

Human chain at Golestan Palace shows support for Iran's cultural heritage

Iranica Desk

Amid growing concerns over recent threats against Iran's cultural heritage, a group of people and members of non-governmental organizations gathered on Saturday in the inner courtyard of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Golestan Palace to amplify public support for Iran's historical identity. Participants in the gathering, holding placards with protest messages, described the recent attacks on historical buildings, museums, and her-

itage sites as a clear assault on the historical memory and civilizational identity of nations, and called for a firm response from international institutions, according to IRNA. During the event, attendees formed a human chain in the heart of one of Iran's most important UNESCO-listed sites, demonstrating a tangible symbol of national solidarity in the protection of cultural heritage — an act that sent a clear message of social resolve to safeguard the country's identity-based assets. The participants also signed

a petition and a statement addressed to UNESCO, calling for the organization's official condemnation of these actions and for legal follow-up to halt attacks on Iran's cultural and historical sites. In remarks on the sidelines of the gathering, Maliheh Khalqi, the CEO of an NGO, emphasized the public nature of the movement, saying, "This gathering was held under the slogan 'I am a guardian of Iran's World Heritage,' and its aim was to declare practical, on-the-ground support for cultural heritage, especially World

Heritage sites." She added that public gatherings in support of cultural heritage would continue, and that efforts would be made to turn this demand into a broader public and international discourse. The gathering took place as cultural heritage activists view attacks on historical monuments not only as a threat to national assets, but also as a direct assault on humanity's shared heritage — an issue that underscores, more than ever, the urgent need for an immediate response from the international community.



● IRNA

Hafezieh leads tourist visits in Fars Province

Iranica Desk

The Deputy Head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Fars Province announced that, even after the Nowruz holidays, which ended on April 2, holiday visitors' interest in connecting with the country's historical identity has not decreased. The tomb of Hafez (known as Hafezieh) remains the most popular tourist destination in spring 2026, attracting more than 16,000 visitors. Speaking to reporters,



● ichtn.ir

Heydar Zadehian-Nejad said that, to date, the tomb of Hafez, the celebrated 14th century Persian poet and lyricist, has ranked first with 16,547 visitors.

It is followed by the tomb of Sa'di, a renowned Persian poet and writer of the 13th century, with 9,512 visitors, the UNESCO World Heritage site of

Persepolis with 6,740 visitors, the Karim Khan Citadel (Zandiyeh Complex) with 5,732 visitors, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pasargad with 4,590 visitors. These sites have drawn the highest number of tourists, according to ISNA. He noted that on April 3, 1,332 people visited tomb of Hafez, 781 visited tomb of Sa'di, and 616 visited the Zandiyeh Complex. He added that Persepolis welcomed 622 tourists, while Pasargad hosted 380 visitors interested in

Iran's ancient history on the same day. Zadehian-Nejad emphasized the deep connection between society and historical heritage, describing this level of public interest in the last days of the holidays as evidence of the valuable place these monuments hold in the collective memory of Iranians. He added, "This strong presence shows that cultural heritage is not merely a tourist destination, but the anchor of our national identity." He concluded by stressing

that all heritage sites in the province remain fully prepared until the very last moment of visitors' stay, stating, "All of our colleagues are providing specialized services at maximum capacity to ensure peace of mind, comfort, and a lasting experience for guests who have chosen Fars as their travel destination." Earlier, Governor General of Fars Province Hosseinali Amiri, during a visit to the Karim Khan Citadel in Shiraz, highlighted Fars Province's distinguished status

in the country's tourism sector — especially during Nowruz. He mentioned that recent field visits had been made to the tombs of Hafez and Sa'di (each visited twice), as well as to Pasargad, Persepolis, Dasht-e Arjan, and other tourist destinations in the province. During these visits, in addition to cordial discussions with the public, artists, and those active in tourism and handicrafts, their issues and problems were reviewed, and, where necessary, appropriate orders were issued to resolve them.

ACL Elite:

Tractor on the verge of withdrawal amid security concerns



Tractor fullback Danial Esmailifard (11) is seen in action against Shabab Al Ahli in the AFC Champions League Elite in Dubai, UAE, on September 16, 2025. ● AFC

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Tractor is on the verge of withdrawing from the AFC Champions League Elite after refusing to visit Saudi Arabia for the knockout phase of the competition. The Iranian top-flight champion is scheduled to take on Emirati club Shabab Al Ahli in Jeddah in a single-legged last-16 tie of the continent's elite clubs tournament. The Asian Football Confederation had to reschedule the knockout round in the West zone, staging all remaining fixtures in Saudi Arabia, following the breakout of a military conflict between Iran and a U.S.-Israeli coalition on February 28. Iranian forces have been

attacking U.S. bases in the Middle East countries, including Saudi Arabia. Last week, Iran's Sports Ministry prohibited the country's national and club teams from visiting "hostile countries, where the security of Iranian athletes cannot be guaranteed," until further notice. Tractor has called on the Asian football governing body to change the host city of the last-16 game, citing "the expansion of the war to Saudi Arabia and the refusal of some foreign players to travel to the country." The AFC, however, has reportedly told the club that it understands the situation of Tractor as a force majeure, but there is no possibility of changing the host country with the last-16 round less than 10 days

away. The AFC insists that if the Iranian team does not show up for the game against Shabab Al Ahli, the case will be referred to the competition's organizing committee, and the final decision will be made based on the regulations of this committee. With Tractor's refusal to fly to Jeddah looking certain, the Iranian club could face a potential fine and a two-year ban from all continental competitions. Tractor won five and lost one in eight games in the West zone's league stage, finishing third in the 12-team table with 17 points, while the Emirati champion stood sixth with 11 points. The two sides met on the opening day of the competition, playing to a 1-1 draw in Dubai last September.

Iran's domestic league players set for national training camp

Sports Desk

The Iranian national team players of the Persian Gulf Pro League will take part in a Team Melli training camp in northern Iran from April 14. Iran head coach Amir Qalenei has made the decision to make sure his players would retain their match fitness amid the domestic league's ongoing postponement. All Iranian top-flight matches have been called off since February 28, following the breakout of a military conflict between Iran and a US-Israeli coalition. Despite all domestic and international flights canceled in the country, the Iranian national team took an ex-



● VARZESH3

hausting road trip to Antalya, Turkey, for a couple of friendly games in the latest FIFA international break. Team Melli fell to a 2-1 loss to Nigeria on March 27, before bouncing back to hammer Costa Rica 5-0 four days later.

The upcoming training camp will be part of Iran's preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be cohosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada from June 11. Iran is set to kick off its Group G campaign against

New Zealand at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, California, on June 16, before facing Belgium at the same venue five days later. The final round of the group fixtures will see Iran take on Egypt in Seattle, Washington, on June 26. Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali said on Friday that the Football Federations of Iran and Turkey are in talks over a friendly game between the two national teams ahead of the global showpiece in North America. However, questions still remain regarding Iran's World Cup participation after Donyamali said that the country's National Security Council "will make a final call on the matter." Last week, the Sports Ministry prohibited all Iranian teams and athletes from visiting "adversary countries" for safety reasons amid the ongoing war in the region.

Saravi, Dorostkar among Asian wrestling's best in 2025

Sports Desk

The Asian Wrestling Council named Iran's Mohammad-Hadi Saravi as the continent's best Greco-Roman in 2025. Saravi's compatriot Pejman Dorostkar, meanwhile, was picked as the best freestyle head coach after steering the Iranian national squad to the world and Asian team titles last year. Reigning Olympic champion Saravi proved to be the wrestler to beat in the 97kg category last year, posting a 10-0 record en route to

gold medals at three major tournaments, including the world title in September. He opened the international season with a dominant run at the Asian Championships in March, claiming three superiority victories without conceding a single point to secure the third continental gold of his career. Saravi then defeated Russia's Artur Sargsian, competing as a neutral athlete, 3-1 in the final in Zagreb to claim his second world gold after his 2021 triumph, before rounding out the season with a 5-1 final victory over



Iran's Pejman Dorostkar (L) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi were named among the best in Asian wrestling in 2025. ● IAWFIR

Azerbaijan's Murad Ahmadiyev at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November. The gold-laden season earned Saravi a nomination for the UWW Most Domi-

nant Greco-Roman Wrestler of 2025 award, though he ultimately lost out to fellow Iranian world and Olympic champion Saeid Esmaili.