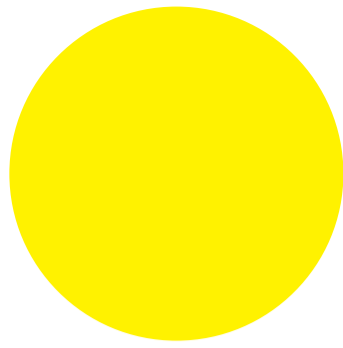


Cultural chords strike deep, rallying support for Iran's pavilion in Tunis

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# Iran Daily

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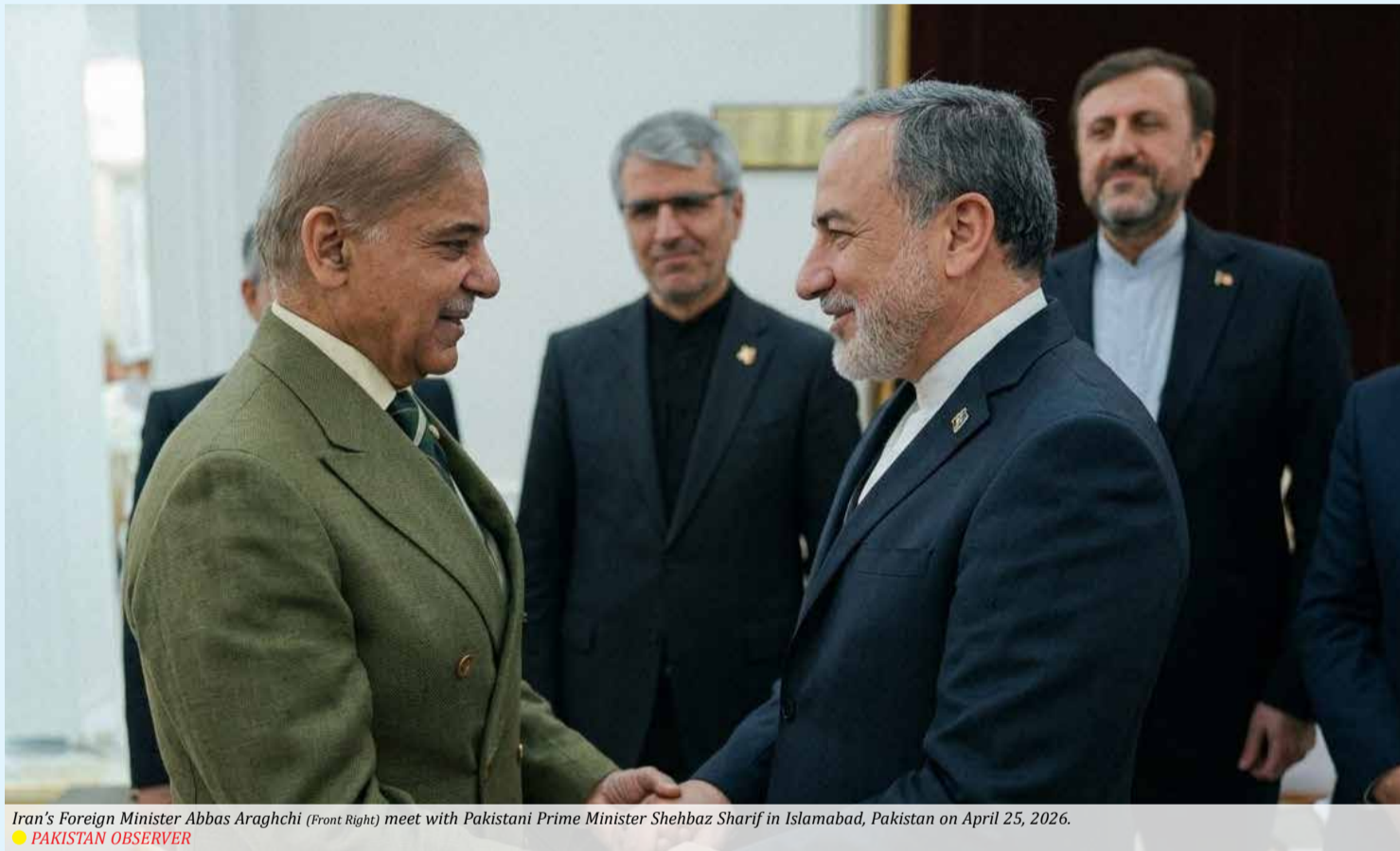
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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (Front Right) meet with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, Pakistan on April 25, 2026.

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### How Tehran enters round two could shape fate of Islamabad talks

#### INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

With the United States refusing to lift the naval blockade on Iran, Pakistani-mediated negotiations between Tehran and Washington remain in suspension. Iran's foreign minister led a small delegation to Islamabad this weekend, conveying Tehran's views to Pakistan but denying any official talks with the US. Iran's diplomatic team is also planning subsequent visits to



Abbas Aslani

Muscat and Moscow.

Abbas Aslani, an international affairs expert, told Iran Daily that the manner in which Iran formally enters the second round of Islamabad negotiations is of major significance and could affect the entire negotiating track, because retreating from the condition of lifting the naval blockade could signal to the other side that Tehran may also back down on other issues.

**IRAN DAILY: Why does Tehran stress the absence of formal talks with the US? Is this aimed at managing expectations, or does it reflect deep doubt**

about Washington's readiness for an agreement?

ASLANI: Tehran is seeking negotiations that produce a result, rather than talks for the sake of talks that amount to a waste of time. The Americans need to show they are genuinely seeking an agreement, and one sign of that could be consistency in their position and that they stand by what they have said, at least during the negotiation process.

Second, Iran has stated that for a second round of negotiations to be held, the Americans must lift the naval blockade, and it has made clear that any new round of talks is contingent upon that step. This

is not merely a symbolic gesture or obstinacy. It could affect the negotiating path itself, and from Iran's perspective, any retreat on this issue could signal to the other side that Tehran may also back down on negotiating issues such as the nuclear file or sanctions.

For that reason, the way the second round takes shape and how Iran enters it could be extremely important. It could affect the entire dialogue and influence whether the process moves toward success or failure.

**What is the significance of the Iranian delegation's parallel visits to Islamabad, Muscat and Moscow? Is Tehran**

**activating a multi-track mediation model, or does each of these capitals serve a distinct function in the negotiation process?**

Pakistan remains an active mediation channel, both for the exchange of messages and for following up on issues raised in the first round, including points Iran presented to the United States through Pakistan under the 10-point proposal, as well as matters raised after the negotiations in Islamabad. [Foreign Minister Abbas] Araghchi will naturally convey new considerations and Tehran's latest views to the other side through Pakistan.

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# Iranian FM, Pakistan's top echelon meet amid diplomatic logjam with US



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (3rd L) meets with Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir (3rd R) in Islamabad, Pakistan, on April 25, 2026.  
IRNA

## International Desk

Iran's top diplomat on Saturday held talks with Pakistani officials amid diplomatic efforts by Islamabad to end the ongoing war between Iran and the United States.

Abbas Araghchi, who arrived in Islamabad on Friday, met with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

at the prime minister's office where Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir were also present.

The efforts are aimed at launching a new round of talks between Tehran and Washington to end the ongoing aggression against Iran, which began on February 28.

Araghchi, who also separately held

a meeting with Pakistan's Field Marshal Asim Munir, said on Telegram that during the meeting he explained Iran's views on ending the war between the Islamic Republic and the US.

Araghchi did not offer further details, but said Tehran will continue engaging in the Pakistani-led mediation efforts "until a result is achieved."

The meetings came as the White House said President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were due to depart for Islamabad on Saturday morning for talks with Araghchi.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters that Iran had a chance to make a "good deal" with the United States.

"Iran knows that they still have an open window to choose wisely," he said. "All they have to do is abandon a nuclear weapon in meaningful and verifiable ways."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei posted on X that Iranian officials did not plan to meet US representatives and that Tehran's concerns would be conveyed to mediator Pakistan.

Washington and Tehran are at a cost-

ly impasse as Iran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries one-fifth of global oil shipments, while the US blocks Iran's oil exports. The conflict, entering its ninth week, has pushed energy prices to multi-year highs, stoking inflation and darkening global growth prospects.

Trump told Reuters on Friday that Iran planned to make an offer aimed at satisfying US demands but that he did not know what the offer entailed. He declined to say who Washington was negotiating with, "but we're dealing with the people that are in charge now".

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt claimed that the US had seen some progress from the Iranian side in recent days and hoped more would come this weekend, while Vice President JD Vance was ready to travel to Pakistan as well.

Araghchi's visit to Pakistan is part of a three-leg diplomatic tour which will also take him to Oman and Russia.

Iran has refused to participate in the second round due to the US violation of a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire by imposing a blockade on Iran's ports. The visit by the Iranian top diplomat

to Islamabad has raised optimism about the second round of the negotiations after the first round failed to lead to an agreement which could put an end to the tensions in the region which have been caused by the recent US-Israeli aggression against Iran. Iranian officials have blamed the US side for putting forward excessive demands and shifting its position at the negotiating table for the failure of the first negotiations.

The US and Israel launched a war of aggression against Iran on February 28, assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several top military commanders.

Iran's Armed Forces responded with 100 waves of retaliatory strikes under Operation True Promise 4, launching hundreds of ballistic and hypersonic missiles, as well as drones, against American military bases across West Asia and Israeli positions throughout the occupied territories.

On April 8, a ceasefire was brokered by Pakistan between the two sides, though tensions remain high over a US naval blockade and Iran's firm control over the Strait of Hormuz.

## Pezeshkian: Enemy plots to spur discontent by striking infrastructure



Masoud Pezeshkian  
president.ir

## International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Saturday that the enemy's purpose for targeting infrastructure and imposing blockades on Iran is to create dissatisfaction among the people.

"The enemy plans to turn today's satisfaction of the people into dissatisfaction, and to counter the enemy's plot, we must not allow any grounds for public dissatisfaction to arise," Pezeshkian said during a visit to the country's Interior Ministry.

He also urged people to reduce their use of electricity after American and Israeli strikes damaged the country's energy infrastructure as the government aims to "control consumption"

of electricity.

"Instead of turning on 10 lights at home, turn on two lights. What is wrong with that?" he said.

The US and Israel launched a large-scale and unprovoked war against Iran on February 28, assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several high-ranking military commanders despite indirect Tehran-Washington negotiations on Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

During their recent aggression against Iran, the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran's infrastructure and have imposed a blockade on Iran's ports aimed at forcing Tehran to accept their conditions in Pakistan-brokered negotiations.

The attacks began with targeting military bases and residential buildings. However, Iran's non-military infrastructure including communications centers, power plants, refineries, industrial sites, scientific centers and bridges was targeted after the aggressors failed to reach their objectives.

The US has also imposed a naval blockade on Iran's ports and has so

far seized three Iranian commercial vessels.

On April 14, Iran's Ambassador to the UN Amir Saeid Iravani in a letter to the UN chief Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the US move as a flagrant violation of Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity, calling it an illegal act of aggression that threatens regional and international peace and security.

He stressed that the US action constitutes a clear breach of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force, and represents a textbook example of aggression under international law.

The ambassador added that the illegal blockade also seriously violates the fundamental principles of the international law of the sea.

"By attempting to prevent maritime traffic to and from Iranian ports, the United States is illegally interfering in the exercise of the sovereign rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran and violating the rights of third states and legitimate maritime trade in accordance with international law," the letter stated.

## Iran's military warns of decisive response to continued US naval siege

## National Desk

Iran's top military command warned that the continued naval "piracy, blockade, and banditry" by American forces in the region will be met with a decisive response from the Iranian Armed Forces.

"If the aggressive US military continues its blockade, piracy, and maritime banditry in the region, they can be certain that they will face the reaction of Iran's powerful Armed Forces," the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters said in statement on Saturday.

The headquarters emphasized that Iran's military possesses "greater strength and readiness" than before to defend the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interests.

It reminded Washington that parts of the US military had already experienced Iran's offensive power and capabilities during the latest US-Israeli aggression against Iran, which began on February 28.

The statement further declared the country's resolve to monitor enemy movements in the region while maintaining full control over the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

"We are ready and determined to inflict even more severe losses on American-Zionist aggressors in the event of any new violation," the statement added. Spokesman for Iran's Defense Ministry Reza Talei Nik said on Saturday that the "enemy, whose objective of crippling Iran's missile and military capabilities has failed, is now seeking an honorable exit from the quagmire of war."

"Iran is today in firm control of the Strait of Hormuz," he added.

Talei Nik also said stressed that a significant portion of Iran's missile capabilities remains unused.

Tensions have been running high over a so-called naval blockade the US has enforced on Iranian ports and ships as well as American attempts to conduct mine-sweeping operations in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian officials have said the blockade is unlawful and a breach of a ceasefire that took effect on April 8 and was again unilaterally extended by US President Doland Trump hours before it was set to expire on April 22.

Iran says it will not accept diktats or conditions imposed by the United States and will not negotiate under the shadow of threats.

## Hezbollah says ceasefire 'meaningless' as Israel's attacks continue in south

## International Desk

Lebanon's Hezbollah said a US-mediated ceasefire in the war with Israel was meaningless a day after it was extended for three weeks, as Lebanese authorities reported two people killed by an Israeli strike.

US President Donald Trump announced the three-week extension on Thursday after hosting Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors at the White House. The ceasefire agreement between the governments of Lebanon and Israel had been due to expire on Sunday, Reuters reported.

While the ceasefire has led to a significant reduction in hostilities, Israel and Hezbollah have continued to trade blows in southern Lebanon, where Israel has kept soldiers in a self-declared "buffer zone".

Responding to the extension, Hezbollah



REUTERS

lawmaker Ali Fayyad said "it is essential to point out that the ceasefire is meaningless in light of Israel's insistence on hostile acts, including assassinations, shelling, and gunfire" and its demolition of villages and towns in the south.

"Every Israeli attack ... gives the resistance the right to a proportionate response," he added.

Hezbollah is not a party to the ceasefire agreement, and has strongly objected to Lebanon's face-to-face contacts with Israel.

The April 16 agreement does not re-

quire Israeli troops to withdraw from the belt of southern Lebanon seized during the war. The zone extends 5 to 10 km (3 to 6 miles) into Lebanon.

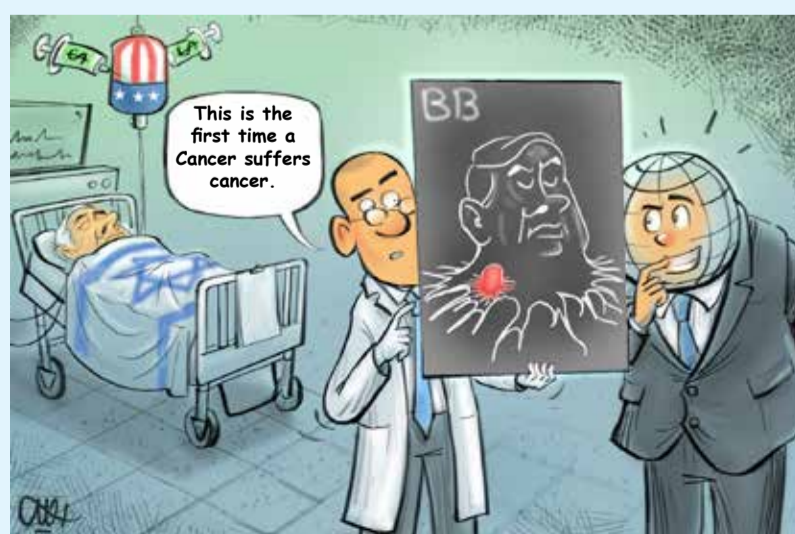
Hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel reignited on March 2, when the group opened fire in support of Iran in the regional war. The ceasefire in Lebanon emerged separately from Washington's efforts to resolve its conflict with Tehran, though Iran had called for Lebanon to be included in any broader truce.

Nearly 2,500 people have been killed in Lebanon since March 2, the Lebanese Health Ministry says.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike killed two people in the southern village of Touloun on Friday. Hezbollah also shot down an Israeli drone, the group and the Israeli military said. Hezbollah identified it as a Hermes 450 and said it had downed it with a surface-to-air missile.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

CARTOON



# TPO launches new cargo corridors, economic war command

## Economy Desk

Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced the selection and operational testing of new cargo transit corridors while reviving previously closed routes, as the country implements measures to maintain trade flows amid ongoing regional tensions following a 40-day US-Israeli war on the country.

Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi, head of the TPO, also announced the establishment of an economic war management headquarters at the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade. "The Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade has taken various measures to prevent disruption in the export and import cycle, including expediting customs clearance, extending deadlines for currency commitments, and renewing trade cards," he said, according to Mehr news agency. "This committee emphasizes the private sector's role in maintaining the supply chain of basic goods," the deputy minister added.

During the Ramadan War that began on February 28, efforts were made to create alternative routes for goods to enter the country, Dehnavi said.

Some previously closed corridors have been revived to facilitate cargo movement, utilizing rail, road, and northern port capacities, according to the official.

Alongside efforts to expand cargo transit routes, regulatory provisions have been reassessed, he said. Foreign exchange earnings, production sustainability, and meeting

consumer needs remain the country's core priorities, with export restrictions on certain products imposed to safeguard domestic supply, he added.

Dehnavi attributed concerns about raw material shortages in warehouses to psychological market tensions, stating that no supply problems are expected for certain raw materials in the coming months. He also highlighted the use of foreign exchange earnings from exports to import essential raw materials, noting that the mechanism helps secure critical supplies amid ongoing trade disruptions.

Synergy between government and the private sector, reform of commodity exchange allocations, and market competition control are among the measures implemented to navigate the current crisis, Dehnavi said. According to the TPO chief, due to incomplete and precise data on damages inflicted on industries, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade is revising processes based on feedback from economic actors, with priorities being reviewed amid uncertainties.

Iran remains in wartime conditions. Tehran and Washington agreed to a temporary ceasefire on April 8 with Pakistan's mediation. Tensions remain high. The US imposed a blockade on April 13 on vessels entering or leaving Iranian coastal waters to force Iran into a peace agreement after the 40-day war. The measure was later expanded to all Iranian vessels on the high seas. Also, under new conditions set by Tehran, only pre-authorized commercial vessels may

transit the Strait of Hormuz, while ships linked to the US, Israel and other "hostile states" are barred.

## Transit routes, neighbors remain strategic

Meanwhile, Jahanbakhsh Sanjabi Shirazi, the secretary-general of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, told ISNA that Iran's access to 15 neighbors makes transit capacities at its western and northern borders a key strategic advantage for regional trade, capable of sustaining cargo flows even under international restrictions.

"Even assuming an unlikely complete siege in the south, a total blockade of Iran is practically impossible," he said, noting that many of Iran's neighboring countries have access to open waters.

Sanjabi Shirazi noted that cargo supply is feasible through transit mechanisms via these countries' ports, as well as by road, rail, and shared land borders. "I believe that regarding western neighboring countries, especially Iraq, a historical opportunity has emerged for them since February 28," he said. "They can pursue port development to activate part of their capacities."

He added that this opportunity could conversely attract Iranian companies previously based in the United Arab Emirates toward Iraq. The new conditions could also reduce costs, as the transit distance for cargo unloading to Iranian territory is less than five kilometers, with minimal distance for small cargo boat operations.

"And in the north, Americans have no ac-



MEHR

cess and cannot prevent cargo ships from docking at northern ports, especially since Russia in the north produces a relatively large portion of our imported food items," he added.

## Transshipment alternatives

Kambiz Etemadi, head of the container committee at the Iranian Shipping Association, told IRNA that Iranian goods currently held at UAE ports could be transferred to the country through transshipment or via other regional ports, though government follow-up is needed to resolve traders' car-

go entry challenges.

"Today, despite problems arising from the war, activities at Shahid Rajaei Port in south are proceeding under normal conditions," Etemadi said.

He noted that the main challenge is that commercial vessels from UAE ports are not entering Iran. Transferring cargo from UAE ports to alternative ports such as Hamad, Sohar, and Muscat in Oman, as well as Qatar, is under consideration as an option, though it increases final costs, he added, noting it remains preferable to a complete halt of operations.

## Iran resumes int'l flights to Istanbul, Medina, Muscat after war hiatus



Passengers queue for check-in at Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran on April 25, 2026 following the resumption of flights after a 56-day pause caused by the war.

WANA

## Economy Desk

Iran launched its first international flights on Saturday following a 56-day war and ceasefire, with services departing for Istanbul, Medina and Muscat, as authorities began a phased reopening of the country's airspace.

Four flights to Istanbul in Turkey, one flight to Medina in Saudi Arabia for (Haji pilgrimage), and one flight to Muscat in Oman were operated on Saturday.

Iran Air, Iran Airtour, Mahan and Meraj airlines operated flights from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport to Istanbul, while Sepehran Airlines flew to Muscat.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Airlines said its first international flight on Saturday departed Imam Khomeini International Airport for Medina, marking the launch of its second international route in the new Iranian year that began on March 21.

The carrier said that flights on the Istanbul route will operate daily until May 1, adding that the service resumed after obtaining the necessary permits from the Civil Aviation Organization. Additional routes, including Baku, Doha, Najaf and Baghdad, are also planned.

The airline also operated its first scheduled passenger flight on the Tehran-Mashhad-Tehran route on Saturday after the 56-

day suspension caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran that began in late February.

With the gradual reopening of the country's airspace and the resumption of flights, the Iran Airlines has restarted scheduled services on the route from Saturday, IRNA reported. It added that the airline's first passenger flight in the new year took place on Wednesday on the Tehran-Mashhad route. Separately, Airports Company CEO Mohammad Amirani said that, under operational planning, the eastern parts of the country have been prioritized for domestic and overflight operations starting Saturday. Provincial airports including Mashhad, Zahedan, Kerman, Yazd and Birjand will serve as key hubs for managing air traffic, with full navigation services available.

Amirani said airports in western and central regions — including Tabriz, Kermanshah, Ahvaz, Urmia, Ilam, Abadan, Isfahan, Shiraz and Rasht, as well as Tehran's Mehrabad airport — will resume operations with specific limits on flight numbers and operating hours, in line with current technical capacity and to ensure the highest level of safety in air traffic control.

## RAI plans transit capacity boost with Turkey, eyes \$30b trade target

## Economy Desk

Iran's railway chief said the country is working to raise annual transit rail capacity to Turkey to 15 million tons in coming years, as part of efforts to develop foreign trade and achieve a \$30 billion annual trade volume with its neighbor.

"We are working to increase the transit rail capacity to Turkey to 15 million tons annually in the coming years," said Jabbar Ali Zakeri, managing director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI). "Our target is to create the necessary infrastructure for developing foreign trade, particularly achieving \$30 billion in annual trade with Turkey."

Zakeri also told reporters that the current transit rail capacity to Turkey has doubled compared to last year, stopping short of providing any numerical details. According to IRNA, connecting the Marand rail line in Iran's East Azarbaijan Province, in the country's northwest, to Cheshm-e Soraya ranks among Iran Railways' most significant national



projects. The route is positioned to become the most economical and secure corridor for cargo transfers between China and Europe in both directions. Cheshm-e Soraya is a border station on the Iran-Turkey frontier, with the planned Marand-Cheshmeh Soraya railway transit line extending approximately 200 kilometers from Marand in northwestern Iran toward Turkey's Aralik border region in Igdir Province.

The location, named after the Cheshmeh Soraya River, sits at a strategic junction intended to link Iran's rail network with Turkey's, creating an uninterrupted passage for China-Europe freight via Iranian territory.

Phase-one studies for the national project have been completed, Zakeri said, adding that executive operations are set to begin within the next two months. Studies for subsequent phases are also underway.

## How Tehran enters ...

**The Omanis, however, play an important role regarding the Strait of Hormuz, as Iran and Oman form the two sides of the strait at its narrowest point. Part of the consultations and discussions could be tied to that issue, which remains one of the key matters on the table.**

Russia, meanwhile, is a member of the United Nations Security Council and holds veto power, so its role can carry weight in that arena. Consultations with Russia may also reflect a strategic balancing approach. It should also not be for-

gotten that Russia was among the countries that played a role in past negotiations related to the nuclear agreement known as the JCPOA, and it could again contribute to addressing some of the major outstanding disputes as a party sufficiently familiar with these issues. One possibility raised regarding Russia concerns the transfer of Iran's enriched uranium. Russia previously did this under the JCPOA and has now signaled readiness to receive the material again. Yet such an arrangement is now open to doubt, because for Tehran, more important than to whom

these stockpiles would be handed over is whether the material should leave the country at all.

One of the considerations at play is the uncertainty and lack of trust associated with the American side. That is why Iran sees it as a risk to transfer enriched uranium stockpiles abroad all at once or in full. Instead, Iran has announced that it has no objection to diluting the material in several stages, so that both the concerns of the other side are addressed and Iran's own considerations are preserved. But Washington appears to view enriched material in symbolic terms,

as something that could be used to declare victory. The United States may be driven less by a technical concern than by a political consideration.

**What explains the deliberate information blackout Pakistan has referred to? Does it signal the talks are entering a more sensitive and detailed phase, or, on the contrary, is it meant to manage the fragility of the negotiations?** Lately, too many issues have been pushed into the open and publicized in the media. Rather than being pursued confidentially behind

the scenes, they have been played out in the media, especially by the United States. The more public diplomacy of this kind becomes, the more it can suffer damage. This can create obstacles and conditions in which dialogue, interaction, and sometimes flexibility diminish, causing the process to move slower than expected and, in some cases, grind to a halt.

For that reason, issues now need to be pursued away from the media, rather than in the form of political and propaganda maneuvering aimed at pressuring the other side. But the American side has gener-

ally not shown such an approach in the past, and even now, during negotiations, it is taking positions not entirely aligned with that principle. It remains to be seen how the Pakistanis can manage this moving forward. More confidentiality helps the talks; less confidentiality hardens the environment for negotiators and their capitals alike. This is unlikely to signal entry into the detailed phase of negotiations, because the parties have not yet reached an understanding even on the frameworks. At this stage, it may be more a phase requiring major decisions.

# From perceived threat to diplomatic opportunity

## Redefining role of diaspora as honorary ambassadors of Iran

By Ashkan Pirzadeh  
Strategic affairs analyst

OPINION  
EXCLUSIVE

Communities that, by their own choice and for various reasons such as investment, education, or living abroad, decide to emigrate and change their place of residence — in other words, live away from their homeland — represent a strategic asset for their countries of origin that is worthy of consideration. Iranians abroad, estimated at between four and five million, comprise a broad spectrum of professionals, academics, entrepreneurs, and cultural activists. Despite the threat-oriented perspectives of the past three decades, I argue that this population can act as “honorary ambassadors” for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Unlike official diplomacy, honorary ambassadors are free from political obligations and enjoy greater trust and socio-cultural influence in host societies. Drawing on the theory of public diplomacy and the concept of transnational social capital, facilitating two-way interaction between the Islamic Republic and Iranians abroad can not only improve Iran’s image globally but also pave the way for scientific, economic, and cultural cooperation. Finally, a policy framework is proposed to transform perceived threats into national opportunities.

In the era of globalization and the communications revolution, a country’s image in global public opinion plays a decisive role in its soft power. Due to its geopolitical position, ancient civilization, and scientific and human capacities, the Islamic Republic of Iran — owing to Western hostility, particularly from the terrorist Zionist regime — has consistently been subjected to conflicting international narratives. Undoubtedly, one of the greatest hidden assets for correcting this image is the multi-million population of Iranians abroad.

Unfortunately, in Iran’s political climate, the view of Iranians abroad has often been ambivalent: on one hand, they have been seen as a “threat,” and on the other, as the “missing link” in development. It is appropriate to transform this dual perspective into an opportunity-driven strategy using a political-sociological approach. The main question is: how can the position and networks of Iranians abroad be utilized to reflect an accurate and balanced image of Iran in host societies and the world?

By shifting the paradigm from threat management to strategic facilitation, Iranians abroad can play the role of honorary ambassadors, provided that the Islamic Republic of Iran rebuilds mutual trust and expands the channels of non-governmental interaction.



### Diasporas: opportunity or threat?

In the literature of international relations and political sociology, there are two dominant perspectives on diasporas:

- The security-conflict perspective (derived from realism), which views diasporas as potentially threatening to the state of origin.
- The network-oriented perspective (derived from globalization theory and institutionalism), which recognizes diasporas as transnational bridges active in economic, cultural, and public diplomacy domains.

### Concept of honorary ambassador in public diplomacy

Public diplomacy, unlike traditional diplomacy, targets not governments but the public opinion, civil society, and cultural elites of host countries. Within this framework, an honorary ambassador is an individual who, without formal appointment, presents a positive image of their country of origin through their social credibility, expertise, or network. The majority of Iranians abroad (including university professors, physicians, artists, engineers, and entrepreneurs) inherently possess

these characteristics.

### Transnational social capital

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and American philosopher Hilary Putnam define social capital as the set of resources that emerge through networks of trust-based relationships. Iranians abroad can be considered a form of capital across the following four spectra:

1. Scientific-technical capital
2. Economic-entrepreneurial capital
3. Cultural-media capital
4. People-centered political capital

Deploying this capital in the form of honorary ambassadors requires a new design in governance and the formulation of progressive policies aligned with the developmental diplomacy pursued by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### Opportunity-driven capacities of Iranians abroad

• **Anti-distortion narrative capacity:** International media often present a one-dimensional image of Iran, focused on political and security issues favorable to the West — an image far from

reality. Iranians residing abroad can produce a balanced and superior narrative countering Western distortions by sharing daily experiences of Iran’s scientific advances, cultural diversity, and social achievements.

• **Scientific and technological diplomacy capacity:** Many top universities worldwide have Iranian-origin faculty members. These individuals can serve as bridges for academic cooperation and present an accurate picture of Iran’s scientific progress.

• **Economic and investment capacity:** Iranian entrepreneurs abroad can contribute to Iran’s economic growth by investing in domestic value chains, and the reflection of such investments will signal a return of confidence.

• **Art and cultural diplomacy capacity:** Iranian artists, directors, and writers abroad can depict Iran’s historical depths and civilizational authority for global audiences. Because of their independence from the government, such works are more effective than official statements.

### Approval and communication of Law on Supporting Iranians Abroad

Iranian diaspora and anti-war protesters hold flags of Iran and signs near Civic Center Plaza in San Francisco, the US, on April 8, 2026.  
● DAN HERNANDEZ/  
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE



The prevailing threat-oriented paradigm toward Iranians abroad is both empirically incorrect and strategically harmful. The community of Iranians abroad, possessing transnational social capital, represents a unique capacity to act as honorary ambassadors for the Islamic Republic of Iran. These ambassadors — not out of political obligation but from cultural attachment and mutual interest — can convey a correct and humane image of Iran to the world.

Following the serious pursuit by Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Law on Supporting Iranians Abroad was finally approved and communicated by the president. This law addresses many of the systemic issues facing Iranians abroad. By providing a clear definition of the Iranian diaspora community, it obliges executive bodies to attract elites, facilitate investment, provide online judicial services, ease passport issuance, create a database of Iranians abroad, grant access to the national smart-government service window, and even offer special support in emergencies. This is an important step toward revisiting and defining an opportunity-oriented perspective on the Iranian diaspora.

### Strategies and recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations can be made:

• **Strengthening the Secretariat of the High Council for Iranian Affairs Abroad:** The High Council for Iranian Affairs Abroad adopts a cross-factional and specialized approach to Iranians abroad. Accordingly, strengthening its Secretariat as the Council’s executive arm would be effective.

• **Appointment of honorary ambassadors:** Any distinguished Iranian residing abroad who meets certain conditions could receive the title or badge of “Honorary Ambassador for the Culture and Peace of Iran”. Since this title carries no political value, it would be a symbolic honor within the host society.

• **Annual conferences with invited prominent Iranians abroad:** Gathering distinguished Iranians from abroad on an annual basis around scientific, cultural, and economic themes, can convey a message of peace and progress to host societies.

The prevailing threat-oriented paradigm toward Iranians abroad is both empirically incorrect and strategically harmful. The community of Iranians abroad, possessing transnational social capital, represents a unique capacity to act as honorary ambassadors for the Islamic Republic of Iran. These ambassadors — not out of political obligation but from cultural attachment and mutual interest — can convey a correct and humane image of Iran to the world.

The prerequisite for realizing this role is a shift in attitude from control to facilitation, the establishment of cross-sectoral intermediary institutions, and the rebuilding of mutual trust. Once implemented, not only will Iran’s public diplomacy be strengthened, but the ground will also be prepared for the return of scientific and economic capital. Iranians abroad, rather than being a security concern, are honorary ambassadors for a prosperous, peaceful, and progressive Iran.



A person holds up an Iranian passport in Yerevan, Armenia, on July 9, 2021.  
● LUSI SARGSYAN/PHOTOLURE

# Disposition of global public toward cease-fire, Iran-US talks

By Sina Mojaver, Arsalan Veisi, and Ali Roohandeh  
Staff at Namafar data collection company

## ANALYSIS

The recent conflict between Iran and the United States has engendered extensive ramifications across political, economic, and security domains, regionally and globally. This belligerence, not only has exacerbated international tensions, but has also exerted a profound influence upon the public sphere in various nations.

A meticulous analysis of the populace's disposition toward the cease-fire and the negotiations possesses particular salience, inasmuch as these perspectives could sculpt the trajectory of diplomacy and future policies. Furthermore, the discernment of divergent reactions among cultural and political groups to this crisis facilitates a superior comprehension of the opportunities and challenges impending. Under such critical circumstances, the examination of the media's role in directing these dispositions becomes indispensable, so that one might formulate efficacious strategies for crisis management.

The tensions between Iran and the United States, alongside their extensive repercussions upon political, economic, and security domains regionally and globally, necessitate a profound comprehension of the public sphere's disposition toward the cease-fire and the negotiations. These dispositions perform a significant function in the diplomatic process, the preservation of market stability, and the configuration of future policies. Moreover, the divergence in viewpoints among disparate cultural and political groups, internal and external to the nation, accentuates the necessity for a meticulous and comprehensive investigation.

This report constitutes a synthesis of three parallel research endeavors, executed with the objective of analyzing the reactions of Anglophone, Persophone, and Arabophone global users on X (formerly, Twitter) to the announcement of the cease-fire and the negotiations. It furthermore undertakes the identification of proponent and opponent groups, their underlying rationales, and an evaluation of the public sphere's convictions concerning victory or defeat in the conflict. Likewise, the role of media and political approaches in the formation of these perspectives has been scrutinized. The provision of a holistic depiction of regional and global reactions, empowers policymakers and analysts to achieve superior crisis management and to direct the negotiation process toward success.

### Disposition of Anglophone users

71% of the Anglophones have endorsed the cease-fire. The proponents of the cease-fire consist of three categories and groups: 1) economic activists, who welcomed the decline in



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oil prices and the restoration of stability to markets; 2) supporters of Trump, who regard the agreement as a momentous achievement and the consequence of "maximum pressure" upon Iran; and 3) anti-Israeli users, who express gratification concerning the United States' withdrawal from direct engagement in the Middle East. Conversely, 29% of users oppose the cease-fire, belonging predominantly to two currents: Democrats, who believe that Trump's imprudent policies have positioned Iran in a superior negotiating posture, and supporters of Israel, who evaluate this agreement as merely an opportunity for Tehran to procure time and to engage in diplomatic subterfuge.

31% of the Anglophones consider Iran the victor of the war, a cohort comprising pro-Iranian Muslims, Democrats, and Israeli extremists. 30% believe this war had no victor and that all parties have sustained damage. 21% affirm American victory in the war, yet 18% deem Israel the war's victor, holding the conviction that Israel, through exploitation of the United States and Donald Trump, has achieved its objectives.

Furthermore, 63% of Anglophone users on X harbor pessimism regarding the future of the negotiations; the root of

this pessimism traces back to Israel's deleterious role in the negotiations and the existent conception concerning Iran's bellicose nature. On the opposing side, 31% of them are optimistic about the negotiations' future; this group includes Democrats who believe Iran possesses the superior position and that Trump will be compelled to accept Tehran's terms, supporters of Trump who have faith in the preponderance of American power, and Pakistani English-writing users.

### Reaction of Persophone users

Considering the fact that accessing X inside Iran has been very limited, at best, during the US-Israeli aggression against the country, the reaction of Persophone X users to the cease-fire and the Iran-United States negotiations presents a dichotomous yet pluralistic picture. 42% of users have endorsed the cease-fire in principle, considering it a means to halt the war, to diminish the threat against infrastructure, and to prevent further harm to citizens; although, this endorsement did not, in every instance, signify complete trust in the negotiation process or satisfaction with the state of governance.

In contrast, 39% of users have opposed the cease-fire, but

their opposition emanates from two divergent origins: a portion of the opponents of the Islamic Republic have regarded the cease-fire as an opportunity for the regime's survival and the deferral of its collapse, whereas another portion of forces aligned with the system have considered it a trap for enemy deception and augmented pressure. Additionally, 19% of the content possessed a neutral and newsworthy nature, merely reflecting momentary events.

In the evaluation of the war's victor, the Persophone users' interpretation, more than being grounded in on-the-ground realities, is subordinate to rival media and political narratives. On one side, opponents of the regime, emphasizing the weakening of the command structure, defensive vulnerability, and Iran's being drawn to the negotiating table, have introduced the Islamic Republic as the war's loser; and on the other side, official media and users aligned with the Islamic Republic have considered America's acceptance of negotiation and the articulation of Iran's demands as evidence of Tehran's supremacy and Washington's retreat.

Nevertheless, what predominates above all is the rise of pessimism regarding the fu-



Nevertheless, what predominates above all is the rise of pessimism regarding the future of the negotiations: 81% of Persian-speaking X users are pessimistic about the fate of the negotiations, and the premature failure of the Islamabad dialogues has exacerbated this pessimism. Only 19% of users have remained hopeful about the continuation of the diplomatic path and the possibility of an agreement in subsequent rounds.

ture of the negotiations: 81% of Persian-speaking users are pessimistic about the fate of the negotiations, and the premature failure of the Islamabad dialogues has exacerbated this pessimism. Only 19% of users have remained hopeful about the continuation of the diplomatic path and the possibility of an agreement in subsequent rounds.

### Disposition of the Arab world's public sphere

A relative majority of users (53%) have declared their assent to the cease-fire. This group itself subdivides into three categories: a portion consider Iran the victor of the battlefield, emphasizing the terms imposed by Tehran, including sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz and the collection of transit tolls; another portion proclaim the United States the victor, pointing to Iran's retreat from its conditions and the weakening of the Islamic Republic as a consequence of the war; and the third category have merely welcomed the reduction of tensions and the return of relative calm to the region.

In contrast, 47% of users oppose the cease-fire. This group predominantly focuses upon the immediate and extensive violation of the agreement within the very first hours: Iran's attacks upon Kuwait and the Emirates, on one hand, and Israel's attacks upon Lebanon, on the other. In the view of these users, the cease-fire is not a genuine agreement but merely an opportunity for the military reconfiguration of the belligerent parties.

A significant point in the prediction of the cease-fire's future is the predominance of pessimism (59%); a matter indicating that even a portion of the proponents have little hope for the agreement's endurance.

Furthermore, the margin of 55 to 45 in the interpretation of victory also constructs an intriguing image: both parties can implant their narrative of success within the public sphere, and this very circumstance likely served as an important factor in the acceptance of the cease-fire by both capitals. Nevertheless, what emerges from the data is the image of an agreement that, more than being an end to a crisis, represents its metamorphosis.

All in all, the present research demonstrated that the disposition of the public sphere across different languages and cultures toward the cease-fire and the Iran-United States negotiations possesses substantial diversity and complexity. These data indicate that the cease-fire has resulted more in the metamorphosis of the crisis than in its termination, and the role of media and political approaches in the formation of dispositions is highly determinative. This analysis could assist policymakers in achieving superior crisis and negotiation management.



The photo shows a view at the press center for the talks between the United States and Iran in Islamabad, Pakistan, on April 11, 2026.

WANG SHEN/XINHUA

The article was first published in Persian by Namafar.

# Iranian football at crossroads over women's presence at Asian Games

## Sports Desk

Despite securing a historic spot in the 2026 Asian Games, the Iranian women's national football team is facing an uncertain future, as neither the country's Football Federation nor the National Olympic Committee (NOC) has presented a clear plan for the team's participation in the event.

The women's national team navigated one of its most turbulent periods, both on and off the pitch, over the past several months. While the team faced challenging results against continental powerhouses such as Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines during the AFC Asian Cup in Australia, the Iranian squad became the center stage of a propaganda war regarding a couple of players seeking asylum in the host country amid Iran's military conflict with the United States and Israel. The team suffered three



● FFIRI

successive defeats to finish bottom of its group, but the overall performance still displayed signs of progress and greater cohesion compared to previous years, re-establishing Iran as a

competitor at the top level of Asian football. With that foundation, the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Games – starting September 19 in Japan – represents one of the most important up-

coming events, marking the maiden appearance of Iran's women's national team at the multi-sport event.

The importance of this tournament extends be-

yond its competitive nature. The Asian Games offer a valuable platform for gaining international experience and exposure to diverse playing styles across the continent. For

a team like Iran, currently on a path of development and stabilization, such a tournament could play a crucial role in preparing for larger events, including future Olympic qualifying campaigns.

However, with a limited timeframe remaining before the start of the Games, no clear picture has yet emerged regarding the team's program for the competition. Neither the sport's national governing body nor the NOC has provided specific updates about the team's dispatch, training camps, or related planning, creating significant ambiguity about the team's status.

This situation is particularly notable given that in recent years, the National Olympic Committee has adopted a 'quality-based' approach, prioritizing the dispatch of sports with realistic medal chances. Nevertheless, a look at past Asian Games – specifically in men's football

– shows that participation has not been strictly limited to medal hopes; maintaining a presence at the continental level has also been recognized as a valid objective.

Given the recent signs of progress and competitive capability shown by the women's team, participation in the Asian Games could greatly benefit the squad. Beyond gaining valuable experience for the players, such participation could sustain the team's upward trajectory and create favorable conditions for future success.

With the countdown to the event underway, resolving the status of the team's participation in the Asian Games has taken on special urgency. Making use of this opportunity could prove instrumental in the continued development of women's football in Iran, while missing out would mean losing a vital arena for growth and visibility at the continental level.

## Asian Beach Games:

### Iranians through in beach volleyball, set up China, Japan tests

#### Sports Desk

The two Iranian pairs progressed to the knockout stage of the men's beach volleyball event at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, setting up last-16 dates with duos from the host nation and Japan today.

Alireza Aqajani and Abbas Pourasgari defeated Syria's Orwa Alsakka and Kutiba Albirini in comfortable fashion, winning in straight sets (21-8, 21-9) on Saturday to finish atop Pool G with a clean sweep of four victories.

Standing between the Iranian duo and a quarterfinal spot today will be Japan's Kosuke Fukushima and Nassim Malki, who finished

runner-up in Pool H with three wins from four outings.

In Pool B, meanwhile, the top spot decider saw Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenovi suffer a 2-1 setback (21-11, 21-23, 15-10) against the formidable Qatari pair of Cherif Younousse and Ahmed Tijan – bronze medalists at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics – and settle for runner-up spot with two wins from three games.

Khakizadeh and Qalenovi will face China's Wang Yanwei and Wu Jiabin – Pool A winners with maximum points – today, with the winner taking on Lebanese or Kazakh pairs in the quarterfinals.

#### Beach soccer dominance

Elsewhere in the multi-sport event, Iran continued its emphatic start to its men's beach soccer campaign with a 13-1 win over Thailand on Saturday.

Mohammadali Nazarzadeh and Mohammadali Mokhtari each scored a hat-trick, with Mohammad Ma'soumizadeh and Davoud Shokri adding two goals apiece, while Seyyed Mohammad Dastan, Seyyed Mahdi Mirjalili, and Movahed Mohammadpour were also on the scoresheet for Ali Naderi's side.

A second successive victory in Group B – following the opening-day 5-2 win against the United Arab

Emirates – saw Iran stand atop the table, thanks to a superior goal difference over Saudi Arabia, and secure a place in Monday's semifinals.

The top spot in the group will still be on the line when Iran and Saudi Arabia go head-to-head at the Sanya Bay Yuhai Club Venue today.

#### 3x3 basketball

In the men's 3x3 basketball, Iran got off to a winning start against Macau before falling to the host in Group A on Saturday.

Piter Girgoorian chipped in a game-high nine points, with Mohammadmahdi Rahimi adding seven to lead Iran to a 21-9 victory in its opener.



● volleyball.ir

Rahimi then delivered a five-point contribution later in the day, but Iran lost 14-13 to China to sit second in the group table ahead of today's crunch test against the Philippines, which defeated both China and Macau by similar

21-18 scorelines.

The top two from each of the four groups will advance to Tuesday's quarterfinals.

Iran is being represented by 57 athletes across 10 sports, including beach

wrestling, beach volleyball, beach handball, beach soccer, jiu-jitsu, beach kabaddi, athletics, 3x3 basketball, sport climbing, and water polo at the sixth edition of the multi-sport event, which runs through Thursday.

## AFC Champions League Elite:

### Iran granted two direct spots in league phase for 2026/27 season

#### Sports Desk

Iran has been guaranteed two direct berths in the league phase of the AFC Champions League Elite for the 2026/27 campaign.

The Asian Football Confederation unveiled the slot allocation for next season's revamped 32-team competition, which saw Iran secure two direct berths in the West zone's 16-team table – an improvement from the previous two editions, which saw one Iranian club forced to find its way through the qualifying playoffs.

Sepahan failed to advance to the league stage in the 2025/26 campaign after a

3-2 setback against Al Dhail in the playoffs and continued its Asian journey in the AFC Champions League Two, falling 3-2 on aggregate to Qatar's Al Ahli in the round of 16.

Iran will be represented by one club at the second-tier club tournament next season, the new slot allocation confirms.

Clubs from the Saudi and Japanese top-flight leagues, meanwhile, are due to see their slots in the elite competition increased to five, including three direct ones, from next season. Japan had three automatic berths in the league phase over the previous two editions, while Saudi Arabia had

two plus a playoff place.

The United Arab Emirates has also seen its allowance increase to three automatic slots with one playoff place available, while Qatar has been granted three confirmed berths.

Esteghlal, Sepahan, and Tractor have been selected as Iran's continental competitors after the country's Football Federation announced last week that the remaining eight rounds of the Persian Gulf Pro League fixtures – postponed since February 28, when the United States and Israel initiated a military campaign against Iran – will be staged after "the conclusion of the national team's games at the

FIFA World Cup (June 11 – July 19)."

With the AFC setting May 31 as the deadline for confirming the 2026/27 continental club lineup, the Iranian federation was left with no choice but to put forward the league's current top three for the two tournaments.

Esteghlal tops the table with 41 points from 22 games – two points clear of second-placed Tractor and Sepahan.

Tractor finished third in the West's 12-team table of the newly concluded elite season with 17 points from eight matches before suffering a 3-0 loss to the UAE's Shabab Al Ahli in the round of 16 a fortnight ago.



Tractor's Mahdi Hashemnejad (L) is seen in action against Shabab Al Ahli's Sardar Azmoun in the AFC Champions League Elite last 16 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on April 14, 2026.

● AFC

# Iran turns heritage damage into call for renewal



S'adabad Cultural-Historical Complex  
● FARS



Chehel Sotoun Palace  
● bartarinha.ir

## Iranica Desk

Sometimes silence signals a pause in history. Among towering old trees and along corridors that have long echoed with the footsteps of the past, a stillness has settled over parts of the S'adabad Cultural-Historical Complex. Broken wood, shattered glass, and doors that no longer open quietly now stand as signs of damage inflicted on places where memory had been carefully preserved for generations.

Yet Iran's history has seen such interruptions before — and each time, continuity has resumed not from a new beginning, but from the very point many believed marked an end, according to chn.ir.

The reported damage to 149 historic sites across the country represents more than a tally of affected buildings. It marks 149 points of contact between past and present, 149 intersections of memory and identity, and 149 links in the chain of what is known as Iranian history. Each of these structures is more than stone, brick, or timber. They embody patterns of life, systems of meaning, and tangi-



Golestan Palace  
● asriran.com

ble expressions of Iranian worldviews. Within a historic home reside not only standing walls, but also social relationships, traditions of living, and layers of cultural experience. Damage to such sites can therefore be understood as more than physical destruction. At a deeper level, it disrupts the public representation of collective memory — striking not only wood and stone, but the very possibility of telling a shared story.

What changes that equation, however, is the public response. At moments such as these, nations either remain fixed on the narrative of loss or transform it into a point of departure. In Iran, officials and citizens appear determined to pursue the latter path.

With the announcement by Minister of Cultural Heritage Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri of a public campaign to restore sites damaged during what officials referred to as the "Ramadan War,"

a shift in meaning has taken place. Damage, once a passive condition, has been recast as a catalyst for action. The campaign amounts to a redefinition of the relationship between society and cultural heritage. Citizens themselves are being called upon to become agents of preservation — the point at which unfinished stories are placed once again on a path of continuity. Amid broader political debate, it may be smaller and steady-

er acts that carry the greatest meaning: a hand lifting a broken brick, brushing away the dust, and returning it to its place. Such gestures amount to a historical decision — that the building should remain, that the story should continue, and that memory cannot simply be suspended.

Every brick restored affirms continuity. Though small in scale, such acts may contribute to the renewal of meaning on a national level.

Why architecture? The answer lies in its dual nature. Architecture is both structure and meaning, both space and narrative. Every historic building serves as a living document of a culture's presence through time. To damage architecture is to blur that document and cast doubt on continuity itself. Iran's experience, however, suggests that such continuity is preserved not only in buildings, but also in the minds and daily lives of its people.

Among the damaged locations, the Sa'adabad Cultural-Historical Complex has assumed particular symbolic importance. What occurred there may be viewed not only as damage, but

also as a reminder that even the most emblematic spaces can be vulnerable.

What matters now is the response. Sites such as Golestan Palace, Chehel Sotoun, and others are taking on new meaning — shifting from damaged places to symbols of determination and continuity.

From a technical perspective, restoration consists of methods and specialized practices. In circumstances like these, however, it becomes something more: a cultural act in which past and present enter into dynamic exchange. Restoration here does not mean creating anew, but returning heritage to the course of continuity.

The public campaign may also yield another important outcome: stronger social capital. Cooperation among institutions, experts, and ordinary citizens can generate networks of trust and collaboration that become strategic national assets, especially at times of broader challenge.

If Iranian history is understood not simply as a sequence of events but as an ongoing process, one defining feature emerges clearly: continuity. This land has faced disruption many times, yet has repeatedly repaired those ruptures through its own internal capacities.

Today, in the face of damage to 149 historic sites, that same pattern appears to be repeating itself — with one notable difference: public awareness and participation now play a more visible role.

Ultimately, what emerges from these events is a sign of active continuity. The 149 damaged monuments may require restoration, but the stories they contain remain alive.

The public restoration drive is an effort to ensure that this current continues uninterrupted — that the unbroken thread of history extends forward, stronger than before.

At this historical moment, Iran appears to be standing on foundations laid centuries ago — foundations tested by every wound and strengthened by every act of repair.

## Iranica Desk

The director-general of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Hormozgan Province has announced the start of restoration studies for the historic Kalat Behdeh Castle in Parsian, in a move aimed at protecting national heritage, reviving cultural identity and strengthening social resilience in the local community. Adel Shahrzad said the project had been defined as a national initiative following sustained efforts by civil institutions, support from local communities and backing from provincial authorities. He described it as a key step toward preserving indigenous architecture, revisiting the region's history and promoting sustainable tourism in the hinterland of the Persian Gulf.

He added that the study phase would lay the groundwork for the physical restoration of the fortress while also enabling archaeological teams and cultural heritage researchers to examine the site's untapped potential. According to Shahrzad, the process could help strengthen residents' sense of belonging and attachment to place, ultimately contributing to greater social resilience in the area, according to chn.ir.

He also highlighted the project's economic importance, saying the restoration studies were not merely an effort to save a stone structure, but could mark the beginning of locally driven development based on heritage tourism. The initiative, he said, could

## Hormozgan begins restoration studies for Kalat Behdeh Castle



● chn.ir

create jobs, support small businesses and help sustain the village population.

Describing Behdeh village, Shahrzad said it is one of Hormozgan's leading tourism villages and has ranked sixth nationally in official evaluations of tourism villages. He said the settlement, with its long history, contains

layers of heritage dating from the pre-Islamic era to the medieval Islamic periods, making it a living museum of civilization, livelihoods and the perseverance of communities living in the Persian Gulf hinterland.

He said Kalat Behdeh is a castle built atop a mountain of the same name in the heart of the village. The site,

whose remains are attributed to periods spanning from the Sassanid period to the Islamic era, was added to Iran's national heritage list in 2009.

According to Qajar-era historical texts and travel accounts, the castle once featured six towers, two res-

ervoirs and a deep well known as "Dilav," reflecting the engineering skill of earlier generations in providing security and managing water resources at high elevation.

Shahrzad said the wider area also contains a range of heritage assets, adding with careful implementation of restoration studies and the use of specialist expertise, officials hope Kalat Behdeh Castle and the surrounding heritage complex can become a successful model linking place-based memory, social resilience and sustainable tourism development in Hormozgan Province.



● INSTAGRAM

# Cultural chords strike deep, rallying support for Iran's pavilion in Tunis

## Arts & Culture Desk

Tunisia's President Kais Saied visited Iran's pavilion at the 2026 Tunis International Book Fair 2026 during the fair's opening at the Kram Exhibition Palace, where organizers reported notable public engagement and expressions of solidarity with the Iranian people. The 40th edition of the fair, running through May 3 under the theme "When the book becomes a homeland," has brought together 394 publishers, including 210 international participants and 184 Tunisian houses, showcasing more than 148,000 titles, according to Mehr News Agency. Opened to the public on April 23, the event features participation from 37 countries, with Indonesia as guest of honor, underscoring Tunisia's push to deepen cultural linkages with Asia. During his tour, Saied stopped at

several national pavilions, including those of Algeria, Palestine, Oman, Iran, and Russia, alongside institutional exhibitors such as ministries and academic centers. At the Iranian stand, Ambassador Mir Masoud Hosseinian presented the president with a finely printed Qur'an dating back to the first century of the Islamic calendar. Cultural Attaché Jafar Morvarid also attended. Iran's pavilion, organized by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, features cultural exhibits alongside visual tributes referencing recent military attacks and commemorating victims, including schoolchildren from Minab. A representative of Nakhle Sabz International Publications said visitor turnout at the Iranian stand has been "striking," with attendees voicing visible solidarity, even as the broader exhibition in-



frastructure falls short of leading Arab book fairs. The program includes high-level

seminars on translation challenges, the intersection of literature and cinema in Tunisia, digital

plagiarism, and intellectual property, as well as a special session marking the 900th anniversary

of Ibn Rushd. Eight awards will be conferred to spur literary and publishing innovation.

## Iran ecolodges turn shelters amid staggering war losses

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's ecotourism sector has taken a \$38.5 million financial hit since February 28 as lodges shifted to free public sheltering during wartime Nowruz travel shutdowns, Yavar Abiri said. Abiri said the crisis, which coincided with the peak travel season, forced thousands of eco-lodges to forgo revenue and provide free or heavily discounted accommodation to displaced travelers, ILNA reported. Official data from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage showed occupancy rates held at around 60 percent, but roughly 40 percent of stays were provided free of charge, with another 20 percent offered at discounts of 30 to 50 percent, effectively eroding income streams. He described the sector as having assumed a de facto "passive defense" role, absorbing popu-



lation flows from urban centers into rural areas as insecurity and mobility constraints intensified. Villages and traditional homes opened their doors, turning ecotourism facilities into safe havens, a capacity Abiri said had not been fully anticipated by policymakers. Daily losses were estimated between \$0.51 million to \$0.64 million per day, driven by service provision without corresponding revenue. Over a 45-day period, cumulative damages approached \$38.5 billion, aligning broadly with official estimates of around \$32.1 billion. Iran currently hosts between

3,500 and 4,000 registered eco-lodges, employing about 30,000 people directly. Abiri warned that prolonged tourism stagnation, inflationary pressures, and declining household purchasing power have compounded the sector's vulnerability, raising the risk of business closures in the coming months. He said the downturn has already pushed some operators toward secondary jobs or potential exit from the market, as travel spending is increasingly deprioritized by households facing economic strain. Abiri also flagged uneven distribution of low-interest government loans, noting that a significant share of allocated funds was diverted toward handicrafts, leaving eco-lodges underfunded despite their role in sustaining rural employment and preserving local cultural heritage.

## Malaysia launches campaign honoring Minab school victims



### Arts & Culture Desk

Malaysia-based charitable groups, in coordination with Iran's diplomatic mission, on April formally launched the "Shajareh Tayebeh 168" campaign in Kuala Lumpur to commemorate 168 primary school students killed in a February 28 bombing in Minab and to mobilize humanitarian aid for Iran, according to Iran's cultural center in Malaysia. Initiated by Iran's Cultural

Consulate in Malaysia with the backing of the Iranian Embassy and Malaysian civil society organizations, the campaign frames remembrance through relief, pairing symbolic tribute with a structured aid pipeline. Malaysian NGO representatives were the first contributors, delivering donations at the Iranian Cultural Consulate in Kuala Lumpur. Ambassador Valiollah Mohammadi thanked Malaysians for their "enduring solidarity and generosity," saying public and official support "will remain etched in Iran's historical memory." Cultural Attaché Habib Reza Arzani said the campaign seeks to commemorate the 168 child victims of the Shajareh Tayebeh Primary School bombing in Minab and to scale up grassroots as-

stance. Under the plan, organizers aim to fund and dispatch 168 containers of public donations to Iran, each named after one of the victims. The initial contributions mark the first shipment tranche, with additional participation expected in the coming days. Malaysian NGOs also pledged funds equivalent to three containers of essential goods, dedicating them to the memory of three children, Zahra Ansarifard, Mohammad Raoufi-Nia, and Mohammad Shahdoostipour. Each container is budgeted at 40,000 Malaysian ringgit, or roughly \$10,000. Donors further presented 40.5 grams of gold bullion to the Iranian ambassador at the Kuala Lumpur consulate as part of the campaign's opening drive.

## Epistemicide: Turkish scholars rap aggression on Iranian universities

### Social Desk

A group of 239 prominent Turkish academics said in a joint statement reported Saturday by Iran's Student Affairs Organization that recent US and Israeli strikes on Iranian universities and research centers constitute "epistemicide," condemning the attacks as violations of international law and assaults on humanity's intellectual heritage. The signatories described universities as inviolable sanctuaries and said targeting educational infrastructure breaches conventions that protect civilian and scientific sites during conflict, ILNA reported. They warned that attacks on campuses and intimidation of Iranian scientists risk militarizing academia and eroding global scholarly security. The statement called on UNESCO and the United Nations to roll out an emergency protection mechanism for universi-



An Iranian flag is seen flying amidst the rubble and debris at Sharif University in Tehran following US-Israeli strikes on April 6, 2026. IRNA

ties in war zones, framing the issue as an urgent governance gap in international safeguards. It also criticized what it termed Western academia's silence, arguing that selective outrage over the destruction of scientific infrastructure undermines institutional credibility and public trust. In a sharp escalation of pressure, the academics urged suspending research ties with Israeli institutions linked to military technologies and advocated excluding pro-war entities from conferences hosted in Turkey. Closing with a show of solidarity, the group said Turkish universities stand ready to absorb displaced Iranian re-

searchers and students, proposing a network of "emergency academic bridges" to keep joint projects operational. The body said the initiative is notable for its breadth, with many signatories drawn from leading Turkish universities and identifying as liberal, non-political scholars. The statement further urged Ankara to elevate the immunity of scientific centers in wartime as a core agenda item at upcoming diplomatic forums, including the Antalya Diplomacy Forum. Since the war began on February 28, 2026, at least 30 Iranian universities and research facilities have been hit, according to reports cited in the statement.

## Classic car rally in Tehran decries attacks on national heritage

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian cultural organizers staged a rally tour and gathering of 70 classic vehicles on Friday at Niavaran Cultural-Historical Complex in Tehran to condemn what they described as US and Israeli military aggression against Iran's cultural and historical heritage, framing the event as a call to defend globally significant sites. Held under the slogan "Cultural heritage is the red line of history and human identity," the event drew a fleet of vintage and historic cars adorned with the Blue Shield emblem, alongside the



names of damaged landmarks and protest signage denouncing the wartime destruction, IRNA reported. Following the static exhibition, participants drove through major streets of Tehran in a coordinated rally, turning the capital's urban

arteries into a moving display of cultural advocacy. Organizers cast the rally as a symbolic assertion of Iran's commitment to safeguarding its civilizational identity, aiming to galvanize international awareness and heighten global sensitivity toward the preservation of heritage sites, many of which hold UNESCO-listed status and transcend national boundaries. They argued that protecting cultural patrimony constitutes a transnational obligation, warning that failure to act risks normalizing the erosion of irreplaceable historical assets.