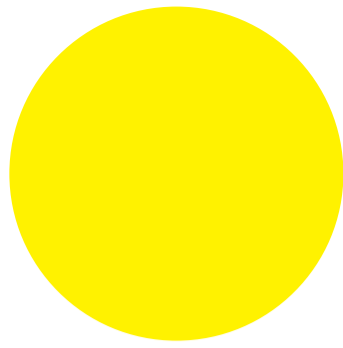


Iqbal's school can dynamize global peace dialogue

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) shakes hands with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said in Muscat on April 26, 2026. IRNA

### Islamic Republic's security architecture in ceasefire era



By Sajad Abedi  
Political analyst

#### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the strategic lexicon of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a ceasefire is rarely viewed as a terminal point of conflict or a transition to Western-style "liberal peace." Instead, it is interpreted through the lens of "tactical consolidation" and "active deterrence." For Tehran, the period following the cessation of kinetic hostilities is a critical phase of the "grey zone" conflict, where security is maintained not by the absence of threat, but by the meticulous management of it.

#### Doctrine of 'forward defense' & proxy calibration

A primary pillar of Iranian strategy during a ceasefire is the preservation and recalibration of its "strategic depth." Iran utilizes the lull in direct kinetic action to replenish the inventories of its regional partners—the Axis of Resistance. From a security perspective, a ceasefire is the optimal window for logistical reinforcement. Rather than de-escalating, Tehran focuses on "qualitative upgrading." This involves transitioning allied groups from using unguided munitions to precision-guided missiles (PGMs) and advanced loitering munitions. By doing so, Iran ensures that the cost of breaking the ceasefire remains prohibitively high for its adversaries. In this context, security is defined as a state of "armed equilibrium" where the threat of a multi-front resurgence serves as the primary guarantor of the status quo.

#### Asymmetric deterrence & technological leapfrogging

For the Islamic Republic, a ceasefire provides the necessary "strategic breathing room" to address vulnerabilities exposed during active combat. From a technical security standpoint, this involves a rapid feedback loop between the battlefield and the laboratory. Iranian military doctrine emphasizes asymmetric capabilities—specifically drones, ballistic missiles, and fast-attack naval craft. During a ceasefire, the focus shifts to cyber-electromagnetic activities (CEMA) and hardening critical infrastructure. The strategy is to move the confrontation from the "visible" battlefield to the "invisible" digital and cognitive realms. By enhancing its cyber-offensive capabilities during a ceasefire, Tehran maintains a "latent strike" capability that can bypass traditional air defenses, thereby maintaining a psychological edge over its opponents without firing a physical shot.

#### Strategic patience & cognitive warfare

The Iranian leadership often employs the concept of "strategic patience." In a ceasefire environment, this manifests as a sophisticated form of cognitive warfare. The security apparatus shifts its focus toward domestic and international narratives. Iran utilizes diplomatic channels and public diplomacy to highlight the fact that the adversary was the aggressor.

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# FM: US military presence uncorks chaos; regional convergence advised



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said in Muscat on April 26, 2026.  
● IRNA

**International Desk**  
Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the experience of the war against Iran showed that the US military presence in

regional countries has served only to generate insecurity and division, urging regional states to pursue indigenous collective security arrangements free from American interference.

Araghchi made the remarks on Sunday in Muscat during talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said. He praised Oman's "responsible approach" in supporting diplo-

matic efforts and its prudent stance during the US-Israeli war against Iran, while reaffirming Tehran's determination to preserve friendly ties with Oman and other southern Persian Gulf states. Iran had targeted US bases and interests in regional countries in response to American attacks, but has consistently said those strikes were legitimate responses to hostile actions launched from the territory of those states. The Omani Sultan reaffirmed Muscat's commitment to regional peace and stability, including through advancing diplomacy, and voiced hope for a definitive end to the war and the restoration of regional security. He also expressed Oman's readiness to assist in that process. With Omani Foreign Minis-

ter Sayyid Badr Albusaidi also present, the talks addressed maritime safety in the Strait of Hormuz, security in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman, economic cooperation among regional states, and developments related to Pakistan-mediated negotiations aimed at ending the war. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei took to X afterwards, saying Iran places high importance on its relations with Persian Gulf countries and remains committed to strengthening mutual trust and constructive cooperation. "The relationship between Iran and Oman is clear proof of Iran's seriousness in pursuing ties based on mutual respect with its southern neighbors," he wrote. The visit marked the Iranian foreign minister's first trip to the region since the recent US-Israeli military assault on Iran in late February, which reverberated across the region. Oman had previously mediated Iran-US talks before the United States and Israel attacked. Fol-

lowing the ceasefire, Islamabad assumed the mediation role and hosted one round of talks, while a second round has yet to be held as Iran has made lifting the US naval blockade a precondition for resuming negotiations. Araghchi had traveled to Islamabad a day earlier, where he presented Iranian proposals to mediators and described the visit as highly productive. He said he had outlined Tehran's position on a practical and implementable framework for a permanent end to the war, adding progress in diplomacy depends on serious political will from the United States. After Oman, Araghchi returned to Pakistan and met Field Marshal Asim Munir, the country's army chief. According to reports, he is expected to travel onward to Moscow after a brief stop. In parallel, Araghchi held phone calls with his counterparts from Turkey, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and France to discuss the latest diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the war.

## President rules out return to talks under US pressure, blockade

Pakistani PM urges adherence to diplomacy, political solution



President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) holds a phone conversation with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the latest status of the Iran-US war on April 26, 2026.  
● president.ir

**International Desk**  
Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Tehran will not enter "imposed negotiations" under pressure, threat and blockade, urging the United States to first remove operational obstacles — including the naval blockade — if it seeks to create conditions for resolving disputes. In a phone call with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday, Pezeshkian said halting hostile measures and providing assurances against renewed bad faith, breaches of commitments and aggressive actions during negotiations were necessary conditions for rebuilding even minimal trust and opening the way for resolving outstanding issues, president.ir reported. Iran and the United States held one round of talks in Islamabad after the ceasefire took hold, but Tehran

has so far declined to enter a second round, citing the continued US naval blockade. Pezeshkian said Washington's hostile actions, including the blockade, were inconsistent with its stated claims of seeking a political settlement, arguing that the contradiction had deepened mistrust among both the Iranian public and officials and posed a serious obstacle to confidence-building and diplomacy. If there is genuine political will to resolve the dispute, he said, an expanded military presence and continued hostile measures would only add to the complexity of the situation and disrupt the atmosphere for dialogue. "Iran believes negotiations can yield tangible results only if the other side replaces policies of threat, pressure and imposition with an approach based on confidence-build-

ing and mutual respect," Pezeshkian said, adding that Tehran is only seeking to secure the legitimate rights of its people within established principles of international law and global regulations, and has made no demands beyond that framework. He said Iran remains open to any rational and fair path grounded in mutual respect, and called on Pakistan and other Islamic countries to use their political leverage to steer the United States toward a responsible framework for dialogue free of pressure, threats and imbalanced demands. Sharif, for his part, said a political solution must be reached that preserves Iran's dignity while ensuring a path toward development, stability and prosperity for the Islamic Republic and the wider region. "The current moment is highly time-sensitive, and this opportunity should be used to prevent a return to tensions," he said.

## 'Beyond expectations': IRGC warns of payback scale in case of fresh attack

**International Desk**

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) warned on Saturday that any new act of aggression by the United States or Israel against Iran would trigger a response "beyond the expectations" of its adversaries and at a level of strategic deterrence. The statement came as Western media reported the United States may seek to land forces on some Iranian islands to pressure Tehran into easing restrictions on passage through the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC said it was fully prepared to confront a range of enemy actions, including ground operations, adding that prisoner-of-war camps had even been prepared to hold potential soldiers. Iran has restricted transit through the Strait of Hormuz — the chokepoint through which roughly a fifth of global oil demand passes — since the early days of the US-Israeli assault that began in late February and ended in a ceasefire on April 8. In its statement, the IRGC described control over the strait as part of Iran's definitive strategy against what it called the "global arrogance" camp during the war and beyond, but stressed that Tehran would continue facilitating passage for commercial vessels from all countries



except those linked to the United States, Israel and their affiliates. Separately, Brigadier General Mohammad Jafar Asadi, deputy inspector of Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, said the enemy was seeking to impose what he called coercive dictates on the Strait of Hormuz, but said such efforts would fail. "The Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz are tied to Iran and the neighboring states, and the Americans have no right to dictate terms or even pronounce on this region," Asadi said. He also warned that Iran's armed forces have contingency plans in place to confront any renewed attack, adding that the US military and the Israeli regime would face a heavier blow in the event of further aggression.

## Islamic Republic's security ...

By positioning itself as the "adherent to the agreement," Tehran gains diplomatic leverage, making it harder for international coalitions to re-initiate sanctions or military pressure. This "diplomatic shielding" is an integral part of its security architecture.

### Transition to 'resistance economy'

Security in a ceasefire is inextricably linked to economic resilience. The Islamic Republic strategy dictates that a ceasefire must be used to bypass sanctions and diversify trade routes. From a security perspective, this is "economic hardening." By integrating its economy more deep-

ly with Eurasian powers and regional neighbors during the lull, Iran seeks to make its economy "un-sanctionable." The logic is simple: the more the region's economic stability depends on Iran, the more the regional security environment favors Tehran. A ceasefire, therefore, is a period to build "economic deterrence," where the cost of returning to war includes the disruption of vital regional energy and trade corridors.

### Leadership transition & institution

Given the recent shifts in the highest levels of the Iranian leadership, a ceasefire allows the new leadership to consolidate its grip on the command-and-control structures, ensuring that the transition

does not create a "window of vulnerability" that enemies could exploit. Ultimately, the Islamic Republic of Iran does not see a ceasefire as a move toward the "end of history" or a permanent settlement. Instead, it is a force multiplier. It is a period of "dynamic restraint" where the state builds the capacity for a more potent response in the future. The strategy is to win the "peace" by ensuring that the adversary remains in a state of constant calculation and hesitation. For Tehran, security in a ceasefire is the art of being more prepared for war on the day the ceasefire ends than on the day it began. In this paradigm, the ceasefire is not the end of the struggle, but the refinement of it.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

CARTOON



# Pezeshkian urges swift, coordinated economic action under wartime strain

## Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian convened a special meeting on Sunday with the government's economic team at the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) to review the latest status of monetary and currency management and the provision of the country's vital needs under wartime conditions, state news agency IRNA reported.

The meeting was part of ongoing field and headquarters-level assessments by the government to manage conditions arising from the 40-day war launched by the US and Israel. Pezeshkian, accompanied by a group of economic ministers and senior cabinet officials, assessed monetary, currency, banking and financing indicators, as well as support for production, market regulation and liquidity management.

A preliminary assessment in mid-April put the damage from the US-Israeli attacks at \$270 billion, a figure that could change.

During the session, which focused on

the strategic missions of the CBI and other economic ministries under current conditions, the president received comprehensive reports on banking network performance, reserves and foreign exchange market management, financing of essential goods, payment system stability, credit support for production, management of external trade and safeguarding economic stability.

Pezeshkian emphasized the need for continued coordination among economic bodies and faster operational decision-making in line with the requirements of the special circumstances, according to the report.

The president highlighted the central bank's pivotal role in maintaining psychological and operational stability in the economy amid foreign pressures, stressing prudent liquidity management, protection of the national currency's value, facilitation of foreign currency supply for vital sectors, support for formal trade and activation of alternative financial mechanisms, particularly bilateral monetary agree-

ments in regional and international interactions. He issued directives in each area.

After hearing detailed briefings, the president called for stronger coordination between the central bank, economic ministries and service agencies to prevent any disruption in meeting public needs, sustaining production, continuing healthcare services, ensuring food security, maintaining energy network stability and controlling markets. He issued a set of executive recommendations on resource allocation, prioritizing expenditures, facilitating payments, targeted support for vulnerable groups and accelerating responses to livelihood and production needs.

Pezeshkian commended the performance of economic and service institutions in maintaining relative stability and preventing disruptions to daily life, while calling for continued field management, rapid decision-making, cross-sector coordination and maximum use of national capacities to navigate current conditions.



Masoud Pezeshkian  
IRNA

The president tasked the central bank and other economic bodies with closely monitoring developments, strengthening economic resilience, enhancing support for production, protecting

livelihoods and ensuring uninterrupted provision of essential goods, urging faster and more precise implementation of economic management under special conditions.

## IRENA lambastes aggression on Iran's energy infrastructure



Smoke rises from a site at a power facility in Fashafuyeh, Tehran Province, targeted in a US-Israeli attack on March 2, 2026 that caused a temporary power outage in the city.  
IRNA

## Economy Desk

The head of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) strongly condemned US-Israeli attacks on Iran's energy infrastructure and civilian facilities, calling them a serious violation of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and international law, including the United Nations Charter.

Francesco La Camera, head of the Abu Dhabi-based agency, made the remarks in an official response to Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi, following a letter from the minister detailing damages from hostile attacks on the country's energy infrastructure, Mehr News Agency reported.

In mid-April, Aliabadi, in a letter to the director-general of the IRENA, stated that an attack on a warehouse of small-scale solar equipment on March 8 caused ap-

proximately \$1.2 million in losses and destroyed supplies intended to provide electricity for 3,500 households in deprived rural areas.

Aliabadi condemned attacks on the country's renewable energy facilities and called for urgent international action to protect such infrastructure as part of global efforts to combat climate change, according to the letter to Francesco La Camera.

In his response, La Camera emphasized the importance of protecting critical energy, water and other civilian infrastructure, stating that such facilities are essential for stability, sustainable development and the welfare of communities. Referring to his previous statements on recent regional developments, he called for an immediate ceasefire and the launch of constructive dialogue to achieve lasting peace.

The IRENA chief underscored the agency's continued commitment to supporting all member states in enhancing energy security, strengthening the resilience of energy systems and accelerating the transition to sustainable energy.

The response also referenced a message published by La Camera on April 17, 2026, on the social media platform LinkedIn.

In that post, La Camera strongly condemned attacks on energy infrastructure and civilian facilities, expressing concern over regional developments and attacks against certain countries, including the United Arab Emirates, which hosts the agency. He declared full solidarity with the governments and people of affected countries and offered condolences to the families of victims.

The IRENA director-general reiterated that attacks on critical energy and water infrastructure, in addition to threatening countries' national security, would have widespread consequences for global energy security, system resilience and economic stability. He emphasized the need for an immediate halt to hostilities and a return to dialogue.

## Chamber offers roadmap to rebuild steel sector after attacks

### Industry plans hot-rolled coil supply for this week

## Economy Desk

The Tehran Chamber of Commerce proposed 11 policy measures to repair and reorganize Iran's steel industry following recent US-Israeli attacks, while industry officials said plans are in place to supply hot-rolled steel sheets this week.

According to Mehr news agency, the chamber said in an analytical report that Iran's steel industry, with annual production of about 31.9 million tons and ranking tenth globally, is one of the main pillars of the country's industrial economy. However, it has faced structural challenges in recent years, including imbalances in the value chain, shortages of raw materials, outdated technology, energy and infrastructure constraints, weak exploration, inefficient pricing mechanisms and government intervention.

International sanctions, followed by damage caused by military attacks on production infrastructure, have further intensified such challenges, the report said.

Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) in the central province of Isfahan and Khuzestan Steel Company in southwestern Khuzestan Province were hit multiple times during the American-Israeli war that began on February 28. MSC is working to restore stable production after parts of its lines were damaged during the hostilities.

Despite the damage, the report said global experience shows that core industries can recover and sustain production if supported by data-driven governance, crisis management and process re-engineering. It outlined a multi-layered roadmap covering short-, medium- and long-term measures.



IRNA

The chamber's proposals focus on establishing a centralized crisis management mechanism and targeted steel allocation across the distribution chain, easing trade and temporarily reducing tariffs to secure specialized steel items for downstream industries, and expanding decentralized supply networks by using the capacity of mid-sized units, private rolling mills and induction furnaces.

It also called for providing immediate credit lines and ensuring stable energy access for small and medium-sized producers, reconfiguring transport networks and prioritizing the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure through diversified financing tools, and shifting industrial development from a centralized model to a more distributed network across the country.

Further measures include building strategic reserves of raw materials equivalent to at least one year of production needs, facilitating financing for the reconstruction of damaged units through government support, strengthening private sector participation in mining investment, particularly in exploration, and reorganizing the geographic distribution of steel production with a focus on coastal areas due to water constraints.

The report also emphasized diversifying the energy mix and optimizing consumption to enhance the sector's operational resilience, add-

ing that coordinated implementation of these measures could improve the industry's resilience to future shocks as well as its productivity and competitiveness at national and regional levels.

Meanwhile, Rasoul Khalifeh Soltani, an industry official, said plans have been made to supply Mobarakeh Steel's hot rolled sheets this week. "For the supply of Mobarakeh Steel's hot rolled sheets, planning has been completed for this week," he said.

Khalifeh Soltani, a member of Iran's steel association, called on steel sheet-consuming industries to manage their raw material demand over the next two months, noting that market volatility for the product would be addressed through smart imports.

"With cooperation from the association and Mobarakeh Steel, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade has placed smart and targeted imports of steel slabs and hot rolled sheets on its urgent agenda," he said, according to IRNA. He expressed appreciation for the Ministry's efforts to supply steel sheets needed by downstream industries.

At the meeting of the Tehran Chamber's industry commission, attended by steel association managers, a member of parliament from Mobarakeh, and officials from the Industry Ministry, Trade Promotion Organization, Central Bank and related industry groups, participants reviewed post-war issues including balancing the steel value chain, imports and exports of required products for downstream industries based on tariff priorities, foreign exchange provision, resolving order registration problems and short-term market management using expert proposals from industry bodies.

## Turkey eyes border upgrades to expedite post-war trade with Iran

## Economy Desk

Turkey will upgrade its border infrastructure to accelerate trade with Iran, Economy Minister Omer Bolat said, adding that Ankara expects to rapidly expand commerce with the Islamic Republic in the post-war period.

"We will upgrade Turkey's border infrastructure to speed up trade with the Islamic Republic of Iran, as we believe we will significantly expand trade with Iran after the war," Bolat said at the opening ceremony of the Gurbulak customs gate in Turkey, according to ILNA, citing the Maku Free Zone news outlet.

Iran remains in wartime conditions. Tehran and Washington agreed to a temporary ceasefire on April 8 with Pakistan's mediation after a 40-day war, launched by the US



Omer Bolat  
ILNA

and Israel on February 028. Bolat said Turkey would not limit its connectivity with Iran to road crossings and would also strengthen rail links and air traffic.

He described the Gurbulak crossing as the most important gateway between the two countries, adding that Agri Province and the crossing serve as "Europe's gateway to Asia," and that Turkey would not overlook this capacity.

Referring to efforts launched in 2003 to revive land border crossings, Bolat said Gurbulak is the 19th crossing restored over that period to enhance

economic capacity with neighboring countries.

Turkey's foreign trade has reached \$800 billion, accounting for nearly 50% of the country's economy, highlighting the sector's importance, he said, adding Ankara aims to raise that figure to \$1 trillion by 2030.

Bolat also thanked Iranian officials for their cooperation in developing trade, praising efforts by West Azerbaijan Governor Reza Rahmani to expand commercial exchanges and strengthen constructive ties between the two countries.

According to the report, Rahmani on Friday attended the opening ceremony of the Gurbulak border crossing in Turkey with an accompanying delegation and held multiple meetings with Turkish counterparts.

# UAE's dollar swap threats show how brittle these US alliances can be



By **Elfadil Ibrahim**  
Columnist

## OPINION

The most striking moment in recent talks between United Arab Emirates officials and US Treasury officials in Washington wasn't the Emiratis' suggestion of a currency swap line, but the warning they attached to it.

If the UAE runs out of dollars, Emirati officials reportedly told their American counterparts, it might be forced to use Chinese yuan instead of US dollars for its oil sales and other transactions.

The US dollar's dominance rests, in part, on its near monopoly over oil transactions. And because the vast majority of global oil transactions are settled in dollars, almost every country must hold greenback reserves to buy fuel.

A Persian Gulf ally openly floating the idea of yuan-denominated oil trade is therefore sure to get Washington's attention, and serve as a reminder to the US that alternatives exist.

The specific vehicle the UAE raised was a currency swap line — an arrangement where two central banks agree to exchange currencies at a fixed rate, giving each party access to the other's currency during moments of crises. On Tuesday, President Donald Trump confirmed that this was indeed under consideration.

The UAE pegs its dirham to the US dollar, and to preserve that peg it must maintain stable access to dollars. That access is now coming under pressure due to the economic conditions created by the US-Israeli war on Iran. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz is depriving the UAE of oil revenue, while missiles in Emirati skies have damaged its aviation and tourism industries.

But the numbers, as they stand today, do not support the image of a country in financial distress. The UAE held \$285 billion in foreign reserves at the end of 2025, and its total dollar assets exceed its dollar liabilities by roughly \$1 trillion — one of the strongest net international investment positions in the world.

Moreover, the S&P Global affirmed the country's highest possible short-term credit rating and near perfect long-term rating last month, citing the UAE's "substantial fiscal, economic, external, and policy flexibility". The dirham peg



President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (front) visits the Ministry of Defence in Abu Dhabi, the UAE, on March 3, 2026.

REUTERS



Indeed, the grievance at its root is not economic, but political. UAE officials regularly stress that their country did not ask to be put in this position. A Persian Gulf ally openly floating the idea of yuan-denominated oil trade is therefore sure to get Washington's attention, and serve as a reminder to the US that alternatives exist.

to the dollar has comfortably held, and Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth funds have continued deal making through the war, including a \$2.3 billion dollar transaction in Jordan recently.

In short, this isn't a country that needs to borrow money from Washington. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent noted on Wednesday that swap lines are designed to prevent countries with large dollar holdings from engaging in "disorderly" sales of US assets, a possibility the UAE implicitly raised in making the request.

Indeed, the grievance at its root is not economic, but political. UAE officials regularly stress that their country did not ask to be put in this position. Before American and Israeli bombs started falling on Iran on February 28, Emirati officials were reportedly shuffling between Tehran and Washington, urging restraint. They made explicit assurances that their territory would not be used as a launchpad for attacks on Iran (though there were reports the Emirates were preparing to get into the fight with the US and Israel to help open the Hormuz Strait in early April. They also stood out in that they were the first Persian Gulf state — followed by Bahrain — to have normalized relations with Israel under the 2020 Abraham Accords).

Since Operation Epic Fury began, the UAE has absorbed more Iranian missiles and drones than any other country. Jebel Ali port

has been struck, as has Dubai International Airport. Oil and gas infrastructure has been damaged, and the Strait of Hormuz, through which the UAE ships oil, its primary revenue generator, has been effectively closed, severing its financial lifelines.

The Emiratis are acutely aware that their pledge to invest \$1.4 trillion in the US economy, reaffirmed by its ambassador in Washington at the height of bombardment, is becoming harder to sustain as it simultaneously rebuilds expensive missile defense systems as well as energy and other infrastructure at home.

Given all of this economic pain and the currently remote hope of a resolution between the US and Iran, the UAE is invoking the China card: the threat that it might be forced to use the yuan or other currencies for oil sales.

This threat has a precedent. In 2023, Saudi Arabia began accepting yuan as payment for Chinese oil purchases, a move at the time widely interpreted as being aimed at Washington. The Biden administration responded by increasing diplomatic contact with Saudi Arabia and initiated high-level negotiations on a comprehensive security agreement, including advanced weapons sales and a stronger US defense commitment. Abu Dhabi has watched and learned. But the current maneuver is more about posturing than about the Persian Gulf state undertaking a fundamental, long-term pivot away from the US.

Persian Gulf and UAE sovereign wealth funds remain overwhelmingly oriented towards US and European assets. The UAE hosts a network of US military bases that it has no immediate interests in



A popular beach resort in Dubai, the UAE, is empty of tourists in March 2026 since Iran started retaliating against the launch of American missile from the Persian Gulf country.

AFP

closing. As the Emirati ambassador to the US, Yousef al-Otaiba, put it in his Wall Street Journal op-ed, "We need a conclusive outcome that addresses Iran's full range of threats." This is hardly the tone of a country shopping for a new security patron.

What helps the UAE's posturing is the fact that Abu Dhabi is taking clear steps to boost its investment exposure to China. Crown Prince Khaled's visit to Beijing two weeks ago resulted in dozens of agreements to boost economic and trade ties, including increasing commercial travel between the two countries. The UAE can use this rapprochement to demand better terms in its alliance with Washington. Its manner of doing so doesn't entail dramatic policy reversals or ultimatums, but rather, a steady stream of signals — the currency swap line enquiry, the Beijing visit, an influential Emirati commentator's suggestion that it may be time to close US bases because they are "a burden and not a strategic asset". Beneath the financial asks and diplomatic theater, the UAE's requests are fairly concrete. It wants Washington to acknowledge (and be prepared to help with) the economic damage its war has inflicted on a country that was not party to its decision to go to war on its much larger neighbor. It also wants to be consulted on and have a say in the terms of any deal with Iran, particularly as it relates to the Strait of Hormuz.

As al-Hashimy, the senior Emirati official, explained on ABC News, any deal with Iran "has to be a good deal" that brings lasting peace. This means addressing Iran's "weaponization" of the Strait and its backed regional groups as well as its nuclear, missile and drone programs, she said.

In other words, a deal where the Trump administration simply cuts loose and walks away from the Iran quagmire — leaving behind a battered but more hardline Islamic Republic with its military infrastructure intact — is no deal at all from Abu Dhabi's perspective.

The UAE understands it possesses immense leverage to renegotiate the terms of its alliance with its senior partner. The swap line conversation is therefore not a plea for help, but a reminder that the UAE has options — and the means to use them.

The article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.

## Iran war a stress test for Persian Gulf states

By **Frederic Wehrey and Charles H. Johnson**

Fellows at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

## OPINION

The US-Israeli war on Iran has had dire security and economic consequences for the Arab states of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Iranian missiles and drones struck airports, hotels, and energy infrastructure across the region, triggering the largest oil supply shock in the history of global

energy markets and a near-total collapse of aviation and tourism. Threats directed at desalination plants have raised fears of a humanitarian emergency. Threats to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz have disrupted over 70 percent of the region's food imports. Externally, the war has prompted questions about the risks and costs of the region's reliance on American security guarantees and bases.

Beyond these effects, the Iran war is a stress test for domestic governance and social cohesion inside Persian Gulf states, surfacing and sharpening pre-

existing fissures and vulnerabilities while introducing new pressures. Among the more prominent of these dynamics are a worsening crackdown on freedom of expression and increased securitization more broadly; a rise in sectarian tensions and internal scapegoating; and the imperilment of the Persian Gulf's migrant labor communities, upon which much of the region's prosperity relies. None of these shocks pose a serious challenge to stability or the survival of the region's monarchies — Persian Gulf regimes are hardly brittle and have

weathered such shocks in the past. But they are still important in revealing shortcomings of the reigning model of strict authoritarianism paired with economic growth, and the gap between those who have benefited from its success and those on its peripheries and margins.

### Securitization

Among these aftershocks, none is more revealing than the wave of arrests for filming and sharing footage of missile strikes and bomb damage, often prosecuted under charges such as "spreading false news and

harming the country's national interest". Regardless of the pretext, the crackdowns should be seen less as a show of strength than as a symptom of weakness: Rulers who have spent decades cultivating an image of stable modernity are now criminalizing the act of shattering that image. More broadly, the arrests expose the fragility of what passes for a social contract in the Persian Gulf — a bargain of acquiescence in exchange for prosperity and security. And as with autocrats everywhere, the danger is that this suppression, occasioned by the pressures of

an active war, could outlast the conflict itself, worsening already dismal track records on freedom of expression.

Across the Persian Gulf, the varying intensity of repression reflects a mix of factors, including the distinct political cultures of each state, the degree of damage they have suffered, and the nature of their relations with the United States and Israel. Those most supportive of the war have had the strongest incentives to suppress its blowback at home. Less tangibly, public opinion plays a part in the perceived depth of pro-Iranian sympathy



A person stands next to a motorcycle as smoke rises in the Fujairah oil industry zone, the UAE, on March 3, 2026, amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran.  
● AMR ALFIKY/REUTERS

among their own citizens. The United Arab Emirates has launched one of the more aggressive Persian Gulf state crackdowns. As of early April, security services in Abu Dhabi alone had reportedly made 375 arrests for filming damage from strikes or “publishing misleading information.” According to the attorney general, the arrests — which swept up people of various nationalities — fell into three expansive categories: publishing authentic but sensitive video clips, fabricating visual content, and “glorifying a hostile state and its political and military leadership.” The deeper subtext concerns Abu Dhabi’s acute sensitivity to any damage to the country’s carefully curated image as an enclave of stability and prosperity and to the nationalism it has worked hard to cultivate among citizens. Protecting both, in the regime’s calculus, requires a firm grip over the informational space, making the “media battle,” as one Emirati official put it at a recent GCC meeting, “no less important than the battle of arms.”

Equally aggressive, if not more so, is Qatar, which attempted to steer a neutral course in the early stages of the war but has hardened its posture as the conflict has dragged on, particularly as Iranian retaliation has inflicted mounting damage on its natural gas infrastructure. As of early March, 313 people had been arrested “for filming and circulating unauthorized video clips, spreading misleading information and rumours, and disseminating content intended to incite public concern,” according to the Qatar News Agency.

### Sectarianism

Nowhere is the risk of sectarianism more apparent than in Bahrain, where Shia citizens constitute an estimated majority of the population and have long been marginalized from political and economic power under the ruling Sunni monarchy. The longstanding divide shaped the 2011 uprising and crackdown as well as the marches and protests that erupted at the beginning of the war.

Most were peaceful, but scattered reports of violence have emerged, and arrests following the outbreak of war have since taken on a sectarian hue. This crackdown has moved on two fronts: Security forces reportedly detained 60 to 65 protesters, the majority from Shia neighborhoods, while authorities separately arrested more than 50 individuals for sharing videos and social media posts,

charging them in exceptionally harsh terms with “betrayal of the nation” and, in a few instances, requesting the death penalty. According to a separate nongovernmental source, more than 160 people — including two prominent artists — have been arrested as of mid-March for alleged sympathy for Iran or similar charges. And at least one person detained in connection with the war has died in police custody: a 32-year-old Shia man who had been previously imprisoned and whose body bore signs of torture and blunt force trauma.

In tandem with this crackdown, the Bahraini regime and its supporters have mounted a robust informational campaign with a heavy-handed insistence on national unity. The government-controlled Bahrain News Agency, for example, has published stories with headlines such as “Bahraini families, institutions express solidarity amid Iranian attacks” and “National Guard Commander highlights Bahrain’s security, national unity.”

Hints of sectarianism have also surfaced in Kuwait, which has a sizable Shia minority and has historically faced periods of political strife along Sunni-Shia lines, though not typically to the same degree or as consistently as in Bahrain. Most notably, Kuwait announced in mid-March the arrest of 14 Kuwaiti citizens and two Lebanese nationals in two separate raids, both allegedly linked to the Iran-backed Shia group Hezbollah. While Hezbollah has denied the claim and no attacks resulted from supposed plots, the arrests raise concerning parallels

to the country’s most recent spate of violent sectarianism: in 2015, Kuwait was rocked by a Daesh (Islamic State) attack on a Shia mosque in Kuwait City that killed 27 worshippers, followed by the arrest of 26 Shia suspects with alleged links to Hezbollah. Regardless of a genuine connection between the most recent arrests and Hezbollah, even the appearance of Shia disloyalty at a time of heightened security concerns could threaten the delicate relationship the monarchy has developed with Kuwait’s Shia minority community.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia has portrayed itself as largely immune from sectarian tensions, despite the government’s historically tenuous relationship with the kingdom’s Shia minority community — a focal point of the country’s Arab Spring demonstrations. Staunch regime supporters have pointed to Saudi national unity as the reason behind this relative tranquility, while others indicate a general fatigue with the tired narratives of sectarian divide. The monarchy’s attempt to foster a relatively moderate variant of Salafism while also promoting a Saudi nationalism that is more inclusive of religious — and other — minorities may offer a partial explanation for the absence of sect-based polarization. But without real transparency and independence in the Saudi media landscape, measuring the extent and impact of the reforms is difficult.

### Migrant vulnerability

A quieter but no less important aftershock of the war concerns



Hundreds of mourners gather at the funeral of Mohamed al-Mosawi in Muharraq, Bahrain, on March 27, 2026. Mosawi's corpse had bruises and marks all across the face and body, inciting the allegations of torture in the hands of Bahraini authorities.  
● MIDDLE EAST EYE

the disparity between the Persian Gulf’s wealthy citizens and residents and its low-income migrant workers. Migrants account for just over half of the GCC countries’ overall population, according to 2024 World Bank estimates. After three weeks of strikes from Iran, at least 23 civilians have died in Persian Gulf countries, 21 of whom were noncitizens. Further reporting also indicates that the migrant populations may be disproportionately suffering injuries as well, though GCC states have not been releasing comprehensive data on injured persons’ nationalities.

South Asian migrants constitute well over half of the Persian Gulf’s migrant workforce. These workers move from India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh for the Persian Gulf’s coveted jobs and the opportunity to send money back to family in their home countries. (India alone receives \$125 billion annually from these remittances.) Still, these numbers do not fully account for the distribution of civilian deaths.

The discrepancy is better explained through the vulnerabilities born of the kafala system, a catchall for practices pertaining to sponsored migrant labor, from foreign consultants to construction workers. Experiences under these systems vary dramatically by sector and country, but systemic abuses generally derive from employers’ extensive control over migrant mobility, often leading to unfair pay, unacceptable housing, unsafe working conditions, and unaccountable subcontracting. Moreover, many of these jobs, such as sanitation, construction, and de-

livery services, are impossible to do remotely. As a result, Iranian attacks pose a disproportionate threat to much of the Persian Gulf’s migrant population, with strikes killing workers at residential sites and in delivery vehicles.

Despite the glaring shortcomings of the kafala system and the war’s uneven impact on these communities, the region threatens to only further exacerbate this existing divide. Even prior to the war, Kuwait recently instated a new law requiring private-sector workers to obtain exit permits from employers. Qatar’s Shura Council had considered doing the same, which would undo reforms responding to international criticism over migrant labor practices preceding the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Continuing with these rollbacks may pose too great a reputational risk at a time of increased scrutiny over the region’s stability from the Persian Gulf’s economic partners. Still, as GCC governments crack down in the name of national security — with migrants occasionally caught in the crosshairs — while the war’s economic ramifications apply pressure to regional regimes, the pretext and incentive to revisit recent reforms to this lucrative system may prove too tempting to resist.

### Postwar risks

These three governance challenges and social fissures are not new in the Persian Gulf but have been thrown into sharper relief by the Iran war. Of them, securitization and the crackdown on freedom of expression are the most worrisome for the region’s long-term prospects. To be sure, authoritarian retrenchment and consolidation have been features of the post-Arab Spring period, but the new wave of arrests connected to the war threatens to entirely eliminate recent modest gains. Alarming, the arrests are targeting not just ordinary citizens and expatriates sharing images or videos but accredited journalists reporting on the war: Both Qatar and Kuwait, among the more tolerant of the Persian Gulf monarchies, have detained journalists amid a broader environment of arbitrary reprisal for coverage of Persian Gulf security. The resulting lack of transparency could create a vicious cycle in which the war’s full effects, especially on vulnerable

communities, are cloaked from scrutiny by the region’s own citizens and the outside world alike. In Bahrain — the Persian Gulf’s most at-risk state in terms of social cleavages — the absence of news coverage in the war’s early days spawned unverified rumors of violent protests and regional intervention. The opacity continued weeks later in the apparent cover-up of the Shia detainee’s death in custody. Yet, in an encouraging development, the Bahraini entity charged with investigating police abuses arrested and charged the intelligence officer involved, apparently in response to online outrage and pushback. Undercutting the development, however, the monarchy announced on April 19 that it would be reviewing citizenship entitlements for “those who have betrayed the nation”. Beyond sectarianism, wealth disparities and economic marginalization are other fissures the Iran war has sharpened. The prewar kafala reforms, undertaken largely to blunt international criticism, never delivered the security and prosperity that drew migrants to the region, and the war has only widened the gap. While some commentators from the region have celebrated the retention of foreign workers while reporting a lack of tension between citizens and migrants, systemic barriers remain for migrants seeking to relocate, and any rollbacks on migrant protections could further jeopardize regional labor while deterring future expatriates at every economic level.

Even as this war has exposed flaws in governance and economic organization across the Persian Gulf, these trends do not pose a serious risk to national viability — even in states like Bahrain facing inordinate social strife. If anything, the stress tests reveal an opportunity. As regime impulses lurch toward tighter control — whether over perceived security threats or economic downturns — zealotry may prove self-defeating. Draconian measures to monitor and silence disaffected publics risk backlash down the line, and continued failures to protect migrant workers could undermine a vital engine of the region’s economies. Persian Gulf monarchies would do well, then, to accelerate rather than pause their ongoing reforms, fostering greater resilience, inclusivity, and unity.



Migrant workers in their sleeping quarters in the United Arab Emirates  
● GHAITH ABDUL AHAD/GETTY IMAGES

The article was first published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

# Asian Beach Games: Iran off the mark as Ajami wins shot put gold

## Sports Desk

Hassan Ajami claimed the first medal for Iran at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, grabbing gold in the men's shot put event on Sunday.

The 27-year-old Iranian saved his best for last on Phoenix Island, registering a personal-best 20.17m with his sixth and final attempt to secure the top prize. China's Chen Chengyu settled for silver with 19.95m, while his compatriot Zhang Haochen took bronze with 19.69m. Mehran Khorand was the other Iranian in the men's shot put final but missed out on the podium, finishing fifth with a best effort of 17.63m.

## Dominant duos

There was further success for the country on the sixth day of the multi-sport event as both Iranian pairs advanced to the men's beach volleyball quarterfinals. The team of Alireza Aqajani and Abbas Pourasgari continued its emphatic run with a straight-sets victory over Japan's Kosuke

Fukushima and Nassim Malki. The Iranian pair won the first set 21-15 before closing out with a 21-17 win in the second – a fifth successive victory for the duo, which is yet to drop a set in Sanya.

Standing between the two Iranians and a last-four place today will be Oman's Mazin Al Hashimi and Hood Rashid Al Jalaboubi, who defeated Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Yakovlev and Abdulmajid Mokhammad 2-0 (21-15, 21-19) later on Sunday to progress. Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenovi, meanwhile, secured the country's second last-eight spot later, thanks to a 2-0 win (21-18, 21-15) against China's Wang Yanwei and Wu Jiabin.

Elsewhere, the Iranian men's beach handball team secured back-to-back victories on Sunday to maintain its perfect run at the Games. Iran began the day with a 2-0 win against Hong Kong – winning the first period 13-8, followed by a 20-6 triumph in the second – and then defeated Bahrain 18-16 in both periods to sit firmly atop Group A with four

victories ahead of today's final group game against China.

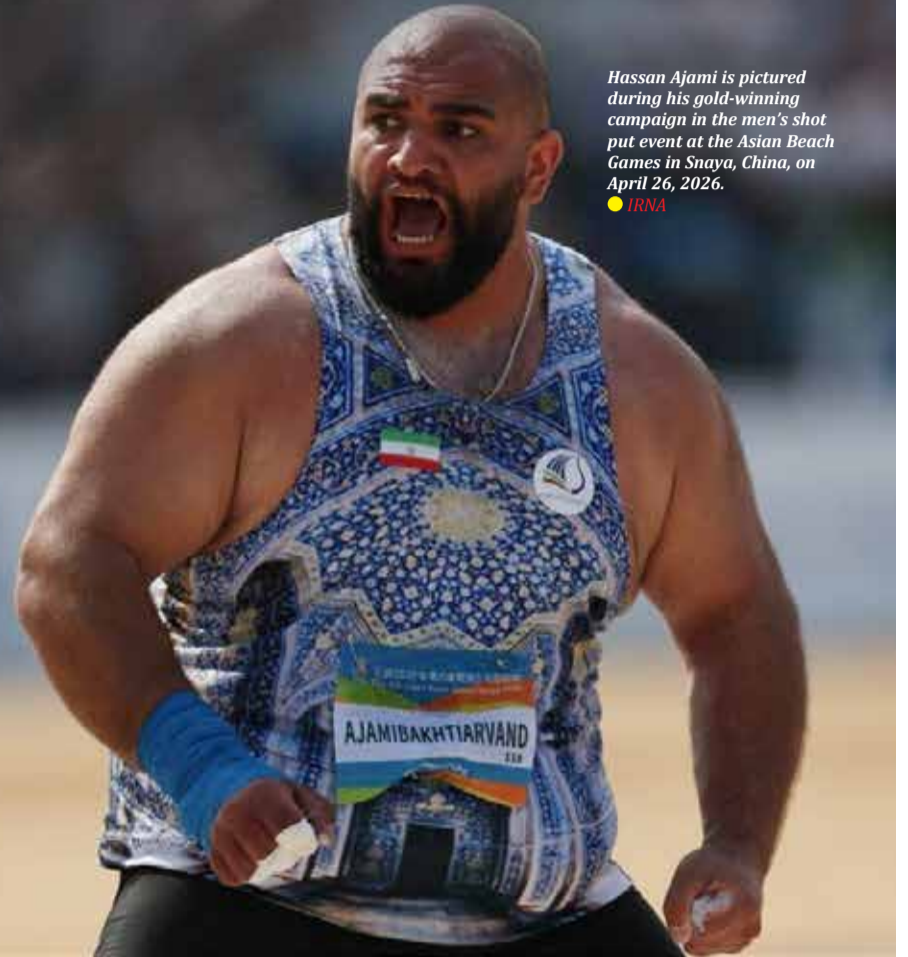
In beach soccer, late drama saw Iran defeat Saudi Arabia 2-1 to clinch a semifinal spot as Group A winner. After a goalless scoreline in the first two periods, Ali Mirshekari broke the deadlock for Iran in the 25th minute, only to see his goal canceled out seconds later by Ahmed Alhamami. However, Reza Dayeri's 27th-minute winner secured a third victory in Sanya for Ali Naderi's men, who had earlier beaten the United Arab Emirates (5-2) and Thailand (13-1).

The Iranian kabaddi team, meanwhile, advanced to the men's final after a victory over Sri Lanka. Having beaten Syria 53-31 to finish top of Group A earlier on Sunday, Iran overcame the South Asian opponent 42-29 to set up a final date with India today.

In men's water polo, Iran beat South Korea in straight sets (4-3, 3-2, 5-2) to secure its second victory of the round-robin competition, following a 3-1 win against Hong Kong the previous day.

Hassan Ajami is pictured during his gold-winning campaign in the men's shot put event at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, on April 26, 2026.

● IRNA



## Tough road ahead for Mirzazadeh as Kayaalp rivalry looms large



## Sports Desk

Iran's Greco-Roman sensation Amin Mirzazadeh will face a daunting task to defend his superheavyweight title at the Wrestling World Championships, with an anticipated rivalry with Rıza Kayaalp is set to resume in October's showpiece.

Few expected Turkish great Kayaalp – winner of a remarkable 13 world and Olympic medals – to make an emphatic return to action, after serving an 18-month doping ban, at the European Championships in Tirana last week.

However, the 36-year-old outclassed Hungarian world silver medalist Dárisz Vitek 7-1 to cap off his campaign with the 13th continental gold of his illustrious career, overtaking legendary Russian Aleksandr Karelin as the most decorated wrestler in the history of the competition.

Should two-time world champion Mirzazadeh – bronze medalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics – and Kayaalp go head-to-head at the

world event again, it will mark a fourth 130kg showdown between the two in five years, with the Turkish holding a 2-1 lead in the previous meeting.

Their first major encounter was in the bronze medal match at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, which Kayaalp won 7-2 to add the third Olympic medal to his personal haul. They met again in the final of the 2022 World Championships, where the Turkish wrestler once again got the better of his Iranian opponent, winning on criteria (1-1). Mirzazadeh, however, turned the tables at the 2023 World Championships. In a closely contested 130kg final, Mirzazadeh rallied from behind late in the bout to make it 2-2 and secure a criteria victory.

As the 2026 World Championships approach, a potential rematch between the two heavyweights looms larger than ever. Yet Mirzazadeh's journey to that contest – and to repeating past successes – remains complex and arduous as he must first overcome young compatriot Fardin Hedayati in the

domestic trials before navigating a field of formidable international opponents, including Kayaalp.

Reigning two-time world under-23 champion Hedayati made his senior international breakthrough in style at the 2024 Ranking Series event in Budapest. The Iranian prodigy, who outmuscled Kayaalp in the quarterfinals before defeating Georgian Olympic silver winner Iakobi Kajaia in the final showpiece, will have every reason to fancy his chances of going all the way on a potential debut at the Senior Worlds.

With two world titles and an Olympic bronze already to his name, Mirzazadeh is determined to continue his winning trajectory, though the scale of the task ahead looks much greater this time around.



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Amin Mirzazadeh (l) is seen in action against Türkiye's Rıza Kayaalp in the 130kg final at the 2023 World Championships in Belgrade.

● UWW

## Iran's Taremi among '48 players to watch' at World Cup

## Sports Desk

Iranian international striker Mahdi Taremi has been named among the 48 players to watch at the upcoming FIFA World Cup – co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada – by Fox Sports.

"Taremi stands out for Team Melli. The talented striker is Iran's captain and best player, having played across several prominent European teams. A key factor for Greek power Olympiacos, Taremi was a UEFA Champions League runner-up with Inter Milan last season," the American website wrote of the Iranian, who

bagged 94 goals and 65 assists in a combined 225 appearances with Porto and Inter before joining Olympiacos last summer.

Having made 20 appearances in the current Greek Super League season, the Olympiacos forward has recorded 10 goals and two assists, while also winning four penalties. Additionally, he has netted three goals in the domestic cup, one in the Super Cup, and two in the UEFA Champions League.

However, on his return from international duty in March – where he was on the score-sheet during a 2-1 friendly defeat against Nigeria before

finding the net twice in a 5-0 win over Costa Rica – the Iranian talisman has struggled for game time with his club.

He was substituted during a 1-0 loss to archrival AEK Athens in the league and was then left on the bench for the entire match in a 2-0 win against Panathinaikos last time out.

Unhappy with the situation, and frustrated by its repetition several times throughout the season, the Iranian star may now be considering a departure after only one season with the club, according to reports in the Greek media. A decent performance in the World Cup could bolster his case for an-

other high-profile transfer in the summer.

Iran will kick off its Group G campaign in the United States against New Zealand at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, on June 15, before facing European heavyweight Belgium at the same venue six days later.

The team will then travel to Seattle, Washington, to face Egypt in its final group game at Lumen Field on June 26.

With eight third-placed teams across the 12 groups advancing to the round of 32, Iran will fancy its chances of securing its first-ever knockout spot at the seventh attempt.



● olympiacos.org

# Doidoukh carpet secures GI recognition through WIPO

## Iranica Desk

The handwoven carpet of Doidoukh village in Iran's North Khorasan Province has been granted geographical indication (GI) recognition through the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), marking a significant step in protecting this traditional craft and strengthening its position in international markets, a provincial official said.

Mehdi Keramati, director general of Industry, Mine and Trade in North Khorasan, said the achievement came after sustained follow-up efforts and coordination between the National Carpet Center of Iran, the Industrial Property Office, and the provincial Department of Industry, Mine and Trade, according to chn.ir.

He noted that the Doidoukh handwoven carpet, which had previously been listed on Iran's national heritage register, will now be recognized among member states of the Lisbon Agreement as an artistic product with a clearly defined regional identity.

Keramati described the international GI recognition of the Doidoukh carpet as a turning point in the history of the province's carpet industry, saying it could pave the way for broader international support for the region's distinctive patterns and designs.

He added that this achieve-



● tabnak.ir



● IRNA

ment will play an important role in enhancing the status of the province's carpets at both national and international levels while creating greater motivation for those active in the sector.

Keramati emphasized that the international registration of geographical indications is one of the most important legal tools for protecting cultural heritage and indigenous brands worldwide. He expressed hope that the move would contribute to economic growth and the expansion of export markets for Doidoukh handwoven carpets.

Doidoukh village is regarded as

the birthplace of one of Iran's finest carpet-weaving traditions, with its rugs renowned across Asia and Europe. The craftsmanship of local women weavers has long carried the fame of the region beyond Iran's borders, producing carpets woven on traditional wooden looms and exported to homes abroad.

The double-faced, pure silk handwoven carpet of Doidoukh is considered one of the world's unique carpets, mainly produced in Raz and Jargalan Town of North Khorasan Province, with the largest share of production concentrated in Doidoukh village.

North Khorasan is home to around 26,500 active carpet weavers, of whom about 800 are based in Raz and Jargalan Town, while nearly 500 artisans are specifically engaged in weaving the double-faced silk Doidoukh carpet.

The province's monthly carpet production is estimated at around 5,000 square meters, generating significant economic value.

As its name suggests, the Doidoukh double-faced silk carpet is a high-quality handmade product distinguished by its rare feature of being woven on both sides, unlike conventional carpets. It is made entirely from

natural silk fibers, and due to these two main characteristics, it holds exceptionally high value and has even been registered internationally as a geographical indication.

When speaking of the finest double-faced silk carpets, the first place that comes to mind is Doidoukh village in the town of Raz and Jargalan. The village lies at the zero-border point between North Khorasan Province and Turkmenistan, where residents have been engaged in this craft for generations and have passed down their weaving skills and techniques from one generation to the next.

Although other areas in Raz

and Jargalan also produce double-faced silk carpets, Doidoukh village remains the main center of this craft, a fact clearly reflected in production statistics.

In Doidoukh village, where the population is predominantly Turkmen, many residents earn their livelihood through weaving these silk carpets. Due to their high quality and popularity, much of the annual production is pre-sold in advance. Foreign tourists visiting North Khorasan also frequently travel to Doidoukh village to observe the weaving process and purchase carpets directly from local artisans.

## Iranica Desk

The Bagh-e Gilas (Cherry Garden) Ecologne in Negarman village, near Shahroud in Semnan Province, has been officially recognized as Iran's first purpose-built ecolodge, according to the head of Shahroud's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department.

Citing an announcement by the secretary of the National Committee for Ecotourism and Green Tourism, Seyyed Mohammad Sadeq Razavian said the lodge was constructed in the early 2000s in Negarman village, IRNA wrote.

Based on official inquiries and system reviews, the complex has been identified as the country's first ecolodge that was designed and built from the ground up, rather than being created



● IRNA

through the conversion of an older building or the repurposing of an existing structure. He added that the Bagh-e Gilas

Ecologne operates on the slopes of Mount Shahvar, one of the prominent natural landmarks of the region.

## Negarman village home to Iran's first purpose-built ecolodge

Razavian noted that the presence of the country's first purpose-built ecolodge in Negarman provides an important opportunity to further promote the tourism potential of Shahroud and Semnan Province. The village is located in the Bastam district, around 20 kilometers north of Shahroud, and is regarded as one of the leading ecotourism destinations in the eastern part of the province.

He said Negarman is known for its exceptional natural attractions, where springs and water-

falls in a predominantly desert climate create a distinctive landscape that brings together mountain and desert scenery. Multiple waterfalls and springs, the Negarman River, and attractions such as the Zereshk Train and the Haft-Rang Farahzad Spring have helped turn the area into a popular destination for nature enthusiasts and travelers seeking unique landscapes, he added.

Razavian emphasized that expanding ecolodges across Semnan Province — particularly in promising areas such

as Shahroud and Bastam — not only creates sustainable employment opportunities, but also helps preserve local identity, revive traditional architecture, and strengthen the local economy.

He described the ecolodge as a successful example of private-sector participation in sustainable tourism, adding that it has effectively utilized the natural and cultural capacities of Negarman through a responsible tourism model while showcasing the village's environmental and cultural heritage.

## Ilam in bloom after rains

### Iranica Desk

Spring has long been one of the most beautiful seasons in Iran's western province of Ilam, where mountains and plains are traditionally covered with dense pasture vegetation and trees turn green with the arrival of warmer weather. Forests of wild almond, oak and ash trees spread across the highlands, providing shade and sustaining local communities.

This year, however, the province's natural beauty has been amplified by abundant rainfall. Seasonal rivers that had run dry are flowing again, while previously dried-up springs have returned, transforming many parts

of the province into scenic destinations, ISNA wrote.

The renewed flow of seasonal springs, the revival of temporary rivers, the increased volume of permanent waterways, and the lush forests of Abdanan are among the natural attractions drawing attention across Ilam this season.

Visitors do not need to travel far to experience the province's landscapes, as scenic areas can be found throughout Ilam. Those staying in the provincial capital can travel to villages such as Mile Siah and Chogha Kabud in Chavar, or head to villages in the Sivan district. In the village of Meydan, travelers can pass through orchards and

relax along the Mishkhas River while enjoying the surrounding scenery.

Every year, many residents spend the Nowruz holidays camping in nature and remaining outdoors throughout the vacation period. This year, due to the favorable weather and abundant rainfall, some visitors have reportedly extended their stays beyond the holidays to continue enjoying the landscapes.

Farzad Sharifi, director-general of Ilam Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said the month of Ordibehesht (late April to late May) marks the peak of the tourism season in the province. "During this period in Ilam is a



● IRNA

paradise for tourism," Sharifi said. "Visitors who come to the province's natural areas can fully enjoy its beauty." He added that this year's rainfall had brought a form of revival to

the province's landscapes. "Previously dry springs are flowing again, seasonal rivers have water, and nature's beauty is visible everywhere," he said. He also said that in the current



● safarmarket.com

season, nearly all areas of Ilam are suitable for tourism, adding that visitors can travel to different villages and stay in eco-lodges and local accommodations while exploring the province.

# Minister: Iran to reshape cultural governance through reform, structural upgrade

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri on Sunday stressed the need to reinforce transformation-driven approaches, update institutional structures and better leverage human capital to improve performance in the new year, as the ministry advances a broad reform agenda, according to remarks carried by state media.

Speaking at a meeting with senior officials from the ministry's development and resources division, he said the roadmap for the year ahead centers on agile governance, coordinated management and more efficient service delivery across heritage, tourism and handicrafts.

Salehi-Amiri praised staff for sustaining operations through a "challenging" year, citing cohe-

sion, expertise and institutional capacity as key factors enabling the ministry to fulfill its mandates. He said the reform push focuses on streamlining procedures, modernizing frameworks and aligning structures with evolving needs to boost productivity. Plans are also in place to strengthen technical infrastructure, standardize processes and sharpen planning to improve execution and service quality.

### Multi-tier platform to project nat'l identity

Separately, the minister on Saturday outlined a cultural policy reset anchored in an "Iran-centric" approach, describing it as the backbone of artistic and cultural programming. He said the ministry is drafting a multi-layered platform to amplify national narratives across film, performing arts and public



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri (c) on April 26, 2026 speaks at a meeting with senior officials from the ministry's development and resources department. ● CHTN

cultural spaces, with coordinated outreach at both domestic and international levels. The strategy will mobilize cultural, artistic and media capacities to present a cohesive national narrative, backed by integrated planning and cross-sector coordination. He highlighted "consensus" as a key policy driver to strengthen social cohesion and institutional alignment. Salehi-Amiri stressed the role of human capital, calling it the ministry's "primary asset," and said programs are being designed to upgrade skills, boost motivation and ensure more effective use of



expertise. The participants also reviewed plans to expand cultural diploma-

cy, including joint initiatives with countries marking Nowruz and engagement with international

organizations to deepen cooperation in cultural and tourism sectors.

# Iqbal's school can dynamize global peace dialogue

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Labour Minister Ahmad Meydari said on Sunday that the thought of Muhammad Iqbal can help "shape" a global dialogue toward lasting peace, as Iranian and Pakistani scholars gathered in Tehran to revisit the philosopher's legacy.

Meydari told reporters on the sidelines of a forum on East-West interaction in Iqbal's work that Iran and Pakistan, drawing on shared cultural and intellectual ties, could convene broader exchanges among world thinkers to seek durable peace, IRNA reported.

He framed conflict as rooted not only in politics and security but also in deeper cultural and philosophical imbalances, echoing Iqbal's view that wars stem from humanity's neglect of spirituality and the breakdown of balance between reason and emotion. He added that cultural affinities can underpin economic cooperation, saying his ministry is expanding contacts with ambassadors and business actors



Iran's Labour Minister Ahmad Meydari (4th L) attends a forum on East-West interaction in Iqbal's work in Tehran on April 26, 2026. ● ILNA

to boost exchanges, while expressing hope for stability and peace in the region.

At the same event, Hassan Fartoosi, secretary-general of Iran's National Commission for UNESCO, described Iqbal as a bridge between civilizations, blending "Western reason" with "Eastern love."

He warned that science without ethics could turn into a "cold knife," stressing that material progress must be pursued alongside moral responsibility and human dignity. Such an approach, he said, enables countries to engage constructively with the world and secure a role in international institutions beyond conventional economic indicators.

Ahmad Masjed Jamei, deputy head of the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, said Iqbal's thinking was shaped by Persian culture, socialist ideas and debates over legitimacy, adding that his writings addressed democracy, economic life and women's rights while remaining grounded in tradition. He noted Iqbal's deliberate use of Persian as a cultural choice that distanced his work from colonial influence and reinforced a shared civilizational sphere linking Iran with South Asia. Masjed Jamei added that historical exchanges between Iran and the Indian subcontinent run deep and called for wider publication of Iqbal's works in Iran, describing them as relevant to contemporary intellectual and social debates.

# Iran's profile rises in China, boosting tourism potential

## Arts & Culture Desk

Chinese public interest in Iran has climbed sharply in the wake of recent regional developments, with Iran trending across Chinese media and social platforms, drawing widespread curiosity about the country's history, culture and tourism potential, Iranian tourism activist Hossein Khalifi said in remarks published by ISNA.

Khalifi, an Iran-based tourism promoter living in Shanghai, said recent events have reshaped how many ordinary Chinese perceive Iran, turning what was once a vague or mistaken understanding into what he described as "deep empathy" and growing cultural fascination.

"In past years, many ordinary Chinese did not clearly distinguish between Iran and Iraq," Khalifi wrote in an article titled "Iran in China's New View: From Vague Similarity to Deep Empathy." "But



recent developments have brought Iran's name into Chinese media more than ever before."

That heightened exposure has translated into strong online engagement. A short tourism video showcasing Iran's attractions on Douyin drew more than 1mn views in less than 24 hours, Khalifi said, alongside over 8,000 comments, with more than 99% described as positive and supportive.

The surge in attention appears to be spilling beyond social media. Khalifi cited reports of grassroots donations in China for the Iranian people, including one case in which a Chinese laborer in Shanghai reportedly donated

20,000 yuan, nearly \$3,000 and roughly equivalent to three months of wages, to the Iranian consulate.

Such gestures show what Khalifi called an emerging "emotional bond" between the two nations, one that could pave the way for stronger people-to-people ties and broader cultural exchanges.

He said many Chinese citizens are now seeking more information about Iran's geography, history and traditions, with some expressing interest in traveling to the country, potentially opening new opportunities for Iran's tourism sector.

Khalifi also pointed to a rise in Chinese media and artistic productions centered on Iran, including animated content reflecting public engagement with regional developments. The changing perception, he said, presents an opportunity to deepen cultural, social and even economic ties between Iran and China.

# Over 11,000 sports trademarks registered as IP drive expands national innovation efforts



Participants attend a World Intellectual Property Day ceremony in Tehran on April 26, 2026. ● IRNA

## Social Desk

Iran has registered 248 sports-related inventions, 136 industrial

designs and more than 11,180 athletic trademarks, the head of the country's Intellectual Property Center said on Saturday at a

World Intellectual Property Day ceremony in Tehran, highlighting robust innovation capacity in the sector.

The April 26 event, held in line with the 2026 global theme linking intellectual property to sports, underscored the role of legal protection in advancing innovation, competitiveness and knowledge-based growth across health and athletics industries, IRNA reported.

Hassan Babaei, head of the State Organization for Registration of Deeds and Properties, said Iran's IP authority has expanded its footprint in recent years under national legislation, reporting 10,996 domestic patent filings and

188 international patent registrations in the past year. He added that 26,140 domestic trademarks were registered alongside 5,448 industrial design filings, signaling steady activity across key IP segments.

"Iran is consistently recognized among leading countries in intellectual property," Babaei said, noting accession to 11 international conventions, including the Strasbourg Agreement on patents. He said further alignment with global frameworks remains on the agenda.

Babaei called for streamlining procedures to narrow the gap between patent applications and final approvals, describing it as a

"critical" bottleneck. He also urged innovators to leverage trademarks and industrial designs alongside patents to accelerate commercialization and job creation.

Siamak Eslami, head of the Intellectual Property Center, said intangible assets now account for a rising share of global output, citing estimates that IP-linked assets exceed 11% of global GDP, or about \$7.6 trillion. He stressed that legal protection transforms ideas into economic value, but "registration alone is not enough." Iran ranks second globally in trademark registrations and 14th in patents and industrial designs on a per capita basis, Eslami said, adding that a new industrial prop-

erty law adopted in 2024 is set for full implementation in 2027 to ease procedures and strengthen commercialization pathways.

Fariba Mohammadi, head of the Research Institute of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, said global sports-related inventions grew by 7.6% in 2025, outpacing overall invention growth of about 4%. She noted that while Iran's innovation has focused largely on physical equipment, future gains hinge on data-driven technologies, smart systems and advanced materials.

The ceremony also honored inventors, including teenagers aged 13 to 18, for contributions to sports innovation.