

Attacks on cultural sites reveal 'destructive' assault on nations' identity: *Pezeshkian*

Arts & Culture Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian visited Tehran's Sa'adabad Cultural-Historical Complex in Tehran on Friday to inspect sections damaged during the recent conflict involving the United States and Israel, saying attacks on cultural and historical sites violate international norms and expose "a destructive approach" toward the civilizational identity of nations. Touring the sprawling palace complex in northern Tehran, Pezeshkian received briefings on the scale of destruction, particularly at the Republic Building, a diplomatic venue that has hosted high-level bilateral meetings,

treaty signings, joint political and economic sessions, and press conferences involving foreign dignitaries over recent years, president. ir reported.

The president said safeguarding Iran's historical and cultural heritage remained a national priority and stressed that damage inflicted on heritage sites must be documented and legally pursued through international mechanisms. He ordered restoration and reconstruction work to begin immediately, calling for specialized technical teams to carry out repairs with "precision and quality." Officials accompanying the visit outlined the impact of



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (3rd L) visits Sa'adabad Cultural-Historical Complex in Tehran on May 8, 2026.

● president.ir

the strikes on several parts of the complex, one of Iran's best-known cultural landmarks and a longstanding venue for state diplomacy and international engagement. Pezeshkian also emphasized preserving the country's historical, cultural and diplomatic assets, saying the damaged sections should be restored rapidly to resume their ceremonial and institutional role.



Two Iranian films picked for Sydney festival lineup



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Two Iranian films will headline major sections of the 73rd Sydney Film Festival in June, with acclaimed directors Asghar Farhadi and Shahram Mokri carrying Iranian cinema's international momentum into one of the Asia-Pacific region's leading screen events. Mokri's latest feature, 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit,' has been selected for the festival's "Festival Favorites" sidebar, continuing

a global run that recently included Switzerland's Friburourg International Film Festival, ISNA reported. The Sydney Film Festival described the film as a work of magical realism in which "three narratives collide," blending psychological ambiguity with layered storytelling, ISNA reported. Written by Mokri and Nasim Ahmadpour, the film stars Babak Karimi and Hasti Mohammadi and follows a woman whose reality begins to shift af-

ter an accident, plunging her into an unsettling and mysterious world. Shot in Tajikistan with a joint Iranian-Tajik cast, the production underscores expanding cultural links across Persian-speaking cinema. The film is distributed internationally by DreamLab Films, headed by Nasrin Mirshab. Farhadi, meanwhile, will compete in Sydney's main competition with his new French-language feature 'Parallel Tales,' shortly after its world premiere in the Cannes Film Festival's main competition. The film brings together several prominent French actors, including Isabelle Huppert, Catherine Deneuve and Vincent Cassel. Sydney Film Festival organizers said this year's official competition, which carries a A\$60,000 award for "audacious and cutting-edge" cinema, draws heavily from Cannes' 2026 lineup. The festival will run from June 3 to 14 across the Sydney Opera House and cinemas throughout the Australian city, showcasing 248 films from 81 countries.

After 6,000 missions, IRCS head calls red crescent 'symbol of trust'

Social Desk

Iran's Red Crescent Society (IRCS) marked World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on Friday as its chief, Pirhossein Kolivand, hailed emergency responders for carrying out more than 6,000 rescue and relief missions during the recent war which started February 28, saying aid workers had emerged as a "symbol of trust, hope and calm" for the public. In a message issued at the opening of Red Crescent Week, observed from May 8 to 14, Kolivand praised rescuers, volunteers and youth teams for maintaining round-the-clock operations in crisis zones and disaster-hit areas across the country, IRNA reported. He said Red Crescent teams pulled 7,200 people from rubble and damaged buildings during missile strikes and wartime attacks, while the organization expanded its operational force from 70,000 to 110,000 personnel following emergency restructuring and the reinforcement of rapid-response units. Average response times, he added, were reduced to less than four minutes. "Relief workers entered the most difficult and unpredictable scenes with responsibility, courage and self-sacrifice," Kolivand said, describing their field presence as an "irreplaceable" pillar of social reassurance during



emergencies.

The remarks came as the humanitarian organization launched "Helal dar Meydan" ("Crescent in the Field"), a nationwide campaign featuring rescue drills, first-aid training stations, medical caravans and public service programs in cities across Iran. Red Crescent Secretary General Maysam Afshar said this year's programs would also include exhibitions documenting rescue operations during the recent war, the rollout of new smart rescue systems and meetings with international bodies including the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme.

Kolivand also paid tribute to four Red Crescent members killed during the conflict, saying they had "sacrificed their lives in service to the people." The organization said more than 2,000 volunteer psychologists provided wartime counseling through Iran's 4030 hotline, handling roughly 205,000 calls and delivering 16,000 hours of psychological support during the hostilities. World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is observed annually on May 8 to commemorate Swiss humanitarian Jean Henry Dunant, founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Hormuz tensions show ...

Under such circumstances, different actors sometimes attempt to strengthen their hand at the negotiating table through pressure on the ground. However, the fragility of the diplomatic process should not be overlooked either. Every exchange of fire, even a limited one, can erode the atmosphere of trust and embolden opponents of any agreement. Reports surrounding Pakistan's mediation efforts and indications that the parties may be edging closer to a temporary understanding also suggest that diplomacy is still alive. Yet it is operating on

extremely shaky ground.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has spoken of "saboteurs" seeking to drag the US president into a new quagmire. How plausible is such a scenario?

The remarks made by Araghchi regarding the role of saboteurs cannot be dismissed outright. In every major crisis — especially in a region such as the Persian Gulf — there are actors that do not benefit from de-escalation. Some may fear that any agreement could alter the regional balance of power or

affect their economic and security interests. Therefore, the possibility of provocative actions designed to pull the United States into a new crisis certainly exists. Araghchi's remarks are focused precisely on that concern: that military adventurism could once again leave diplomacy caught in the crossfire. To what extent could these developments affect negotiations and diplomatic efforts to contain the crisis? Could such clashes deepen mistrust and further complicate the path toward a final agreement? These developments can undoubtedly affect negotiations and diplomatic ef-

orts to contain the crisis, but the extent of that impact will depend on how the principal actors manage their behavior in the coming days and weeks. Under the current circumstances, what matters most is preserving channels of communication and preventing the military dimension from overshadowing the political process. The experience of many international crises has shown that even at the height of security tensions, diplomacy can succeed when the parties retain the political will necessary to manage the crisis and avoid unintended escalation.

Naturally, any exchange of fire can heighten mistrust and make the job of negotiators more difficult. At the same time, however, such tensions can sometimes lead both sides to conclude that the cost of prolonging the crisis outweighs the cost of reaching an agreement. For that reason, it would be premature to say that diplomacy has reached a dead end. Rather, the region appears to have entered a sensitive phase of "diplomacy alongside deterrence" — a phase in which political rationality, security restraint, and the role of mediators may ultimately shape the course of events.