

Restoration begins at UNESCO-listed Chehel Sotoun after war damage



8 >



Iran Daily

Vol. 8159 • Thursday, July 09, 2026 • Tir 18, 1405 • Muharram 24, 1448 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



> irandaily.ir

| newspaper.irandaily.ir

| IranDailyWeb

Iran strikes regional US bases in response to new assault

Any source of support for US army 'legitimate target': *Armed Forces*

2 >

Iraq's holy cities stage funeral processions for Martyr Khamenei



2 >

People pray during a funeral procession for Iran's martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated on February 28 in Israeli and US airstrikes, in Najaf, Iraq on July 8, 2026.

End of Iran-US diplomacy, worst possible outcome for both sides, world

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Tensions between Iran and the United States have flared up once again. This time, however, Washington has gone beyond limited military action by revoking the temporary suspension of Iran's oil sanctions. US President Donald Trump has also spoken of the end of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, although no official announcement has been made. These developments have once again cast doubt on the durability of any agreement between Tehran and Washington,



Nozar Shafiei

leaving the future of diplomacy shrouded in uncertainty. Speaking to Iran Daily, international affairs expert Nozar Shafiei said that if diplomacy is ultimately set aside, the next option would be war—the worst possible outcome not only for Iran and the United States but also for the world. Both sides, he argued, should abandon the notion of gaining the upper hand and compromise.

IRAN DAILY: Given the recent developments, how do you assess the prospects for continued negotiations between Iran and the United States? Is diplomacy still a viable path forward?

SHAFIEI: Overall, Iran-US relations remain highly fragile. Although the two countries have been at odds for 47 years and such a longstanding dispute cannot be resolved overnight, the

hope for progress diminishes as tensions in the Strait of Hormuz continue to rise. Naturally, if the two sides genuinely seek to resolve their differences, they should behave in a way that minimizes friction. Instead, despite the existing memorandum of understanding, both countries appear to be moving along a path that could lead to further escalation. While it has generally been assumed that bilateral relations, despite their ups and downs, were gradually moving forward, last night's developments demonstrated that the road toward normalizing relations is, in fact, highly challenging. Obstacles exist on both sides, in Iran as well as in the United States, and this is hardly conducive to reducing tensions. On the contrary, de-escalation requires both parties to send signals that reflect a genuine willingness and motivation to resolve

their disputes. Diplomacy never completely disappears from relations between states. Even under the most difficult circumstances, it can continue behind closed doors. Nevertheless, a halt in diplomacy at this stage would be an extremely alarming signal. If either Iran or the United States were to declare that diplomacy has ended or announce that the Iran-US MOU has been suspended, it would amount to a significant step backward—and some signs of that are already visible. One example is the US Treasury Department's decision to reverse the easing of oil-related restrictions on Iran. These developments send a negative message about the future of Iran-US relations. Even at this moment, it appears that diplomacy is in its final stages. If diplomacy is ultimately taken off the table, the next option is war—and

war would be the worst possible outcome for both Iran and the United States. Iran should not assume it can easily force the United States out of the equation, nor should Washington believe it can easily bring Iran to its knees. If the current crisis is not managed, the world may once again face a conflict whose consequences could be even more severe than those of the 40-day war. The ceasefire and the MOU that followed were themselves the product of the devastating consequences of that conflict. If another war breaks out now, however, the world will confront it with greater preparedness, but ironically, that very sense of preparedness could draw Iran and the United States in particular—and the region more broadly—into a confrontation with no clear end in sight. Such a scenario would be extremely dangerous for the world.

How seriously should Donald Trump's remarks be taken? Does it signal a genuine shift in US policy, or is it better understood as part of Washington's political and negotiating tactics?

It is still necessary to wait and see what other developments unfold. For example, during his speech at the NATO summit, Trump did not repeat that statement about the end of the MOU. Had he truly intended to make it official, he might well have reiterated it on that occasion. However, the United States is expected to carry out another round of strikes, and that could once again trigger a chain reaction, further escalating the crisis. Wars are not always controllable. There is often an assumption that military actions can be carefully managed, but they can suddenly spiral out of control.

Page 3 >

Iraq's holy cities stage funeral processions for Martyr Khamenei



Mourners carry the coffin of Iran's martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei at the Imam Ali (PBUH) shrine in Najaf, Iraq on July 8, 2026.
● HUSSEIN FALEH/AFP

six-day ceremonies Iran has planned for Ayatollah Khamenei who was assassinated on the first day of a recent US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

A procession was held in Iran's holy city of Qom on Tuesday after three days of similar ceremonies in the capital Tehran. The funeral of the martyred Leader will conclude with his burial on Thursday in his hometown of Mashhad in northeast Iran.

In Najaf, despite the scorching heat, vast crowds filled the streets of Najaf since the early morning, with some people pushing close hoping to touch Ayatollah Khamenei's coffin as it rode slowly in the back of a truck en route to the shrine of Imam Ali – the first Shia Imam.

There, the call for prayer echoed in the vast courtyards as hundreds of clerics

waited for hours to pray over Ayatollah Khamenei's body.

Inside the shrine, thousands jostled to get closer to the coffin as it was carried away in the mausoleum's halls – its last stop in Najaf before being flown to the other holy city of Karbala.

Mohammed al-Bayati, 30, said he would have never missed the funeral "of the person who challenged the power of America and Israel."

Murtada al-Maliki, 27, who travelled overnight from the southern Iraq to attend the funeral in Najaf, said Ayatollah Khamenei "stood with us against Daesh" terrorist group, "and kept Israel in check." According to reports, mourning tents had been established throughout the funeral route and black banners had been raised across Najaf's streets and public squares. In Karbala, the bodies were taken to the shrines of Imam Hussein (PBUH), Shias' third imam for farewell ceremonies.

Former Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, who heads Iraq's State of Law coalition, also attended the ceremony. "Commemorating the legacy of the mar-

tyred Imam Sayyed Ali Khamenei, the great leader of the Islamic nation, and participating in his funeral is a duty because he was a great leader who remained steadfast, endured, stood against challenges and brought victory to the Iranian nation," Maliki said in remarks carried by the Iraqi News Agency.

"Everything the Iraqi people do today through their participation in the funeral of the martyred Imam Khamenei and through their other supportive positions, no matter how great or valuable, remains insufficient compared with the stature of this great figure, a figure who shaped a bright future not only for the Iranian nation but for many countries in the region," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei was assassinated, alongside some of his family members, on February 28, the first day of the 40-day war of aggression waged by the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran. Iran's Assembly of Experts subsequently appointed Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

International Desk

Huge crowds thronged the streets of Iraq's holy cities of Najaf and Karbala on Wednesday as they mourned martyred

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and his family members during his funeral procession in the Arab country.

Funeral in Iraq was the fifth day of the

Iran strikes regional US bases in response to new assault

Any source of support for US army 'legitimate target': **Armed Forces**

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces launched retaliatory attacks against United States' military bases in regional countries on Wednesday after renewed attacks by the American forces on Iranian territory despite a ceasefire agreement reached between the two countries.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said in a statement on Wednesday that it struck 85 US military targets in Bahrain and Kuwait with missiles and drones in an initial response to American aggression against Iranian territory. The IRGC said the strikes hit facilities at Port Salman, the US Fifth Fleet's area in Bahrain, and Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait. It also announced the downing of an MQ-9 drone, saying the aircraft attempted to interfere with the operation before it was shot down.

The announcement came after the US launched a fresh wave of military strikes on "a number of coastal bases and non-military stations" in Iran's southern Hormozgan Province and Mahshahr, which the IRGC said "openly violated the ceasefire" and "trampled the Islamabad understanding."

On June 18, Iran and the US signed a Pakistan-brokered Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which calls for a permanent end to hostilities across all fronts and includes a commitment from both sides to hold further talks on a final agreement in the next 60 days.

Under the 14-point deal, Iran is required to ensure toll-free passage for commercial vessels for at least 60 days, with full restoration of traffic in the Strait of Hormuz within 30 days.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said US strikes on Iranian coastal monitoring facilities constitute a "flagrant violation" of the MoU that ended the recent war between the two countries, warning that Iran's Armed Forces will respond under the right to self-defense.

The ministry said the attacks constitute a breach of paragraph one of the agreement on ending the war.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) on Tuesday claimed its forces struck over 80 targets, including Iranian air-defense systems, coastal radar sites and 60 IRGC small boats in response to Iran's alleged attacks on three commercial vessels that were transiting the Strait of Hormuz

'Ceasefire is over'

Hours after CENTCOM's announcement, US President Donald Trump President said the interim agreement with Iran to



pause fighting is over following a series of strikes between the US and Tehran overnight.

"To me, I think it's over. I don't want to deal with them anymore." Trump said, speaking to reporters at the NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey.

"I'll speak to our negotiators. They want to negotiate. They're good people," he continued. "But they have to come back to me. As far as I'm concerned, it's just a waste of time dealing with them [Iran]." The US president later said he will likely engage in additional strikes on Iran on Wednesday night.

He also said that he is "not happy with what the Iranians are doing," adding that he does not seek regime change but that the US does not want Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

Iran's top military command, Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, warned regional countries for their support for the US strikes, saying that any source of support for the "aggressor US army" will be considered a legitimate target for Iranian Armed Forces.

"The repetition of illegal attacks against Iran, alongside last night's decision by the US Treasury to revoke the license for Iran's oil sales, which the US government had committed to under paragraph 10 of the memorandum of understanding, the violation of Iranian arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as the continuation of the Zionist regime's military aggressions and terrorist acts against Lebanon, have rendered important and fundamental parts of the memorandum of understanding on ending the war ineffective," the statement said.

Dangerous consequences

"The responsibility for the dangerous consequences of this escalation rests with the treaty-breaking US regime," it added.

The headquarters also reiterated that the only safe route for commercial ships and oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz is the path designated by Iran, and that Tehran will not allow any interference in the management of the Strait.

This is not the first time that the United



Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps fires missiles at US bases in regional countries from an undisclosed location in Iran on July 8, 2026.
● TASNIM

States has targeted Iranian soil since the reaching of the agreement between Tehran and Washington in June.

Iran's Armed Forces have responded to each instance with decisive retaliatory strikes against strategic and sensitive American targets across the region.

The US president also claimed that the US could "take over" Kharg Island, a strategically important island off Iran's coast, and that there would be "nothing" Iran could do about it.

Army Chief of Staff and Deputy Coordinator Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said any attempt by hostile forces to land troops on Iran's coasts would turn the country's shores into "hell" for invading forces, warning that anyone who undertakes such an operation would find "no way out"

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf also lambasted the US for committing major violations of the MoU, stressing that Washington's "era of bullying and extortion" is over.

Citing breaches involving the Strait of Hormuz, the reinstatement of oil sanctions, attacks on southern Iran, and continued Israeli military aggression in Lebanon, Qalibaf stressed on Tuesday night that Washington's violations will fail to weaken Iran's resolve.

China warns against 'reigniting' war

China denounced the sharp escalation in hostilities, with Beijing's Foreign Ministry warning both sides against "reigniting" the war in West Asia.

"Reigniting the war is not in the interests of either side, and military means cannot solve the fundamental problems," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a news conference, when asked about the strikes.

Qatar, a key intermediary in talks between Iran and the US, also reacted to the renewed tensions, calling for diplomacy.

In a Foreign Ministry statement posted on X, Qatar said it "emphasizes the need to spare the region the consequences of these unjustified attacks."

Doha also stressed the need to "pursue the path of dialogue and diplomacy, to de-escalate tensions, and to build upon the progress achieved under the memorandum of understanding."

Pezeshkian: Iran will stand firmly for own rights despite US bullying

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the US has turned the 2026 FIFA World Cup into another arena for bullying and political pressure, stressing that, "We stand firmly for our rights."

In a message posted on social media platform X on Wednesday, Pezeshkian said the US government's conduct as World Cup host reflected its long-established foreign policy.

"The US government's conduct as World Cup host follows its familiar foreign policy: bending rules, humiliating rivals, creating obstacles, and cheating. This is their MAGA playbook. Iran rejects such games. We stand firmly for our rights," he wrote.

Washington imposed sweeping travel restrictions on Iran's national team, forcing the squad to remain at its training base in Tijuana, Mexico throughout the tournament.

The team was allowed to enter the US only shortly before matches and was required to leave within 24 hours after each game, restriction that no other participating nation faced.

Iran strongly condemned both the US and FIFA over the measures, saying the restrictions violated the principles of fairness and equal treatment expected of a World Cup host.

Washington also came under heavy criticism after US President Donald Trump personally interceded with FIFA Presi-



Masoud Pezeshkian
● president.ir

dent Gianni Infantino over the suspension of US striker Folarin Balogun.

Balogun was ultimately cleared to play against Belgium despite having received a red card, a decision that sparked condemnation from football officials and observers.

More than 30 members of the European Parliament called for an investigation into possible pressure from the Trump administration over FIFA's handling of the Balogun case, saying that the organization's political neutrality and the integrity of the World Cup have been compromised.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran raps US revocation of oil waivers as 'flagrant violation' of MoU

Economy Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday strongly condemned the US move to revoke a temporarily sanctions waiver for Iranian oil sales as a breach of a memorandum of understanding signed between Washington and Tehran, warning that the US would bear responsibility for the consequences of a breach of the agreement.

The ministry said in a statement early on Wednesday that the United States' move to constitute a "flagrant violation" of Clause 10 of the memorandum of understanding that ended the recent war.

According to IRNA, the statement said that less than 20 days after the signing of the Islamabad memorandum, the cancellation of the general license issued on June 21 was "another sign of the US ruling body's bad faith, instability, and unreliability."

It added that over the past 20 days, the United States, either directly or through actions by Israel against Lebanon, had re-

peatedly committed both minor and major violations of various provisions of the memorandum. The ministry said Iran had acted in "complete good faith" since signing the June 18 memorandum, using all available means to fulfill its commitments under the agreement.

"Despite this, the US government, in line with its long-standing practice, has sought to justify its own violations with various pretexts while simultaneously breaching its commitments," the statement said.

According to Reuters, the US Treasury on Tuesday re-imposed sanctions on Iranian oil as a US official said alleged Iranian attacks on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz were "wholly unacceptable" and would have consequences.

The ministry warned of the consequences of US treaty violations and said Iran would take any measures it deemed necessary to protect its national interests and national security.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Kazem Gharibabadi,

also warned on Tuesday that Tehran would take "firm measures" to safeguard its national interests and national security in response to "successive US violations of the Pakistan-mediated memorandum of understanding between Tehran and Washington."

In a post on X following reports that Washington had revoked the sanctions waiver, Gharibabadi said the decision constituted a "flagrant violation" of Clause 10 of the understanding, while the renewed actions amounted to a "serious violation" of the memorandum's first and second provisions.

The US Treasury had authorized Iranian oil sales until August 21 last month as part of the fragile agreement between Tehran and Washington. Tuesday's decision shortened that wind-down period, setting a new expiration date of July 17.

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) withdrew General License X, issued on June 21, and replaced it with a narrower authorization, General License X1,

which allows a wind-down period for transactions until July 17 but prohibits any new purchases or loading of Iranian-origin crude oil and petroleum products from July 7.

Iranian officials have not claimed responsibility for reports that three tankers were struck by unknown projectiles in and near the Strait of Hormuz in recent days.

Under the agreement with the United States, Iran had pledged safe passage for ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran has said vessels should instead use a northern route under Iranian control rather than a route along Oman's coast protected by the US Navy.

A US official said negotiators continued to work in good faith toward a final agreement with Iran despite the latest escalation. Another US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said preliminary indications suggested Iran had fired at three commercial vessels, according to Reuters.

The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway between Iran



REUTERS

and Oman, is one of the world's most important energy chokepoints. Before the 40-day US-Israeli war against Iran that began on February 28, about one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments passed through the strategic strait each day.

Any prolonged disruption could drive up energy prices and increase pressure on consumers and governments already grap-

pling with higher fuel costs. Oil exports remain a key source of revenue for Iran, generating billions of dollars in hard currency that help finance government spending and support an economy weakened by years of US sanctions. Despite the restrictions, Tehran has expanded oil shipments in recent years, largely to China, making crude exports one of its most important economic lifelines.

Kazakh logistics hub at Iran's port to bolster regional supply chains



ISNA

Economy Desk

A \$25 million agreement between Iran and Kazakhstan to build a logistics terminal at Iran's Shahid Rajaei Port marks a strategic step toward redefining Iran's role in regional and international supply chains, the head of the Iran Feed Industry Association said.

"The agreement is not merely a port contract," Majid Movafiq Qadiri, who is also a member of the Iran Chamber of Commerce's board of representatives, told IRNA. Kazakhstan signed the \$25

million agreement in June to develop a logistics hub at Iran's Shahid Rajaei Port, which Iranian officials say will support the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Qhadiri said implementation of the project would strengthen the eastern branch of the INSTC and further cement Iran's position as a bridge linking Central Asia to open seas.

Under the agreement, Kazakhstan will build a dedicated logistics terminal at Shahid Rajaei Port in the south of Iran to manage

grain exports, containerized cargo and transit shipments, he said.

In return, Iran will gain access to dedicated infrastructure and berths at Kazakhstan's Aktau and Kuryk ports on the Caspian Sea, he added.

Regarding the agreement's impact on bilateral trade, Qadiri said the targets were "highly significant."

He said the corridor's transport capacity is planned to increase from about 3.5 million metric tons to 20 million metric tons annually, while bilateral trade is projected to rise from around \$500 million to \$3 billion.

Achieving those goals would create a competitive, reliable and sustainable trade route linking Iran, Central Asia and global markets, he said.

Qadiri said Kazakhstan, as one of the region's major producers of grains and oilseeds, could help improve access to raw materials for Iran's livestock, poultry and aquaculture feed industry through the agreement.

He said shorter transport

times, lower logistics costs, greater supply security and more diversified import routes would be among the key benefits of the cooperation, ultimately improving the competitiveness of Iranian feed producers and reducing the cost of domestic protein production.

The agreement's impact extends well beyond the feed industry, Qadiri said, adding that it would strengthen Iran's position as a regional transit hub, support the development of related industries, encourage investment in port and logistics infrastructure, create added value and expand exports of technical and commercial services.

He said the process would contribute to the national economy while enhancing the position of Iran's livestock, poultry and aquaculture feed industry within regional supply chains.

Bilateral trade currently stands at about \$400 million and could rise two to three times following the project, according to Kazakh officials.

Tehran, Islamabad seek stronger IT ties, joint technology zone

Economy Desk

Iran and Pakistan agreed to expand cooperation in information technology, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, with Tehran proposing the creation of a joint technology zone that was "very well received" by Pakistani officials, Iran's deputy telecommunications minister said on Wednesday.

Mohammad Mohsen Sadr, who heads Iran's Information Technology Organization, met with Pakistan's Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications Shaza Fatima Khawaja on the sidelines of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance in Geneva, he said in a post on X. "During this meeting, areas for expanding cooperation between Iran and Pakistan in IT, e-government, artificial intelligence, digital economy, cybersecurity and innovation ecosystem development were discussed," Sadr wrote. He added that he had proposed establishing a joint technology zone, which was met with strong interest from the Pakistani side.

"I believe strengthening technological cooperation among regional countries can pave the way for a more connected, smarter and more prosperous future for nations," Sadr said.

Sadr also held talks with Oman's deputy telecommunications minister on the sidelines of the Geneva conference, discussing cooperation in e-government,



artificial intelligence, digital economy, communications infrastructure and broader technology interactions, he said.

"Iran and Oman have valuable capacities to deepen digital cooperation and create joint opportunities on the path toward the future of the digital economy," Sadr wrote.

Sadr also addressed a workshop on artificial intelligence and the government digital ecosystem held Tuesday at the headquarters of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Geneva.

The workshop, which featured speakers from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the ITU's development sector and university academics, was "very well received" by participants, Sadr said.

The Global Dialogue on AI Governance, hosted by the ITU, brings together government officials, technology experts and industry representatives to discuss frameworks for regulating and managing the rapid development of artificial intelligence technologies.

End of Iran-US ...

Therefore, even if Trump did not initially insist that the MOU had come to an end, an escalating crisis could ultimately place him on a path toward formally declaring its termination. The end of that understanding would, in effect, amount to a declaration of war.

How will the latest developments affect the role and effectiveness of mediators? Can countries such as Qatar continue to play a meaningful role in facilitating dialogue, particularly after the attack on one of its vessels and Doha's critical response?

Mediators generally begin their work

under difficult circumstances and strive to bring disputes to a conclusion. Pakistan and Qatar have already demonstrated this. Despite the considerable distance between the positions of Iran and the United States, the two countries succeeded in bringing them closer together.

However, every country has its own capacity. Qatar has traditionally maintained good relations with Iran and has played constructive roles in mediation efforts. If it feels that its efforts are not being appreciated or that it is being treated unfairly, it will undoubtedly withdraw. The withdrawal of such mediators would be a serious warning sign

of a possible confrontation between Iran and the United States.

The parties to the dispute should not deprive themselves of the opportunity that mediators provide without taking into account the potentially negative consequences they may face in the future. Mediation is an important opportunity to prevent crises from escalating and an equally important mechanism for resolving them.

If mediators conclude that their efforts are producing no results, they may choose to step away from the negotiation process. In their absence, misunderstandings are more likely to increase, tensions may intensify, and the

crisis could expand further.

If diplomacy comes to a halt, what are the most likely scenarios for Iran-US relations? Is there still room to manage tensions?

Tension management remains possible to some extent, but it cannot continue indefinitely. If diplomacy ultimately fails, the consequence will be confrontation. Such confrontations could remain confined to the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, or they could spill over into the territory of Iran and the Persian Gulf states.

What is certain is that no one knows how resilient Iran would be under such

pressure, or how resilient the global economy would prove in the face of higher oil prices and the wider economic pressures that would follow.

Ultimately, both sides must abandon the belief that they hold the upper hand or can decisively dictate the outcome. These are mental constructs. What actually unfolds on the ground may differ significantly from what decision-makers in either Tehran or Washington expect. When perceptions diverge from operational realities, decision-makers may find themselves drawn into a course of action whose outcome brings nothing but loss and damage to their own countries.

Global messages of a national ceremony

OPINIONS EXCLUSIVE

The farewell ceremony for the martyred Leader and the funeral procession transpired in Tehran with magnificence commensurate with his stature and station. Tehran, during these several days, had metamorphosed into a smaller Iran. Iranians from every extremity of the country, exhibiting divergent dialects, attires, and preferences,

had converged upon the capital to render homage unto their martyred Leader.

This enormous popular attendance, while simultaneously constituting a collective mourning suffused with profound sentiments and emotions, also represented a national event possessing global ramifications and reverberations. It was a manifestation of a grand unity and cohesion, a devotion to Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and a commemoration of decades of his struggles. In truth, what was perceptible in Tehran over those three days was not circumscribed or confined to mourning and lamentation over the loss of a colossal figure; rather, it constituted a renewed covenant with those very ideals and the path for which Ayatollah Khamenei sacrificed his life; a path whose objective was the attainment of a novel Islamic-Iranian civilization.

Now, as following experts and political activists have posited in their commentaries for Iran Newspaper, this epic of popular participation also possesses a signification, namely, that this epic constitutes an embracement of Ayatollah Khamenei's thought; a thought whose explanation and elucidation demands greater endeavor than before. The farewell and funeral ceremonies ought not to remain confined to form, appearance, and the effusion of popular sentiments and then conclude; rather, they should serve as a commencement for the universalization of the thought of independence-seeking and steadfastness against global excesses. Without any doubt, traversing this stage of the path entails the preservation and fortification of national unity. The funeral ceremony of the martyred Leader of Iran, which served as a symbol of unity and cohesion, can now, and indeed must, function as a catalyst and a consolidating factor for the articulation and explication of the path and thought of that great man.



Iranians gather around the Azadi square of Tehran on July 6, 2026, to attend a farewell ceremony for the martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and his family, who were assassinated in the US-Israeli attacks on February 28, 2026.
● leader.ir

When thought proliferates



By Abbas Salimi Namin
Researcher of politics,
history

One of the strategic fallacies of hegemonic powers is the supposition that, through the physical elimination of a figure, one can arrest the trajectory of a thought. Historical experiences, however, have repeatedly demonstrated that assassination, rather than constituting the end of a movement, represents the inception of a novel phase in its existence. Whenever a figure who embodies an intellectual, political, or cultural discourse becomes the target of assassination, society ceases to perceive him merely as an individual, but instead transforms him into a symbol of a cause. From this very point, the adversary, contrary to its primary objective, not only achieves no gain but also facilitates the conditions for the expansion of that same thought.

The widespread veneration of the martyred Leader's station by Iran's populace is likewise analyzable within this same framework. This veneration is not merely an emotional or sentimental reaction; rather, it is a declaration of the truth that thought does not perish with the removal of its proprietor. Such figures become enduring paradigms within the historical memory of nations; paradigms that are not only remembered, but also whose intellectual and practical trajectories attract greater attention than before and become a reference point for subsequent generations.

Now, after the martyrdom of the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, the adversary will confront a more complex reality if it perceives a threat from the influence and efficacy of a figure and considers him an obstacle to its illicit interests. It now confronts not an individual, but millions of human beings who are reinterpreting and reproducing that thought. For this reason, physical elimination does not diminish the scope of that person's influence, but rather multiplies it several-fold. His directives, stances, and orientations become a paradigm for the social and political conduct of society; a reality that the architects of assassination are typically incapable of comprehending.

Martyrdom possesses another characteristic as well; namely, that it substantiates the veracity of a thought. When society observes that an individual is prepared to sacrifice his life for his beliefs and ideals, the relationship of the peo-

ple with that thought enters a novel stage. In this stage, an emotional, doctrinal, and valuative bond is forged that is far more profound than the connection that existed during that figure's lifetime. This bond, particularly when predicated upon divine ideals, justice-seeking, and independence-seeking, possesses the capacity to accelerate social transformations and to reinforce the society's resolve to combat domination.

The presence of religious, political, and cultural figures from diverse countries at the commemorative rites for the martyred Leader constitutes another indication of this same reality. This presence signifies that geographical boundaries have never been able to circumscribe deep-rooted thoughts. The thought of independence, dignity, and resistance, when grounded in human nature and dignity, does not remain confined to a specific geography and finds an audience among other nations as well.

In truth, from the moment that the domination of greedy powers expanded throughout our region, a thought also materialized in opposition to it, one that emphasized the return of nations to themselves, trust in internal capacities, and reliance upon indigenous capabilities. This thought maintains that if nations rely upon their own capacities in the scientific, economic, political, and administrative arenas, they can halt the process of domination and preserve their genuine independence.

The commemoration of the exalted station of the martyred Leader is not merely a veneration of an individual; rather, it is an opportunity for the reinterpretation and reproduction of a thought that he represented. The more the study of the perspectives, ideals, and experiences of such figures increases, the greater the probability of that thought becoming a coherent paradigm for other societies likewise increases. Hence, even in countries that have had limited political or cultural connections with Iran, this discourse has been able to influence public opinion and intellectual currents.

The outcome of all these realities is that assassination, contrary to the conception of its architects, is incapable of extinguishing thought. A thought that has taken root in the souls of the people, with the martyrdom of its bearer, not only does not perish but becomes more enduring, more pervasive, and more efficacious.

An enduring legacy in politics, resistance, and civilization-building



By Ali Jannati
Iran's former
minister of culture

The magnificent funeral ceremony for the martyred Leader of the Revolution contains multiple political, cultural, and doctrinal messages and indicates the profound and emotional bond, as well as the gratitude and unified support, of the Iranian nation for the outstanding and enduring services of that martyr. A figure who, with a brilliant record of struggle, political activity, and executive administration, after the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini, played the most significant role in the formation and consolidation of the Islamic Republic of Iran system, and stood firm against global arrogance and the Zionist regime unto the point of sacrificing his life. This colossal ceremony is an opportunity for the display of national unity, the consolidation of the system's position, and the exhibition of Iran's national, political, and international authority, and it stands as one of the most magnificent scenes in contemporary history, wherein the beloved leader of Iran, in the presence of millions of people from Iran and other Muslim nations, is interred and laid to rest.

The presence of high-ranking delegations and the participation of officials from various countries in this event consti-

tutes a formal expression of political solidarity by world leaders and politicians with the Islamic Republic, transforming this ceremony from a national event into an international symbol, and it will play an effective role in consolidating the position of the new leadership at the global level. The holding of the funeral ceremony for the martyred Leader's remains in Najaf and Karbala and his burial in the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) has solidified the station of the departed leader as a religious authority in the Islamic world, and especially among the world's Shias, and his shrine will become a site for pilgrimage and the expression of devotion by the loyalists and enthusiasts of the Islamic Republic system.

The wise and sagacious Leader of the Islamic Revolution, throughout 45 years of sincere service during his presidency and leadership of the Islamic Establishment, consistently, with mastery over domestic and foreign affairs and with foresight and correct cognition and comprehension of the realities of the era, directed his attention toward future horizons. Through raising awareness among various societal classes and enlightening them regarding the conspiracies of the enemies of the Islamic Republic system, he institutionalized the thought of independence-seeking, self-belief, and self-reliance among elites

and the masses of the people, and with unparalleled courage and prudence, he guided the vessel of the Revolution and the Islamic Establishment through the turbulent sea of historical events, wars, seditions, and complex crises in the most fitting manner. In diverse arenas, he elevated the Islamic Establishment to a distinguished station at the regional and global levels, and in the diplomatic arena, he established the three principles of wisdom, dignity, and expediency as the basis for constructive and effective interaction with the world. He considered unity and Islamic awakening among Muslim nations to be the most important issue of the Islamic world and, through the articulation of the discourse of a "novel Islamic civilization," he endeavored to elevate the historical trajectory of the Revolution from the level of a political system to the level of global civilization. His measures for the formation and reinforcement of resistance forces in Islamic countries were able to expand Islamic awakening throughout the Muslim world and to inform the Islamic world regarding the crimes and expansionism of the Zionist regime. Without any doubt, the heroic resistance of the Iranian nation throughout the 40-day war can be considered the fruit of the foresight and prudence of that martyred Leader, who established the culture of

resistance against the enemy within Iranian society and Islamic countries.

The martyred Leader of the Revolution, with special attention to the country's scientific and technological advancement and to Iran's independence and prosperity, consistently emphasized the purposeful utilization of novel technologies in resolving the country's key issues. The strengthening and formation of civilization-building institutions, including the development of universities, the establishment of schools and universities affiliated with religious seminaries, cultural centers and think tanks, and attention to scientific institutions as civilization-building centers, constitute the principal part of the Leader's cultural legacy.

The departed Leader of the Revolution considered Iran to be a distinguished identity within the Islamic world and, contrary to extreme nationalist perspectives, he defined Iranism within the context of pristine Muhammadan Islam, and the focus upon Iran as a civilizational territory possessing lofty historical, cultural, and ethical capacities was consistently one of the pillars of his intellectual school.

Undoubtedly, the name of the martyred Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei will be immortalized in the political history and governance of Iran as a powerful and invincible leader.



Foreign and domestic delegations pay respect in groups to martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and his family on July 3, 2026.
● leader.ir

Display of social capital, int'l credibility



By **Mohsen Pakaein**
Former Iranian
ambassador

The magnificent ceremonies of mourning and the funeral procession for the remains of Ayatollah Khamenei, with the million-strong presence of the people, were not merely a ritual of lamentation, but rather transformed into an arena for the display of his station and influence in the domestic and international arenas. The extensive participation of various societal classes, accompanied by the attendance of delegations and high-ranking officials from diverse countries at the rites of homage, demonstrated that, contrary to the decades-long endeavors of the adversaries of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the United States of America and the Zionist regime, to implant an image of Iranian isolation, the realities on the ground narrate an alternative trajectory. This presence, in fact, signifies that the Islamic Republic of Iran still possesses considerable political and diplomatic capacity for influence, and that the personality of the martyred Leader of the Revolution, even beyond Iran's borders, has attracted the attention and respect of numerous nations and governments.

Indubitably, the rendering of homage by political and religious figures from various countries to the martyred Leader of the Revolution can be interpreted as an indication of opposition to unilateralism and the hegemonic policies of powers that have consistently endeavored to impose their desired order upon

the world. This event, in addition to reinforcing the station of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international arena, provides a context through which global public opinion may regard the Iranian people, the country's governance structure, and the political and religious thoughts of the martyred Leader with greater precision. It is natural that, subsequent to this, the attention of researchers, academics, political science scholars, and religious clerics to the governance experience of the Islamic Republic and its theoretical foundations will increase more than before; an experience that, over nearly five decades, despite pressures, sanctions, threats, and numerous crises, has been able to preserve the country's independence and authority.

In confirmation of this reality, a memory from the period of my diplomatic mission in Thailand is worthy of contemplation. At that time, an Asian Buddhist association that constituted an organization with political and research-oriented approaches invited me to deliver a lecture on the Islamic Revolution of Iran and its political structure. After the conclusion of the session, I discovered that the members of this association had conducted extensive studies on the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its mode of governance. The association's spokesperson explained that they had comparatively examined the four great revolutions of the world, namely, the French Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the Soviet Revolution, and the Islamic

Revolution of Iran. The result of their studies was that, irrespective of doctrinal and cultural differences, the governance model of the Islamic Republic of Iran could be inspirational for many countries; because at its apex stands a leader who, despite possessing extensive political prerogatives, does not incline toward despotism, and, despite having access to abundant resources, does not become ensnared by corruption; a matter that, in their belief, in many other revolutions, ultimately led their leaders toward dictatorship or corruption.

The reality is that, although certain regional governments have at times adopted policies aligned with America, the majority of Iran's neighbors did not enter a path of comprehensive confrontation with the Islamic Republic, and the endeavor to create a regional consensus against Iran did not achieve results. This matter signifies that Iran, in addition to possessing defensive capabilities, also holds an effective and determinative station in regional diplomacy. The profound relations between the nations of Iran and Iraq, which in recent years have been further reinforced by events such as the massive Arbabeen pilgrimage, constitute a clear example of this social and cultural capital. Hence, the holding of commemorative ceremonies for the martyred Leader in Iraq should be considered a symbol of the continuity of these strategic bonds and an indication of the failure of efforts that sought to create a rift between the two nations; a bond that today, more than ever, manifests itself across various political, cultural, and social arenas.



Organizers at the funeral ceremony of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei salute back at the huge sea of people who have come from various corners of the country to Tehran, Iran, on July 2, 2026, to announce their steadfastness in the path of their martyred Leader.
● leader.ir

Environmental policies of martyred Leader



By **Shina Ansari**
Head of
Department of
Environment

The communicated environmental policies of the martyred Leader in the Persian calendar year 1394 (2015) constituted a watershed moment in the country's environmental policy-making. The establishment of an integrated national environmental system, coordinated and systematic management of vital resources, the criminalization of environmental degradation, the preparation of the country's ecosystem atlas, the reinforcement of environmental diplomacy, the expansion of the green economy, and the institutionalization of environmental culture and ethics are among the 15 topics of the communicated policies of the martyred Leader. The general environmental policies are, in truth, among the highest levels of policy-making and macro-strategic determination for the country. The Leader's special attention to the "environment" as a cross-sectoral issue rendered these policies a comprehensive roadmap for the country's environment; policies that included not only the executive branch but also other branches of government and even the armed forces. Hence, the communication of these policies by the Leader was a highly significant and valuable event for the country's environment. Although more than a decade has passed since the

communication of the general environmental policies, and many of their components have not been implemented, this does not negate their comprehensiveness, inclusiveness, or efficacy, and these policies still constitute a robust strategy for resolving the country's environmental issues. Because, in the system of environmental problems, alignment among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as other sectors such as the armed forces, the media, and the general populace, is an unavoidable necessity. Among the noteworthy aspects of the Leader's communicated policies is the attention to the prominent and efficacious role of the people in environmental preservation. The expansion of the society's environmental awareness, knowledge, and insight, the reinforcement of social responsibility at all levels and among all segments of society, and, in other words, the creation of a social movement for the improvement of the country's environmental condition are among the intelligent and precise aspects of the martyred Leader's communicated environmental policies, which merit examination with a more expansive perspective on his teachings and statements concerning the protection of nature.

The martyred Leader's emphases that "the environment does not belong to this or that administration, and we must all strive for

its preservation," "environmental degradation is a great calamity that destroys humanity's future; therefore, officials and the people must stand against it," "officials should endeavor to elevate the level of public awareness and sensitivity regarding the environment," "the responsible apparatuses should diligently monitor the implementation of laws, and the judiciary should address environmental violations through appropriate mechanisms," and many of his explicit and emphatic viewpoints in the environmental domain, indicate the necessity of eschewing a sectoral perspective on the environment, the need for a national consensus and resolve for the protection of natural assets, and the imperative for decisive action against environmental violations.

Today, in honor of the blood of the martyrs of the two unjust imposed wars, especially the martyred Leader, and relying upon and supported by the general environmental policies, which must continue to serve as a comprehensive and all-inclusive document constituting the basis of activity and the axis of cooperation among governmental, executive, and popular institutions, we must, with greater belief and conviction, endeavor for the protection of this land's precious nature.

The article first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper Iran.

From individual mourning to global bond of truth-seekers



By **Mohammad Sadegh Javadi-Hesar**
Member of the Central
Council of the Mardom
Salari Party

The farewell and funeral ceremonies for a human being, at first glance, represent an effusion of emotions and profound grief that settles upon hearts following the loss of a beloved one. This grief can belong to an individual, a family, a people, a nation, or even a part of the world. In such moments, human beings, by accompanying the remains of their departed beloved, display the pain of separation and the agony of parting, and through their presence, they reveal their emotional bond with him. This emotional dimension, although valuable and natural, constitutes but a small part of the truth latent within a grand funeral.

The more important and enduring part of this event becomes manifest when the bond among human beings transcends the boundaries of personal and emotional relationships and enters the arena of belief, thought, ideal, and truth. When individuals assemble not merely due to kinship or friendship, but by virtue of empathy in the path of a school of thought, a doctrine, and a shared objective, then their mourning acquires a deeper meaning. In such circumstances, the loss of a figure is not merely the loss of an individual; rather, it is the grief of separation from an intellectual current and a spiritual paradigm that has united many hearts.

In the history of Islam, a clear example of this truth is observable. It has been narrated that, after the passing of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the pillar upon which he leaned

before the construction of the pulpit, lamented from separation from him. Rumi has poetically described this narrative thus: "The groaning pillar from separation from the Messenger, lamented like the possessors of intellects." This story is a symbol of the fact that whenever a bond is formed upon the foundation of truth, faith, and love, even inanimate objects lament the separation from that truth. It is self-evident that, at such a station, conscious and truth-seeking human beings, more than any other creature, will feel the loss of that figure with their entire being.

From this perspective, the significance of a magnificent funeral is not confined to the vastness of the multitude or its outward splendor; rather, it resides in its capacity to engender empathy, alignment, and harmony among truth-seeking hearts across the globe. If this convergence can connect souls desirous of truth with the ideals and thoughts of the martyr, then this ceremony will become the point of inception for a cultural and civilizational movement; a movement that transcends geographical boundaries and will constitute a spiritual asset for the future.

Within the intellectual system of the Islamic Revolution, raising awareness, seeking truth, and opposing arrogance have always been enumerated among the most important principles. The funeral of the martyred Leader was not merely a memorial for a figure; rather, it was a catalyst for the re-birth of a thought founded upon justice-seeking, dignity, independence, and the defense of the oppressed.

The Iranian nation has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity to

create grand scenes of unity and solidarity at historical junctures. Hence, this social capital was also displayed in the most optimal manner in such an event. Truth belongs to all, and the spiritual assets of a nation must also be preserved in a comprehensive and national manner. Any exclusivist perspective can diminish the efficacy of such movements and circumscribe their sphere of influence.

A martyr who has spent his life in the path of Islamic and revolutionary ideals is not recognized solely by his name and image; rather, what must be introduced to society and the world is his intellectual system, his ethical character, his manner of living, his type of social engagement, his political insight, his faith, his sincerity, and his spirit of self-sacrifice. If these dimensions are properly reinterpreted and elucidated, his personality will become an inspirational paradigm for future generations, and his message, transcending a specific temporal period, will remain in the historical memory of the nation.

Ultimately, if the martyr's ideals and directives, accompanied by the responsible and conscientious conduct of the adherents of this school, are correctly presented to the world, a robust ring of solidarity among the nations of the region, and even certain governments, will be forged in the path of justice-seeking and opposition to arrogance. This is the very meaning that the Holy Quran refers to as "Hablullah"; a divine rope that invites human beings to unity, empathy, and solidarity, and adherence to it will be a source of authority, cohesion, and dignity for the Islamic ummah.



The screengrab shows the mourning Iraqi people swarming the Najaf Airport on July 8, 2026, to touch the coffin of the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, which was transported there upon the request of Iraqi officials.
● leader.ir

Saei confident as Iran women's taekwondo faces packed calendar

Sports Desk

Iran's women's taekwondo team is preparing for a hectic international calendar in the coming months, with head coach Mahrouz Saei expressing confidence that a youthful squad can rise to the challenge despite limited international experience and mixed results at recent world and Asian championships. The national team will begin its demanding schedule with a trip to Chuncheon, South Korea, where the World Cup Team Championships, starting next Tuesday, will be followed by the Korea Open. Saei believes the two events will provide crucial preparation for a series of major tournaments later this year. Iran will send two separate groups to South Korea. A four-member squad selected for the Team World Cup will also compete in the Korea Open, while a second group will only take part in the latter event. Ten athletes are currently training in the national camp, with teenage prospect Hanna Zarrinkamar, who secured a second successive world junior title in April, due to join the senior team before it departs for South Korea. Performances in South Korea will also play a decisive role in finalizing Iran's squad for the

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September. While two athletes have already secured their places, Saei said the remaining berths will be determined by results in South Korea.

The Asian Games remain the centerpiece of Iran's campaign in 2026, with the coaching staff viewing the event as a key milestone on the road to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"Our main objective is to win gold medals at the Asian Games," Saei said, noting that strong performances would also earn valuable world ranking points and increase Iran's quota for future Grand Prix events.

Currently, Olympic silver medalist Nahid Kiani is Iran's only regular representative at the Grand Prix level. Bronze medalist Mobina Nematzadeh, another of the country's top-ranked competitors, is sidelined after knee surgery and is not expected to return to competition for another seven to eight months. Saei said she remains in regular contact with Nematzadeh throughout her rehabilitation and is encouraged by the athlete's recovery, although she acknowledged the team will have to cope without one of its biggest stars for much of the season.

Before the Asian Games, Iran



● taekwondo.ir

will also compete at the World Women's Open Championships, scheduled for late August in Taiyuan, China. Saei indicated the event is likely to feature the same lineup intended for Nagoya, allowing the team to fine-tune its preparations approximately one month before the continental showpiece. The coaching staff is also seeking additional high-level preparation through an overseas training camp. Iran has ap-

proached several countries, including Turkey and Azerbaijan, with the preference being a 10- to 12-day joint camp with the reigning women's world champions from Turkey. Beyond immediate results, Saei emphasized that Iran's current strategy is focused on "long-term development." "We lowered the average age of the team because we're building for the future. We have confidence in these young athletes,

and I hope they seize this opportunity and show they belong at the highest level," Saei told the official website of the Iranian Taekwondo Federation. Several promising youngsters, including Baran Nemati, Fatemeh Ahmadi and Fereshteh Fathi, have recently been promoted to the senior squad after gaining only limited international exposure at the Asian Championships in Ulaanbaatar in May, where Iran managed just two

medals through Kiani's gold and Yalda Valinejad's bronze.

Other emerging athletes, such as teenage sensations Saina Karimi and Hasti Mohammadi, who won gold and bronze, respectively, at the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games, have also joined the national program within the past year, further lowering the average age of the team.

While acknowledging the inexperience of many squad members, Saei said the coaching staff deliberately chose to invest in youth with an eye on future Olympic success.

The younger athletes will be supported by experienced campaigners such as Kiani and Valinejad, both expected to play leadership roles on and off the mat as Iran attempts to blend emerging talent with proven medal contenders.

Saei admitted that winning gold medals at the Asian Games will be far from straightforward, particularly after the competition adopted Olympic weight categories, increasing the level of competition in each division. Nevertheless, she believes success in Nagoya will be critical to improving Olympic rankings and laying the foundation for Iran's ultimate ambition: winning Olympic gold at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

Iran adds 26 slots to Asian Games delegation



● MNA

Sports Desk

Iran has added 26 slots to its delegation for the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, taking the country's contingent to 308 athletes across 36 sports.

The 20th edition of the continental multi-sport event will open at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya, Japan, on September 19.

The Iranian National Olympic Committee (NOC) had initially confirmed the delegation last week following "a thorough technical review, an assessment of the national federations' performance, the athletes' state of preparedness, and their prospects for success."

However, additional quotas were approved after a late review by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday.

The revised decision means the Iranian contingent - named "Angels of Minab" in memory of the 168 victims, including 120 schoolchildren, killed in a U.S.-Israeli airstrike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh Elementary School in Minab, southern Iran, on February 28 - will comprise 214 men and 94 women competing at the Games.

Of the additional slots, 16 have been allocated to the men's national handball team, which will

be led by new Croatian head coach Nenad Kljaić. Further quotas have been awarded in shooting, archery, equestrian, athletics, jiu-jitsu, gymnastics, boxing and table tennis.

In recent years, Iranian sports authorities have emphasized a "quality over quantity" approach when selecting teams for the Olympics and Asian Games.

Nevertheless, calls for a larger delegation emerged in recent days, with several federations seeking additional quotas. Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali has also reportedly pushed for broader representation, insisting Iran should aim to send one of its largest-ever delegations to the Asian Games.

At the previous Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, Iran fielded 289 athletes - 211 men and 78 women - and finished seventh in the medal table with 13 gold, 21 silver and 20 bronze medals, its lowest placing in the past five editions of the Games.

The country's most successful campaign came at Tehran 1974, where it won a record 81 medals, including an all-time high of 36 golds, to finish runner-up to Japan in the overall standings.

In more recent editions of the Games, Iran's best finish came at Guangzhou 2010, where it placed fourth with a haul of 20 gold, 15 silver and 24 bronze medals.

FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers: Iran's Group E opener moved to Philippines amid regional tensions

Sports Desk

Iran's men's national basketball team will play its designated home fixture against New Zealand in Pasay, the Philippines, when the second round of the FIBA Basketball World Cup Asian Qualifiers gets underway on August 27.

The decision came after the sport's international governing body, FIBA, ordered all first-window matches in Group E to be staged in the Filipino city due to regional security concerns following recent military tensions in the Middle East.

Iran was also stripped of home-court advantage in the first round for the same reason, with its designated home games against Iraq, Jordan and Syria relocated to neutral venues in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon, and Amman, Jordan.

The opening window of the second round will also see Iran face the Philippines on August 31 as part of six Group E games to be played over five days in Pasay.

Iran advanced to the second round after defeating Syria twice, either side of an emphatic 67-49 victory over West Asian rival Jordan last week, to finish top of Group C, and will carry over a 6-1 record into Group E, which also features reigning three-time Asia Cup champion Australia, Jordan, and Syria.

Iran will conclude the qualifiers with an away game against Australia on February 28 next year. The top three teams from each of the two second-round groups, along with the best fourth-placed team, will qualify for the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup in Qatar.

AVC Girls' U18 Volleyball Championship: 'Experience was priority': Iran coach shrugs off poor campaign

Sports Desk

Head coach Akram Qahremani said her team prioritized gaining experience over results after Iran endured a disappointing campaign at the Asian Girls' U18 Volleyball Championship in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. Iran suffered a 3-2 defeat (23-25, 25-19, 25-18, 16-25, 15-12) to Hong Kong on Tuesday to finish 12th in the 16-team tournament, its lowest-ever placing in nine appearances since making its debut in 2008.

The result marked a significant step back for Iran, which had recorded its best-ever finish at the tournament in 2024 by placing sixth.

"Our players made fewer mistakes on serve than in previous matches, and it was a very good

performance overall," Qahremani said after the match. "However, at certain stages, Hong Kong's experience made the difference, and our players were unable to manage the crucial moments."

The head coach stressed that the primary objective of Iran's campaign was player development rather than immediate results.

"Our approach throughout this tournament was to gain experience and develop players who can contribute to Iranian volleyball in the years ahead," she said. Qahremani added that the Iranian Volleyball Federation has adopted a long-term strategy for the girls' U18 national team, acknowledging that building a competitive squad will require patience.

"The federation has adopted a long-term strategy for the girls' U18 national team, so achieving success will naturally take time," she said. "I hope we can fulfill the federation's objectives in the coming years and that this team will produce better results overall." Iran began its campaign with a 3-1 loss to the Philippines before falling in straight sets to Indonesia and Japan to finish bottom of Pool C.

The team then defeated Australia in four sets before losing 3-0 to Chinese Taipei and concluding its campaign with the five-set defeat to Hong Kong.



● SEPIDE ABDOLHAYY/volleyball.ir

How Iranian folklore connects past to present

Iranian folklore is a vibrant and enduring tradition that has developed over thousands of years. It encompasses myths, legends, and cultural influences from across Greater Iran. These folktales are more than mere stories; they are deeply intertwined with Iranian identity, forging a connection between modern Iran and the ancient Persian empires and their beliefs.

In this article, we will explore the captivating elements of Iranian folklore, including prominent characters, myths, mythical creatures, and the ways these stories shape Iranian culture and identity. By examining these stories and traditions, we can gain valuable insight into how the Iranian people perceive the world, differentiate right from wrong, and reflect on universal human experiences.

Arash the Archer, a legendary figure from Persian mythology, depicted in a stunning representation.

ALAMY

Storytelling traditions

Storytelling has long been a vital part of Iranian culture. During the Safavid dynasty, it became a central social activity in coffeehouses, where individuals from diverse backgrounds gathered to hear epic tales of heroes and their adventures, surfiran.com wrote.

Today, the Shahnameh, penned by Ferdowsi (940-1020 CE), one of the most influential figures of Persian literature, remains a cornerstone of Iranian folklore. It is recited and performed at national festivals, serving as a living link between generations through stories rooted in Persian mythology and legendary heroes who defended their homeland. In Iranian culture, storytelling is not merely entertainment — it is a means of transmitting values such as honor, bravery, and justice, ensuring these ideals endure through time.

National epic

The Shahnameh, composed in the 10th century, is one of Persian literature's most significant works and is regarded as Iran's national epic. It narrates the stories of kings and heroes from the Sassanid era, preserving core elements of Iranian folklore. Among its characters are iconic figures like Rostam, Zal, Sohrab, Fereydun, and Zahhak, each confronting unique challenges and moral dilemmas. The tale of Rostam and Sohrab is

especially poignant. It's a tragic story of fate, familial love, and loss: Rostam unknowingly battles and fatally wounds his own son, Sohrab, only to discover his identity too late. This narrative underscores the idea that even the greatest heroes are bound by destiny. The Shahnameh continues to inspire national pride and teaches timeless values—courage, sacrifice, and justice.

Mythical creatures in Iranian folklore

Iranian folklore is replete with mythical beings, many embodying the eternal struggle between good and evil. One of the most revered creatures is the Simorgh, a majestic bird symbolizing wisdom and healing. In the legend of Zal, the Simorgh rescues an abandoned infant and raises him in her nest, ultimately returning him to his family. The Simorgh's role as a protector embodies hope and guidance, reminding people that even in darkness, a higher power watches over them. Another notable figure is Zahhak, a monstrous three-headed dragon representing deceit and tyranny. His reign ends when the hero Fereydun defeats him and imprisons him on Mount Damavand. This battle exemplifies a recurring theme in Iranian folklore — the triumph of good over evil.

The Div, a demon or devil figure, appears frequently in Persian stories, symbolizing chaos, cor-

ruption, and malevolent intent. The Divs often serve as adversaries that heroes must confront and overcome, reflecting internal and external struggles faced while upholding moral integrity. Pari are ethereal, fairy-like beings often depicted as beautiful and benevolent yet enigmatic. They appear in romantic tales and symbolize beauty, mystery, and the complex nature of the supernatural. Stories involving Pari explore themes of love, transformation, and redemption, emphasizing the multifaceted aspects of the spiritual realm.

Iranian folklore is brimming with tales of folk heroes whose bravery, resistance, and loyalty continue to inspire generations. One such legendary figure is Arash the Archer (Arash-e Kaman-gir), celebrated for his courage and self-sacrifice.

According to legend, Arash was chosen to resolve a border dispute between Iran and Turan. He shot an arrow that traveled an incredible distance, marking the boundary between the two lands — though he used all his life force in the process. The story of Arash symbolizes unwavering dedication to one's homeland, a core value that resonates deeply within Iranian culture.

Another notable figure is Zahhak, a monstrous three-headed dragon representing deceit and tyranny. His reign ends when the hero Fereydun defeats him and imprisons him on Mount Damavand. This battle exempli-



The Homa bird statue at Persepolis symbolizes a mythical creature of Iranian folklore.

ALAMY

fies a recurring theme in Iranian folklore — the triumph of good over evil.

Amir Arsalan is another beloved character whose adventures were famously recounted to the Qajar king Nasereddin Shah by a skilled storyteller. His battles against demons, sorcerers, and enemies reflect the eternal struggle between good and evil. His unwavering love for Farrokh-Laqa highlights themes of loyalty, perseverance, and heroism.

Folklore, daily life in Iran

Iranian folklore extends beyond mere stories; it plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and societal values. Passed down orally through generations, these tales foster a shared sense of identity and continuity. For example, the story of Hossein the Kurd

of Shabestari exemplifies the ideal of Javanmard — chivalry, honor, and moral virtue. Hossein's unwavering dedication to justice and community embodies the virtues of loyalty and bravery.

Molla Nasreddin, a humorous and clever folkloric character, is highly popular not only in Iran but across the Middle East. His stories often hide moral lessons within humor, prompting reflection on personal actions, social norms, and societal contradictions. These tales serve as both entertainment and social critique, emphasizing wisdom, humility, and the importance of wit.

Influence of folklore on Persian literature

Furthermore, Iranian music, visual arts, and theater draw deep inspiration from folklore.

Themes of heroism, love, and supernatural beings found in folktales are vividly depicted in miniature paintings, exquisite carpets, and theatrical storytelling (Naqali). These art forms serve to keep the spirit of folklore alive, offering visual and auditory windows into Iran's timeless stories.

Iranian folklore, with its tapestry of mythology, moral lessons, and cultural wisdom, offers a profound glimpse into the mindset and history of the Iranian people. It continues to shape Iran's cultural identity — reflecting its struggles, values, and hopes. Through epic tales of heroes, realms of fairies and demons, and the symbolism of mythic beings, these stories forge a powerful link between Iran's glorious past and its present, providing lessons that remain relevant today.



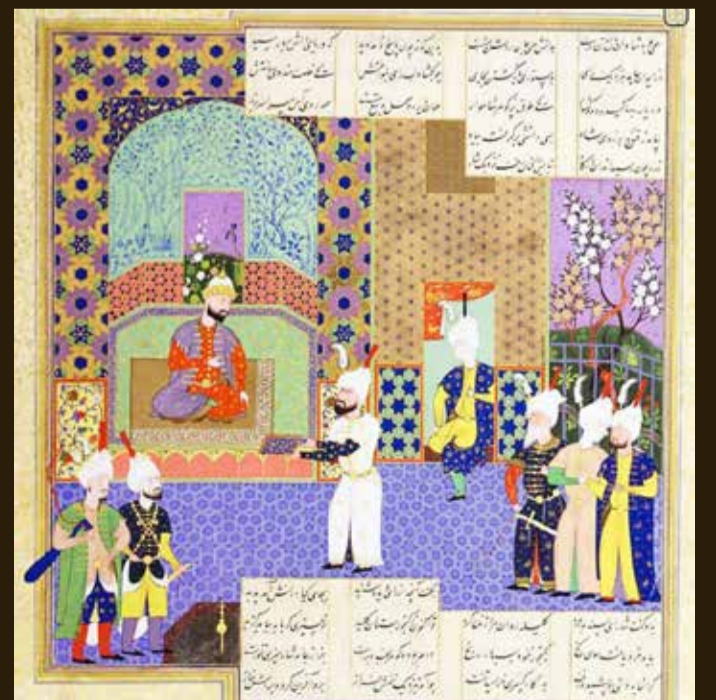
Isfandiyar defeats a dragon in this 14th-century Isfahan miniature, capturing a legendary moment from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh

ALAMY



The mythical Simorgh carries infant Zal to her nest, from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, the Persian national epic written in the 10th century.

ALAMY



A folio from Shah Tahmasp's Shahnameh shows offering book to king Nushirvan.

ALAMY

Iraq issues commemorative stamp for martyred Leader

Arts & Culture Desk

Iraq issued a commemorative postage stamp on Wednesday to mark the funeral ceremonies for Iran's martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, as mourners and senior officials from two countries, Iran and Iraq, gathered in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, according to Iraq's Ministry of Communications. The special stamp, unveiled by Iraqi Communications Minister Mustafa Jabbar Sanad, commemorates one of the largest religious and state ceremonies held in Iraq in recent years and reflects Baghdad's decision to preserve the occasion in the country's historical record. The funeral ceremonies began in Najaf on July 8 before continuing to

Karbala under extensive security and logistical arrangements. "The commemorative stamp has been issued to honor the grand funeral ceremony that Iraq is witnessing," Sanad said, describing it as a symbol of recording the event in Iraq's national memory. The ministry said the postal issue was intended to memorialize the ceremony and underscore its historical significance. The body of Ayatollah Khamenei and several members of his family arrived at Najaf International Airport late on July 7, where they were formally received by senior Iranian and Iraqi officials. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian headed the Iranian delegation, while Iraqi Prime Minister Ali

Falih al-Zaidi led the Iraqi reception alongside political, religious and tribal figures. The funeral procession drew large crowds of Iraqi citizens, pilgrims and visitors, with prominent Iraqi political leaders, including members of the Coordination Framework, joining the ceremonies. Commemorative stamps have long been used by governments to mark defining national, historical and cultural events. Iraq has previously issued special postal releases to commemorate major religious occasions and milestones, with the latest edition highlighting the significance Baghdad has attached to the funeral ceremonies held in the country's revered Shia holy cities.



Iran pitches halal tourism potential Vietnam forum



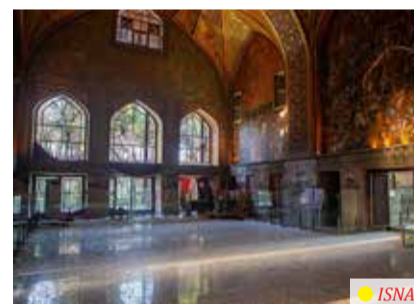
Arts & Culture Desk

Iran promoted itself as a safe and competitive destination for the fast-growing halal tourism market at an international conference attended by delegates from around 30 countries in Vietnam on July 8, according to Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, as Tehran stepped up efforts to expand its share of Muslim travel. The conference, held in Vietnam's coastal Khanh Hoa province under the theme "Vietnam, A New Destination of Halal Tourism", brought together about 350 government officials, tourism authorities, investors and businesses from South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and member states of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, showing

intensifying competition for Muslim travelers, ILNA reported. Parham Janfeshan, adviser to Iran's tourism minister and director-general for tourism services supervision and evaluation, said Iran's civilizational heritage, Islamic culture, diverse landscapes and Muslim-friendly infrastructure positioned it to become "one of the world's influential destinations" in the expanding halal tourism market. "Halal tourism is no longer limited to halal food," Janfeshan said. "It requires a complete ecosystem, including standard accommodation, family-oriented services, facilities compatible with Islamic culture and well-trained personnel." He said Iran's location at the crossroads of major Muslim regions, combined with cultural and social infrastructure already

aligned with Muslim-friendly travel standards, gave the country a competitive edge. Janfeshan also argued that firsthand visits offered foreign travelers the chance to experience Iran's "security, tranquility and hospitality" directly, providing what he described as a more accurate picture of the country than negative portrayals abroad. He called for broader international cooperation, including joint tourism agreements, specialized travel packages for Muslim visitors, stronger health tourism, higher service standards and the training of specialist tour guides to support long-term growth. The conference highlighted the commercial importance of the sector. Vietnam said it welcomed more than 21mn international visitors in 2025, including around 600,000 Muslim travelers, or nearly 3% of total arrivals. Vietnamese officials said they were building a nationwide halal ecosystem and encouraging destinations such as Khanh Hoa to expand halal-certified services as demand from Muslim travelers continues to rise. Iran has been seeking to diversify its tourism industry by developing religious, cultural and medical travel, while placing greater emphasis on halal tourism as global Muslim travel spending continues to expand.

Restoration begins at UNESCO-listed Chehel Sotoun after war damage



Arts & Culture Desk

Restoration work began at Iran's UNESCO-listed Chehel Sotoun World Heritage site in the central city of Isfahan after blast damage linked by the 40-day US-Israeli military aggression on Iran, the site's director said, marking the first phase of efforts to preserve one of the country's most important Safavid-era monuments. The project aims not only to repair damaged sections but also to safeguard the site's historical authenticity while documenting physical evidence left by the conflict for future research. The restoration follows technical assessments, damage surveys and the procurement of traditional building materials. "The main objective is to protect the site's authenticity and historical identity," Mostafa Hadipour, director of the Chehel Sotoun World Heritage Base, told ISNA. He said conservation work is being carried out under internationally recognized restoration principles and with the minimum intervention required to

stabilize the monument. According to Hadipour, the blast wave from an attack on the nearby Isfahan governor's office damaged parts of the historic complex, which lies within the site's protected buffer zone. The ticket office's decorative brick latticework was destroyed, safety glass shattered, equipment was damaged and part of the roof over a staff building collapsed. Restoration crews have begun replacing fractured wooden beams with matching timber treated against moisture, termites and wood-boring insects. Plasterwork, structural reinforcement and repairs to damaged walls are also under way. Hadipour said the work has uncovered previously concealed architectural features, including a historic wall niche and traces of earlier painted decoration hidden beneath later layers of plaster. "These findings provide valuable evidence of the building's evolution through different historical periods," he said. "We are documenting and preserving every layer revealed during the conservation process." He added that conservators would use a special method to preserve selected historical layers and retain evidence of the recent damage as part of the monument's documented history. Built in the 17th century under the Safavid dynasty, Chehel Sotoun is one of nine Persian gardens inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 2011. The palace is renowned for its mirror hall, monumental frescoes and landscaped gardens, making it one of Iran's foremost cultural landmarks.

Iran wins four medals at Int'l Scientific Physics Olympiad

Social Desk

Iran's national physics Olympiad team won two gold, one silver and one bronze medal at the International Scientific Physics Olympiad (ISPhO) 2026, held online from June 21 to June 30, the Ministry of Education announced. The online competition brought together secondary school students from more than 60 countries and served as a preparatory event for national teams ahead of major international physics contests, IRNA reported. Hirbod Foudazi delivered the competition's strongest overall performance, winning a

gold medal, the Best Participant award and the highest score in the theoretical examination. Amirsam Goharpey claimed Iran's second gold medal, while Kian Zarabian earned silver and Mohammad Mirmohammadi took bronze, completing Iran's four-medal haul. Established to promote international scientific cooperation and excellence in physics education, the International Scientific Physics Olympiad provides outstanding secondary school students with an opportunity to demonstrate their theoretical knowledge and problem-solving skills in an international competitive environment.

Five Iranian short films to shine at Russian festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Five Iranian short films will compete at the 16th Light of the World festival in Russia from September 12-16, organizers and Iranian media said, underscoring growing cultural exchanges between the two countries. Held in Russia's Yaroslavl Region, the festival focuses on films for children and young audiences. Founded by the Rybinsk Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, it brings together international productions exploring youth, family and social themes, IRIB News reported.

The Iranian lineup includes 'Bitura' by Faraj Salehi, Rana al-Azm and Kiasha Tangestani; 'Dandelions Girl' by Azadeh Masihzadeh, Tara Soroush, Benjamin Afraneh and Abdollah Bahadori; 'The Road We've Come' by Narges Fazeli; 'Distant Land' by Abbas Qadirmohseni and Farshad Borzou; and 'The Old Woman and the Great Tree' by Robabeh Hashemi. Produced by Documentary, Experimental & Animation Film Center (DEFC) of Iran, 'The Road We've Come' follows a mother with a disability who faces mounting obstacles while trying to bring her daughter home from school.



'Dandelions Girl' tells the story of an 11-year-old village girl determined to play soccer, using her talent as a goalkeeper to challenge social expectations and pursue her dream.