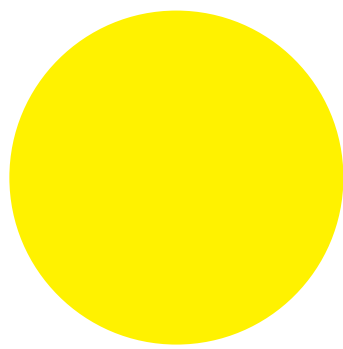


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Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi (R) welcomes his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi in Muscat, Oman on July 11, 2026.
● IRNA

Food, not just oil, may define Persian Gulf's next security order

Persian Gulf stability may soon hinge on wheat as much as missiles



By Mohammad Emami
Senior researcher at
presidential administration

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

When war erupted between Iran, Israel, and the United States and the Strait of Hormuz once again became a potential flashpoint, global attention immediately turned to oil markets. But another, quieter shock was moving through the region: the fragile supply chains that feed millions in some of the world's most im-

port-dependent societies. The ceasefire may have reduced the immediate risk of escalation, but it did not resolve the deeper vulnerability the war exposed. Confidence in the systems that keep these wealthy but food-insecure states fed has been badly shaken. For decades, Persian Gulf security has been defined by oil flows, military deterrence, and strategic alliances. Yet a series of recent shocks from the war in Ukraine to disruptions in Red Sea shipping and the latest conflict around the Strait of Hormuz has revealed a less visible but in-

creasingly consequential threat: the fragility of the region's food systems. The Persian Gulf states remain among the most food-import-dependent economies on the planet. They import the vast majority of their staple foods, much of it passing through the narrow Strait of Hormuz. The same vital chokepoint also carries critical fertilizers and agricultural inputs. Energy, food, and geopolitics are now dangerously intertwined.

Shared vulnerability
This problem did not begin

with the latest confrontation. Long before the recent Israel-US clash with Iran, food security had already become a pressing common challenge across the Persian Gulf. Scorching heat, extreme water scarcity, declining domestic agriculture, and the accelerating effects of climate change have left every country from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to Tehran and Doha facing the same harsh reality: none can reliably feed itself without external supply chains. What makes this strategically important is that the vulnerabil-

ity is shared. The same shipping lanes, fertilizer markets, climate pressures, and supply chain risks affect them all. This condition can be described as "food co-vulnerability" a rare situation in which one country's food security becomes closely tied to the vulnerabilities of its neighbors. Unlike classic security rivalries, where states compete for advantage, this shared exposure encourages collective resilience. A disruption in grain shipments, fertilizer supplies, or maritime trade routes rarely respects political borders.

Push for new routes

Persian Gulf governments have responded by buying farmland abroad, building strategic reserves, and investing in agricultural technology. These steps help. But they do not solve the fundamental issue: dangerous dependence on long, vulnerable maritime supply chains in an unstable world. This is why overland corridors linking the grain belts of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia to the Persian Gulf are no longer long-term infrastructure projects. They are becoming strategic necessities.

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Ayatollah Khamenei pledges vengeance for martyred Leader

Political Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei expressed heartfelt appreciation for the "astonishing, enemy-breaking and historic" turnout at the funeral of the martyred Leader, vowing that vengeance on the "criminal and disgraced murderers" is certain.

In a message issued following the funeral ceremonies for martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader praised the massive public participation in Iran and Iraq, calling it an extraordinary display of support.

"We pledge to avenge the pure blood of the martyred Leader and all the martyrs of these two wars from the criminal and disgraced murderers," Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

"I sincerely appreciate the presence of tens of millions of people in the cities

and villages of Iran and Iraq, especially Tehran, Qom, Najaf, Karbala and Mashhad," he said, describing the turnout as "astonishing, enemy-breaking and historic."

Addressing the martyred Leader directly, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "With tearful eyes and broken hearts, as we bid farewell to your body, we pledge to preserve your school of thought and steadfastly follow the straight path you charted, fearing no hardship and placing our trust, as you did, in God's promises."

The Leader declared that avenging the blood of the martyred Leader and all the martyrs of these two US-Israeli wars of aggression against Iran was "the demand of our nation and must certainly be carried out."

Ayatollah Khamenei said those responsible "will take to their graves the dream of a peaceful death in bed," adding that the pledge "does not depend on

my presence or that of other officials."

"Whether we are here or not, this will be realized, and soon, free people across the world will each carry out part of this divine mission," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also paid tribute to those martyred alongside the martyred Leader, saying, "Blessed are you, who are now guests of the Master whom you served with devotion."

Addressing Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, the eighth Imam of Shia Muslims, the message described the martyred Leader as "a humble servant" who had dedicated everything to his faith and to serving the Imam.

It expressed hope that, in the future, he would be among the righteous who accompany Muhammad al-Mahdi, the awaited Imam in Shia belief.

The statement concluded by offering condolences to the Imam of the Age and praying for the elevation of all those killed.



Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei
IRNA

"We ask God to grant all the martyrs the highest ranks, to bestow patience upon their families, and to grant the

oppressed Iranian nation a decisive and imminent victory, God willing," he noted.

Araghchi: Mutual compliance key to implementing Iran-US memo

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran has so far fulfilled all its commitments under a memorandum of understanding signed with the US, stressing that the deal can only succeed through "mutual compliance."

"Iran has so far kept its word, unlike the so-called US Treasury Secretary who is violating Paragraph 9 of the MoU," the Iranian foreign minister said in a post on X.

That refers to part of the memorandum of understanding that Iran will "maintain the current status quo of its nuclear program," and the United States "will not impose any new sanctions, and will not deploy additional forces in the region" pending a final deal.

"That violation follows other violations and missteps by the United States. Reality check: There can only be mutual compliance," Araghchi said hours before his departure for Oman for talks with the country's officials on arrangements for the administration of the Strait of Hormuz and regional developments.

Araghchi's comments came days after the US conducted fresh military strikes on Iran and issued new sanctions targeting 14 Iranian individuals and entities on Friday.

US President Donald Trump also declared on Friday that a ceasefire reached between the two countries was "over," even as he claimed that Iran had requested continued talks.

"We have agreed to do so, but the United States has stated to them, in no uncer-



Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi (R) greets his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi as the Iranian diplomat visited Muscat on July 11, 2026 for talks with the Arab country's officials.
IRNA

tain terms, that the Cease Fire is OVER!" Trump wrote on Truth Social.

The comments mark a new low in relations between the two countries, after an exchange of fire this week rocked the shaky agreement aimed at turning the months-long ceasefire into durable peace and threatened a return to full-scale regional war.

The US launched the strikes on the pretext of alleged Iran's attacks on ships in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which is a major source of contention between the two countries.

The US Treasury Department also revoked a temporary sanctions waiver for Iranian oil, cancelling a license announced in June that had allowed Tehran to produce, sell and deliver crude oil

and related products through August 21. Iran's ambassador to the United Nations warned that Tehran will no longer consider itself bound by the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding if the US continues to violate its commitments under the agreement.

In a statement to reporters outside the UN Security Council on Friday, Ambassador Amir Saeed Iravani said the United States has repeatedly breached the MoU, including through large-scale military attacks on Iranian islands and southern cities on July 7 and 8.

These renewed attacks, he said, constitute a "flagrant violation" of the UN Charter and a material breach of the MoU's first clause, which commits the US to ceasing all military action against Iran.

Deputy FM: US export reward exposes UAE role in anti-Iran onslaught

International Desk

Iran said a US decision to ease export controls on the United Arab Emirates in recognition of the Arab country's support for a recent US's military operation against Iran is a "proof of Abu Dhabi's disgrace."

"The US Department of Commerce has published a new document under which it has eased export control regulations and upgraded the UAE's export status as a reward for the country's support for military aggression against Iran," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said in a post on X on Friday.

Gharibabadi said that the move amounted to "Washington's official admission and a document of Abu Dhabi's disgrace," adding that it carries "international responsibility and direct legal consequences."

"The UAE must be held accountable," he wrote.

Remarks by the Iranian official came after the US loosened export controls on the UAE, making it easier to export Nvidia AI chips, military equipment, commercial satellites and spacecraft in a boost to relations between the two allies.

"Today, the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) is announcing that it will significantly upgrade the status of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) under the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) (15

CFR parts 730-774) in recognition of the UAE's status as a US Major Defense Partner and its support in advancing US national security interests, including Operation Epic Fury", the department said in a statement, referring to the US-Israeli strikes on Iran that began in February.

In providing the more favorable treatment for certain exports to the UAE, the Commerce Department said the US had worked with the country for decades to counter Iran and what it called "its proxies, including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis," according to Reuters.

Additionally, it noted, the UAE was the largest US trading partner in the Middle East, and that its foreign direct investment in the United States was valued at over \$1 trillion.

Under the new regulation, the Commerce Department moved the UAE into a country grouping that allows more license exceptions for military and dual-use items controlled by the department.

The UAE will be the only country in the group that is not a member of multilateral export control regimes. Other countries in the grouping include NATO countries and other allies.

Recent reports had already revealed that the UAE played a far more active role in the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran by carrying out dozens of airstrikes on Iranian territory from the opening days of the war which began on February 28.

Food, not just oil ...

Iran sits at the geographic heart of this emerging north-south network.

Any serious attempt to build resilient regional food supply chains that completely bypass Iran is likely to be both costly and strategically incomplete.

Limited opening for cooperation

This does not mean political reconciliation is at hand. Sanctions, deep mistrust, and old rivalries remain major obstacles. Yet food security has a distinct advantage: when bread prices soar or supplies tighten, the pressure on governments becomes immediate and intensely domestic.

The Arab Persian Gulf states bring capital, advanced logistics, and modern agricultural expertise. Iran

brings geography, established overland routes, and proximity to major Eurasian grain producers. These complementary strengths combined with their shared climate and food challenges could open the door to limited, practical cooperation even without broader political trust.

Redefining security

The deeper lesson of the recent crisis may be conceptual. While experts have long warned how food can be weaponized, the current situation points to another possibility: food as a platform for pragmatic cooperation. Joint efforts on grain corridors, fertilizer networks, strategic reserves, and early-warning systems could gradually serve as confidence-building measures.

For generations, the Persian Gulf

built its security architecture around one goal: keeping oil flowing. In an era of climate disruption and fractured supply chains, the region's next great strategic challenge may be ensuring that its societies stay fed.

The map of the Persian Gulf is being redrawn. Alongside naval chokepoints, military bases, and oil terminals, the infrastructure that keeps millions fed is becoming a strategic asset in its own right.

In that sense, the strategic question facing the Persian Gulf is no longer only how to defend against common threats, but how to manage common vulnerabilities.

After decades focused on securing the flow of oil, the region may now need to devote equal attention to securing the systems that sustain life itself.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran pitches transit initiatives to strengthen BRICS connectivity

Economy Desk

Iran's Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd proposed closer transportation cooperation among BRICS countries on Saturday, presenting a package of initiatives aimed at expanding regional connectivity while reaffirming its readiness to serve as a reliable transit link for the bloc's supply chains.

Speaking virtually at the BRICS Transport Ministers' Meeting hosted by India in the city of Nagpur, Sadegh Malvajerd said Iran's geographic location made it the only link connecting three major Eurasian transport axes.

"Iran, through the International North-South Transport Corridor, the East-West route and the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor, plays a key role in connecting the markets of Asia, Europe and the region," she said, according to IRNA.

Sadegh Malvajerd said the three routes connect Russia to the Indian Ocean, India to Central Asia, the Caucasus and Europe, and China to the shortest overland route to Europe, adding that all BRICS members would benefit from the transit network.

She also presented four proposals to expand transport cooperation



Iran's Roads Minister Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd speaks via video link at the BRICS Transport Ministers' Meeting in Nagpur, India, July 11, 2026.

● THE PUBLIC WORLD

within BRICS, including recognizing the Rasht-Astara railway and Chabahar Port as strategic BRICS projects, establishing a permanent corridor coordination council to facilitate cargo transportation, developing a

green corridor and cooperation on sustainable transport, and creating multi-purpose corridors for energy and fiber-optic infrastructure along transit routes.

The minister also expressed Iran's

support for this year's BRICS theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," saying it was aligned with the country's transport capabilities and approach. Founded in 2009 by Brazil, Russia,

India and China (with South Africa joining in 2010), BRICS has since expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia as full members.

Sadegh Malvajerd reiterated Iran's readiness to serve as a safe, reliable and cost-effective bridge for BRICS supply chains and said she hoped the meeting's discussions would lead to practical agreements and expanded transport cooperation among member states.

Referring to recent US and Israeli attacks on Iran's transport infrastructure, she said the actions violated international law, adding that despite the damage, all affected infrastructure had been rebuilt in the shortest possible time and transit flows had resumed along all international routes, demonstrating Iran's commitment to maintaining the resilience of regional and international transport networks.

The remarks came after what Iran described as some of the latest attacks on its transport infrastructure during the 40-day war that began on February 28. Earlier on Thursday, US strikes damaged railway infrastructure in the north-eastern provinces of Golestan and Khorasan Razavi. One of the two damaged railway tracks was repaired within 15 hours, allowing passenger train services on the Tehran-Mashhad route to resume, while repairs to the second track were expected to be completed within a few days.

UNCTAD: Iran attracts \$1.65b in foreign investment in 2025, up 13%



Economy Desk

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Iran rose 13% in 2025 from a year earlier to \$1.647 billion, according to the latest global investment report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The report showed FDI inflows into Iran increased from \$1.449 billion in 2024, marking a second consecutive annual increase after rising 2% the previous year.

The figures cover a year that included a 12-day US-Israeli aggression on Iran in June 2025 and continued US sanctions under President Donald

Trump's renewed "maximum pressure" policy, according to Tasnim news agency.

According to the report, global FDI increased 6% in 2025 to \$1.624 trillion. FDI flows to developed economies rose 11% to \$723 billion from \$649 billion in 2024, while flows to developing economies increased 2% to \$901 billion from \$883 billion. Developing economies nevertheless attracted \$178 billion more in FDI than developed countries.

UNCTAD said the increase in global investment was driven mainly by higher investment in data centers, followed by the oil and gas sector,

while investment in renewable energy, infrastructure and manufacturing declined.

Iran ranked 81st among 201 economies in terms of FDI inflows in 2025, according to the report, placing it ahead of more than 120 economies.

The report also showed Iran attracted more foreign direct investment than a number of European countries, including Denmark, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iceland, as well as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain and Kuwait.

Iran remains fifth-largest global oil producer as output rises in 2025

Economy Desk

Iran's crude oil and condensate production surged 2.7% in 2025 to 4.446 million barrels per day (bpd), up 116,000 bpd from a year earlier, according to the latest Statistical Review of World Energy published by the UK-based Energy Institute (EI).

The report showed Iran accounted for 5.2% of global crude output in 2025, retaining its position as the world's fifth-largest producer behind the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Canada. The data comes as US President Donald Trump's second administration pursues a policy aimed at pushing Iran's oil exports to "zero" through sanctions.

Separately, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its latest monthly oil market report that global oil demand was on track to decline this year for the first time since 2020, as the US-Israeli war on Iran continued to disrupt oil production and exports in the Middle East.

The agency said a recovery had begun following last month's peace memorandum of understanding between Washington and Tehran, but warned that renewed escalation could further cloud the outlook.

According to the IEA, the latest round of fighting was triggered

by differing interpretations of provisions governing the Strait of Hormuz under the agreement. Before the conflict erupted in February with US and Israeli strikes on Iran, the waterway carried almost one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports.

Under the MoU, Iran pledged to ensure the safe passage of vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.

The IEA said the effective closure of the strategic waterway had disrupted as much as 14 million bpd of crude oil flows, contributing to fuel shortages and higher prices that weighed on the global economy.

Since the memo was signed in mid-June, 52 tankers carrying about 62 million barrels of Iranian crude oil and petrochemical

products have departed, according to Reuters.

The shipments were a sharp recovery after Iranian crude exports were largely suspended between mid-April and mid-June because of a US naval blockade on Iranian ports.

"Anticipating a possible imminent resumption of the US navy blockade, Tehran shipped out no less than 10 million barrels of crude oil and fuel oil overnight," TankerTrackers.com said on Thursday in a post.

The peace memo was signed separately by Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on June 18. It extended the US-Iran ceasefire for 60 days and established a framework for future negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program and other issues.



● ISNA

South Pars plant hits 500 MW with last steam unit coming online

Economy Desk

The head of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) announced on Saturday that the South Pars Be'sat combined-cycle power plant had reached its full generating capacity of 500 megawatts after completing its expansion unit.

The expansion was completed with the startup of the plant's third and final steam unit, which brought the facility fully online at its nominal capacity of 500 MW, Touraj Dehqani said on Saturday, according to

ISNA.

The move allows the facility to supply electricity to refineries and petrochemical complexes in the South Pars region, he added.

He said the plant's 500-MW steam section would provide power to Pars 1 refineries in Asalouyeh, Pars 2 refineries in Kangan, as well as petrochemical complexes in the area, helping ensure stable production, uninterrupted refinery operations and greater reliability for the power grid in southern Iran.

"The full commissioning of the steam section of the

South Pars Be'sat combined-cycle power plant, in addition to improving the reliability of electricity supply for strategic industries, will also strengthen the resilience of the country's power grid, safeguard national assets and support the plant's sustainable operation," Dehqani said.

According to Pars Oil and Gas Company, the South Pars Be'sat combined-cycle power plant consists of three steam units, and the startup of the third unit marks the full completion and operation of the steam section expansion project.

A historic farewell in Najaf, Karbala

Parade of Islamic Ummah's power



By Mohammad Mirzaei

Member of the Cultural Commission of Iran's Parliament

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The funeral procession of the martyred Leader in Holy Najaf and Exalted Karbala was a spectacle of rare parity within the annals of the Islamic Ummah; a multimillion-person convocation that, transcending borders, manifested an unbreakable nexus between Muslim nations and the distinguished station of the "walayah" (guardianship). The fervent presence of pilgrims and devotees from Iraq and adjacent countries, and that magnificent farewell within the sacred shrines, not merely demonstrated heartfelt veneration for the martyred Leader but also transmitted a clear message to the global community: this Ummah, in defense of his ideals and legacy, remains unanimous and resolute. In articulating that which transpired, however, allusion to several noteworthy points is incumbent. Firstly, the funeral procession of the Islamic Revolution's Leader in Iran was of such magnitude that even certain Western media outlets characterized it with words such as "the victory parade" of the Iranian nation and conceded its grandeur and the momentous messages latent within it. Even Iran's adversaries concede that the immensity of this multimillion-person procession signified the profound bond between the populace and the revolutionary ideals, the Islamic Republic's Establishment, and the walayah. In fact, and beyond political currents,

the martyred Imam's funeral transformed into a national and historic epic of the Iranian nation; an epic that constituted a tribute to a lifetime of service by the martyred Leader and the distinguished legacy bequeathed to Iran from his 37-year tenure of political stewardship. The multimillion-person funeral transmitted the message of the Iranian nation's authority and cohesion to the global community, and the people, precisely as the martyred Leader had articulated during the final weeks of his blessed existence, were thus mobilized and said the final word. Another point is that the region's nations have witnessed that the two Imams of Iran's Islamic Revolution, and especially our martyred Imam during their tenure of guardianship, established the Islamic Republic's system in such a way that the economic sanctions and full-scale wars imposed upon Iran could not inflict any detriment upon this country. It was during the stewardship and leadership of the martyred Khamenei that he, from his position as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, designed the possibility of victory in war for Iran, and that with the most inexpensive weaponry feasible. They witnessed how global arrogance, with all its multitudes and materiel, assailed Iran, and how its fighter jets worth hundreds of millions of dollars were vanquished by drones and missiles, constructed at far lower cost by the youth of this very land, and they observed how the enemy's aircraft carriers could not endure remaining in proximity to Iran's territorial waters, and how America's hollow hegemony collapsed throughout the entire region.



The casket holding the purified remains of Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who was martyred by US-Israeli missiles earlier in February, is transported toward the shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH), as seen from atop a house in Karbala, Iraq on July 8, 2026.

● khamenei.ir

All those measures and that sagacious governance by our martyred Leader were what caused not only the Iranian nation to mourn and lament his martyrdom, but also the sting of his martyrdom to settle upon the soul of the Islamic Ummah and all the Muslim nations of the region. To such an extent that not only the freedom-seeking populace and the Shias of Iraq, but, had it been feasible, all freedom-seeking Muslims of the region in various countries would have conducted magnificent funeral ceremonies within their own nations. From another perspective, the immense, multimillion-person funeral of the martyred gentleman of Iran in the holy city of Najaf and Exalted Karbala also possesses historical referents and identifications. Imam Khamenei, following the

example of his master, Imam Hussein (PBUH), acted in the manner of Hussein; just as that martyred Imam in Karbala was also under sanction and siege, and was martyred not within the tent but in the midst of the battlefield. Likewise, the martyred Leader, akin to Imam Hussein, attained martyrdom alongside the beloved members of his family, and did not bow his head before the bullying of arrogance. Such identifications, alongside that unyielding leadership and the generation of authority that Iran's martyred Leader possessed, have now been manifested not only by the Iranian nation but also by the Muslim Ummah, the Iraqi people, and the peoples of other Arab countries in the region, some of whom have succeeded in reaching Iraq to participate in this funeral ceremony.

As in Tehran, too, we witnessed a considerable multitude of sisters and brothers who had journeyed from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other neighboring countries to Tehran to bid farewell to Imam Khamenei. All these people fulfilled their duty in appreciation of the martyred Imam's endeavors; if the Iranian nation, through its presence, insured the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Establishment, the walayah, and this Islamic Republic, then in Najaf and Karbala, this funeral likewise signified the collapse of arrogance's hollow hegemony. The Leader of the Revolution has enjoyed an enormous social base not only in Iran but also in the region's nations.

The Americans today, more than at any time in the preceding four months, have realized the extent of their miscalculation and must now pay the price for their deed. Now, the martyrdom of Imam Khamenei has augmented the knowledge and awareness of all nations in the region, and America no longer possesses any place to remain in the Middle East. Hence, the Iraqi people and all the followers of our martyred Leader in the Middle East, in unison with the Iranians in Najaf and Karbala, demanded retribution for the blood of this martyred Imam. The Iraqi people's reception of Iran's martyred Imam was truly befitting our Imam; our Imam indeed possessed a higher station and base. The funeral and farewell that the Iraqi people conducted exhibited the depth of the Ummah's connection with the Imam and left the global community in astonishment, confronting them with this question: what is this connection that the Muslim nations of the world have with the leadership of their Ummah?

Commonalities transcending politics



By Mohammad-Ali Abtahi

Member of the Combatant Clergy Association

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The funeral rites of the martyred Leader in Iraq can be examined from two divergent yet mutually complementary perspectives; firstly, from a religious perspective, and secondly, from a political and strategic one. Each of these two angles bears messages that render the significance of this ceremony superior to a mere formal and ceremonial farewell.

From a religious perspective, the funeral and circumambulation of the Leader's remains in the proximity of the sacred shrines of the Immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) in Iraq possesses a particular semantic significance. In the long-standing Shia tradition, the custom has always been that the remains of great scholars and clerics, whenever feasible, are circumambulated beside the mausoleums of the Immaculate Imams or interred in their vicinity. This tradition is considered an indication of the profound spiritual bond between religious scholars and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

In Iraq, too, this tradition possesses a lengthy antecedent, and for years, the remains of numerous faithful and religious figures from various parts of the Islamic world have been transported for circumambulation to the sacred shrines of Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and Samarra. From this perspective, the presence of the martyred Leader's remains,

as a marja (a top cleric authorized to make legal decisions), in these sacred sites, and his subsequent funeral beside the mausoleum of Imam Reza (PBUH) in Mashhad, constitutes a link in this same historical and religious tradition and shows his particular station among the Shia community. However, perhaps the more significant message of this ceremony should be sought in the political dimension and the relations between Iran and Iraq. Here, the subject is no longer merely a religious marja, but rather the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran; a figure whom, for years, certain media and political currents endeavored to interpret Iran's influence and connection with Iraq solely within the framework of "proxy forces" or political and military interventions. The extensive participation of the Iraqi people in the funeral ceremony presented another image of these relations. This participation demonstrated that the bond between the two nations, more than being a product of political relations, is rooted in shared religious, cultural, and historical beliefs. The popular reception of this ceremony indicates that a considerable segment of Iraq's Shia society, irrespective of prevailing political analyses, has established a profound and doctrinal connection with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the station of the marja'yya.

Another noteworthy point is the presence of movements and groups that have not always been counted among the official supporters of Iran's policies. Their participation in the funeral ceremony showed that this event, transcending political and factional borders, trans-

formed into a unifying occasion for various segments of Iraqi society. This very matter redoubles the political value of this ceremony and demonstrates that Iran's social capital in Iraq is not limited merely to aligned groups.

On the other hand, the presence of official Iraqi dignitaries in this ceremony also bore a clear message. Although a portion of this presence can be assessed within the framework of diplomatic formalities and the coinciding visit of Iran's President, the holding of a ceremony with this level of magnificence for the leader of another country on Iraqi soil is not a common occurrence in international relations. This event indicates the privileged and special relations between Tehran and Baghdad; relations that have been formed on the basis of religious, cultural, historical, and security commonalities and have now entered a deeper stage.

The funeral of the martyred Leader in Iraq, in truth, was not merely the farewell of a prominent figure; rather, it represented a manifestation of the deep-rooted ties between the two nations and the two countries. A tie that can, in the future as well, lay the groundwork for greater convergence, the strengthening of political and security cooperation, and an increase in empathy between the Iranian and Iraqi nations. If this social and historical capital is properly preserved and reinforced, Tehran-Baghdad relations will undoubtedly enter a more robust phase, and its achievements will be noteworthy not only for the two countries but also for the Islamic world.



Iraqis mourn for the martyrdom of Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei during his extended funeral in Najaf, Iraq, on July 8, 2026.

● khamenei.ir

Paying tribute to martyred Leader



By Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani

Head of the Central Council of the Executives of Construction Party

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei constitutes a calamity for the Islamic world and the devotees of the Islamic Revolution. He was among the prominent disciples of Imam Khomeini's school and one of the influential figures of Iran's contemporary history, who spent his life in the struggle for and preservation of the Islamic Revolution's ideals.

Unwavering faith, endurance in the face of adversities, courage in sensitive arenas, and an unwavering spirit in discharging

weighty responsibilities were among the salient features of his character. Ayatollah Khamenei played a decisive role in preserving the country's stability, security, and authority, and rendered his name enduring in the historical memory of the Iranian nation. I retain numerous memories of the martyred Ayatollah Khamenei. Memories, each of which reveals an aspect of his conscientiousness and sense of responsibility. One of these memories dates back to the late days of 1990. At that time, after the conclusion of the Iraqi-Imposed War and the liberation of prisoners, in my capacity as a member of the Board of Directors of the Defense Industries Organization and Deputy for Coordination of the Missile Group, I went to meet with him to present a report on the condition of the country's military industries. In that session, I spoke about

the necessity of developing Iran's defensive capabilities, particularly in the missile domain, and the importance of supporting this strategic sector to ensure the nation's national security. What remains in my mind above all else was his precise perspective on the country's strategic issues. Ayatollah Khamenei listened attentively to the explanations and posed questions that demonstrated his particular mastery and sensitivity regarding the various dimensions of the subject. At that juncture, perhaps few could grasp the significance of the missile capability's role in Iran's future defensive architecture as clearly as is understood today, but he, with a vision transcending day-to-day matters, attended to the necessity of reinforcing the country's deterrence infrastructure.

The history of the Islamic Revolution is a history of connections, trusts, and collaborations among figures who, at fateful junctures, bore the burden of the country's responsibility. Among these influential connections, the relationship between the martyred Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani holds a particular place; two longtime companions who, from the years of struggle against despotism and arrogance through the era of the Islamic Establishment's consolidation, the Sacred Defense, and the country's reconstruction, played their

roles alongside one another.

In this relationship, subsequent to the Revolution, I also have several particular memories of him. First, the time of his assassination attempt in July 1981, which occurred before the event of the Seventh of Tir [June 28, 1981]. Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani was then occupied with inspecting the coal mines of Kerman; immediately upon being informed, he returned to Tehran, and we went to the hospital, and like a brother, and perhaps closer than a brother, he cherished Ayatollah Khamenei and was concerned for his condition. After the event of the Seventh of Tir, one of my father's spiritual challenges was how to convey the news of the martyrdom of Ayatollah Beheshti and 72 others to Ayatollah Khamenei.

For our family, the recollection of Ayatollah Khamenei's name has always been intertwined with the memory of an ancient friendship. My father recounted that his first acquaintance with Ayatollah Khamenei was formed in the advanced jurisprudence (kharaji) class of the late Ayatollah Damad. A friendship that, during the years of struggle against the Pahlavi regime and especially in Iraq, deepened and transformed into brotherhood, and continued after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the great arenas of responsibility and the country's governance.

This friendship was not merely a polit-

ical relationship. It was rooted in trust, mutual understanding, and years of shared struggle. Both were among the closest companions of Imam Khomeini and, at the most critical junctures of Iran's contemporary history, stood beside one another, and many of the country's great crises were overcome through their consultation and cooperation and under the guidance of the departed Imam.

The martyred Ayatollah Khamenei is no longer among us, but his intellectual, political, and managerial legacy continues to flow through the life of the Islamic Republic and the historical memory of the Iranian nation; a legacy manifested in resistance against threats, a sense of responsibility toward the nation's destiny, continuous effort to preserve stability and national security, and faith in Iran's future. Figures of this caliber cannot be measured merely within the framework of political disputes and daily judgments. Just as my father frequently emphasized, the record of great historical figures is properly understood only when evaluated on the broad horizon of national transformations and in relation to the conditions and exigencies of their own era. The final judgment concerning them is rendered not by the clamor of daily politics but by the passage of time and the historical memory of nations.



The Iraqi people pay tribute to martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei by circumambulation his coffin — a ritual practice in which practitioners walk clockwise around the sacred shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH) — in Karbala, Iraq, on July 8, 2026.

● khamenei.ir

Iran transcends factions, tastes, and political rivalries, and the survival of the Islamic Revolution depends on preserving national unity, rationality in decision-making, and harnessing the capacities of all forces loyal to the country. Today, the most important tribute to his memory and legacy is the endeavor to build a future in which national unity prevails over division, rationality over extremism, hope over despair, and na-

tional interest over transient political conflicts. This is the very ideal that he and his longtime companion, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, with all the ups and downs of history, strived for years to realize; the ideal of a powerful, secure, and stable Iran, developed and pure, possessing national solidarity, capable — by relying on its human and historical capital — of continuing the path of progress and glory.



By Reza Mirabian

Expert on West Asian affairs

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The funeral of the martyred Leader in Iraq, unquestionably, is an exceptional, unprecedented, and noteworthy phenomenon in the history of relations between the two countries. If we return only a few decades, we will observe that Iran and Iraq endured eight years of heavy warfare. A war that left thousands of dead, martyrs, and devastation for both nations. At that time, no one could have imagined that a day would arrive when this same Iraqi nation, with insistent and extensive reception, would demand the presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Leader's remains on their own soil, to perform the funeral prayer for him beside the sacred shrines and to bid him farewell with a magnificence of rare occurrence. This event can scarcely be compared with any parallel in contemporary history. In fact, we are confronted with an entirely exceptional phenomenon that surprised many observers, especially Western and American analysts. It should not be forgotten that Iraq has been under occupation and subsequently under American pressure and influence for more than two decades, and it was natural that Washington would have no desire for the holding of such a ceremony. Hence, this magnificent reception can be interpreted as a resounding "no" from the Iraqi nation toward American policies vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. A clear message that they consider Iran a neighborly, brotherly, co-religious, and co-sectarian country and are unwilling to act against the Islamic Republic under American political pressure.

Indissoluble bond of two nations



Iraq's Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi (from 3rd R), alongside Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (from 4th R) and other high-ranking officials, prays for the soul of martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei upon their arrival at the Najaf Airport, Iraq, on July 7, 2026.

● khamenei.ir

This solidarity is not limited merely to the funeral ceremony. In recent years, especially in the battles of the Resistance Axis, Iraq has played one of the most brilliant and influential roles. Iraq's resistance forces, alongside the Islamic Republic of Iran, whether in confronting counter-revolutionary groups based in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region or against the threats and hostile actions of certain regional countries, have had an active and decisive presence. They have demonstrated in practice that, at critical junctures, they stand fully beside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

If we analyze these developments within the framework of prevailing international equations, perhaps no analogous example can be found. What has occurred transcends conventional political calculations, and for this reason, this valuable capital must be appreciated. The historical, cultural, religious, and doctrinal bonds between the two nations have today manifested themselves more than ever before, and it is hoped that these relations will become increasingly robust. The extensive participation of the Iraqi people in this ceremony demonstrated that they perceive their future and destiny as intertwined

with the Islamic Republic of Iran and interpret this convergence in the confrontation with American policies in the region.

If we cast a glance at the history of Iran-Iraq relations, we realize that, at various junctures, many of the governments ruling Iraq endeavored to place this country in opposition to Iran. This policy is not confined solely to the era of Saddam. Even during the Ottoman period and thereafter, numerous wars and provocations were undertaken with the aim of creating a schism between the two nations. During the Imposed War, too, despite the fact that the majority

of Iraq's population consisted of Shias, the country's rulers attempted to employ these same Iraqi youth in the army ranks against the Islamic Republic of Iran. This approach demonstrates that foreign powers and dependent governments have always sought to generate confrontation between the two nations. Nevertheless, by virtue of the awareness of the region's nations, the blood of the martyrs, and the martyred Leader's leadership, many of these mental and political boundaries crumbled. Had the leaders of the Baathist regime been told years ago that the Iraqi people would one day, with fervor and enthusiasm, hold a funeral for the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, they would undoubtedly have deemed such a statement unbelievable. Today, however, this historical reality has occurred and has become a symbol of the profound transformation in the relations between the two nations.

It is natural that such an event would be displeasing to America. Even before the ceremony's holding, reports were published indicating that the US State Department, by dispatching directives to certain of its embassies in the region, had pressured governments regarding participation in this ceremony and had warned them against involvement at a high level. Despite these pressures, many countries participated in the ceremony, and more importantly, the Iraqi people, through extensive and rare participation, demonstrated that the will of nations transcends pressures and the political considerations of foreign powers. This very extensive participation constituted the most important message of this ceremony. A message that indicates the solidity of the historical, religious, and strategic bonds between Iran and Iraq and shows that these relations have today entered a new and decisive phase.

Farewell to the sun



By Eskandar Momeni

Iran's Minister of the Interior

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The farewell to the martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Imam Khamenei transcends a national mourning, constituting an event of immense international dimensions. His comprehensive personality and saga-

cious leadership traversed geographical boundaries and captivated innumerable hearts across the globe, the Islamic world, and especially within the strategic depth of the Resistance Front.

Hence, a portion of the unparalleled magnificence and grandeur of this venerable rite is indebted to the presence and solidarity of the devotees who, from various countries of the world, renewed their allegiance to the ideals of that exalted martyr, and this epic presence conveyed the message of the fortitude

and vitality of the movement of the two Imams of the Revolution to the world's ears.

This magnificent and historic ceremony, simultaneously, depicts a unique and enduring manifestation of unity, concord, and cohesion. The unified presence of various groups, ethnicities, and tastes from across Islamic Iran, alongside brothers and sisters from other Islamic countries, displays an indissoluble nexus among the individual members of the nation and the great Islamic Ummah. This profound empathy

and solidarity will constitute a line drawn through all the divisive conspiracies of the enemies and demonstrates that the martyrdom of the Ummah's Leader itself constitutes a new axis for the cohesion and integration of society and the consolidation of the Islamic Ummah's ranks against the arrogant powers.

By divine favor, the holding of numerous sessions for coordination, synergy, and support of the popular farewell and funeral rites among various institutions, and the preparation of necessary ar-

rangements, have provided a secure and orderly environment so that this historic farewell can be conducted at the highest possible level and befitting the exalted station of the revolutionary Leader's martyr. The extensive presence of the people in this ceremony was, in practice, a renewal of allegiance to the Leader of the Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei.

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

'Major achievement': Iranian basketball chief hails World Cup qualifying campaign

Sports Desk

Iran Basketball Federation president Javad Davari has praised the national team's resilience after it topped its group in the first round of the 2027 FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers, describing the squad's three consecutive victories as "a major achievement" amid significant changes to the roster and difficult circumstances in the buildup to the final qualifying window in July. Iran defeated Syria twice, either side of a revenge victory over Jordan in Amman, to finish atop Group C with a 5-1 record. "The national team completed this stage despite being deprived of hosting rights because of the regional situation and FIBA's decisions," Davari told Mehr News Agency. "In the middle of the campaign, we were also affected by the Ramadan War, which had a significant impact on the team's progress." Davari recalled that Iran held a training camp in Qatar before traveling to Beirut for the second qualifying window in March, where it suffered its only defeat of the campaign against Jordan. He said the circumstances surrounding that game had affected the result, while the escalation of

the conflict afterward led to the postponement of Iran's second fixture of the window against Syria. Following the end of hostilities, Iran resumed preparations under Greek head coach Sotiris Manolopoulos despite having no opportunity to play warm-up matches. He described the 72-68 victory over Syria in the rescheduled game in late June as a turning point, saying it helped restore the players' confidence heading into the decisive double-header. "Syria has invested heavily in basketball and strengthened its squad with naturalized players," he said. "Jordan is also an experienced basketball nation with a naturalized player in its lineup and the advantage of hosting us, yet we still beat them. Considering the war, the lack of preparation matches and everything the team went through, the players' performance was completely satisfactory." Davari added that Iran's recent success was even more impressive because the national team had undergone two separate rebuilding phases. The first overhaul was part of a planned youth movement aimed at refreshing the squad, while the second came unexpectedly fol-



● FIBA

lowing the departures of experienced players, including Behnam Yakhchali, Mohammad Amini and Sina Vahedi. "Those departures forced further changes to the squad, but the new group performed very well," he said. Iran has been drawn alongside Australia, New Zealand, the

Philippines, Jordan and Syria in second-round Group E, with its opening "home" game against New Zealand scheduled to be played in Pasay after FIBA moved all Group E fixtures in the August window to the Philippine city. Davari said no decision had yet been made regarding hosting rights for the fifth and sixth qual-

ifying windows and expressed hope that Iran would be allowed to stage those games on home soil. He confirmed that the national team would reconvene after a short break, with preparations beginning under Iranian assistant coaches before Manolopoulos returns from the FIBA U18 Asia Cup

qualifiers, where he is currently overseeing Iran's junior team. The Greek coach is then expected to take a two-week vacation before rejoining the senior squad. Davari also stressed the importance of arranging international friendlies ahead of the second round after previous attempts to organize warm-up matches fell through. "We made serious efforts to secure friendly games before the last three qualifiers, but negotiations with several countries did not produce results," he said. "This time we will pursue the matter much more strongly because every game in the next stage will be crucial to qualifying for the World Cup." The federation chief also revealed that Iran is continuing to identify players of Iranian heritage living abroad following the successful inclusion of Iranian-American Ryan Salehi in the recent qualifiers. "We are monitoring players with Iranian roots, whether both parents are Iranian or one parent is Iranian," Davari said. "If they are eligible and willing to represent Iran, they will be introduced to the head coach for technical evaluation. Strengthening the squad remains one of our priorities."

Behnejad gives Iran injury scare ahead of VNL Week 3



Sports Desk

Iranian setter Arshia Behnejad faces a race against time to be fit for Week 3 of the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League after suffering a knee injury during a training session on Friday. The Iranian squad is in Kladovo, Serbia, ahead of the final week of the preliminary round, which begins on Thursday in Belgrade. Iran will open its campaign in the Serbian capital with a daunting clash against surprise package Ukraine, which sits fifth in the standings with a 5-3 record. Head coach Roberto Piazza's men will then face Germany and Slovenia before wrapping up the pre-

liminary phase against Turkey on July 19. Behnejad has been Piazza's first-choice setter, and his absence would be a major blow for the Italian coach, who is eager to see his team continue its recent improvement after a difficult start to the tournament. Iran defeated Cuba 3-1 last time out to snap a four-match losing streak and climb to 14th in the 18-team standings, having won just two of its first eight matches. **Pleased with progress** Piazza, meanwhile, said he has been encouraged by the significant progress his team made in Week 2 despite losing three of its four

matches, adding that the training camp in Serbia had provided an ideal opportunity to reflect on the team's performances and build momentum for the upcoming fixtures. "Although we had only one victory in the first week, we made significant progress against major teams such as France, the United States, Japan and Cuba in the second week," Piazza said. "That had a huge impact on the players' confidence." "The most important thing is that the players now believe success is completely in their own hands," he added. "From the very first day, I tried to create that mentality within the team, and now I can

see that they truly believe it. For me, that was the greatest achievement of our camp in Serbia." "This week could be a defining moment for us," Piazza said. "Our first match is against Ukraine, and I'm sure they will be looking to avenge last season's defeat. Both teams will be fully prepared." "It will be a very difficult week, but at the same time it is a great opportunity to prove, just as we did against Japan, France and the United States, that we belong among the world's top teams," he said. "In the end, the outcome of these matches may come down to just one or two points."

FIBA U18 Asia Cup 2026 WABA Qualifiers: Iran edges host Jordan to advance

Sports Desk

Iran defeated host Jordan 80-77 in Amman on Friday to secure a place at the FIBA U18 Asia Cup, which begins on August 13 in Ahmedabad, India. Mohammad Yashar Kamalkhaleli recorded 15 points, eight rebounds and three assists as Iran maintained its perfect record in the West Asia sub-zone qualifiers, sealing qualification with one game to spare ahead of its final fixture against Lebanon. Amirreza Azari added 13 points, while Mohammad Shamsi (12), Soheil Soleimannejad (10) and Mohammadsaleh Pakgohar (10) also scored in double figures. Tamer Anky led Jordan with a game-high 23 points and 13 assists for a double-double, while Mohammad Badwan also scored

23 points. Mutaz Swais and Laith Sahlieh chipped in with 14 points apiece. Iran opened its campaign with a 97-87 victory over Palestine on Tuesday before routing Iraq 96-29 and defeating Syria 82-61. The top three teams in the round-robin tournament will

qualify for the continental championship, which also serves as a qualifier for the 2027 FIBA Under-19 Basketball World Cup. The four semifinalists at the Asia Cup will earn berths at the global tournament, scheduled to be held in Pardubice, Czechia, in June next year.



● FIBA

Zandi leads taekwondo squads into Chuncheon double-header

Sports Desk

Iran's men's and women's taekwondo teams departed for Chuncheon on Friday ahead of two major events in the South Korean city. The three-day WT World Cup Team Championships will begin on Tuesday, followed by the Korea Open G1 tournament. Reigning world and Asian champion Abolfazl Zandi headlines Iran's star-studded men's squad, which also features Olympic silver medalist Mehran Barkhordari, Asian champions Mahdi Hajimousaei and Amirina

Bakhtiari, Asian bronze medalist Amirreza Sadeqian, and Mohammad Hossein Yazdani. Payam Khanlarkhani will make his debut as Iran's head coach after replacing interim boss Amir Tajik, who guided the team to a runner-up finish behind South Korea at the Asian Championships in Ulaanbaatar in May. In the women's competition, Iran will be represented by Yalda Valinejad, who arrives fresh off a bronze-medal finish at the Asian Championships, while 20-year-old prospect Hasti Mohammadi will look to build on her



● WORLD TAEKWONDO

breakthrough campaign at last year's Islamic Solidarity Games, where she claimed bronze on her senior international debut. Baran Nemati and Fereshteh Ahmadi, meanwhile, will be eager to bounce back after missing out on the

podium at the Asian Championships. Head coach Mahrouz Saei recently said the two tournaments in Chuncheon would play a decisive role in finalizing Iran's women's squad for the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September.

Iranica Desk

The historic Abbasi Square (Meydang-e Abbasi), an urban space closely linked to Iran's oldest hotel, the Abbasi Hotel, is set to undergo restoration by the Isfahan Municipality, five years after its inclusion on Iran's National Heritage List. The planned project has renewed discussions among heritage experts over whether the restoration will be carried out in accordance with conservation standards and with sufficient involvement from architectural specialists.

Designed and constructed in the 1970s, the Abbasi Square and its adjoining complex were created to provide a harmonious visual setting for the historic Abbasi Hotel. Considered one of the notable examples of contemporary architecture in Isfahan due to its compatibility with the surrounding historic urban fabric, the square has suffered significant deterioration in recent decades and is now in need of comprehensive restoration, according to IRNA.

A defining feature of the site is its visual harmony with the exterior architecture of the Abbasi Hotel, both designed by Iranian architect Elias Yassi Gabbay, a graduate of the University of Tehran and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. After designing the hotel's exterior to complement the historic neighborhood, Gabbay also won the competition to design the adjacent square.

His design incorporated traditional Iranian architectural elements, including arcades, turquoise multi-sided domes, intricate tilework, and the Godal-Baghcheh (sunken courtyard) concept common in central Iran. The square was intended to serve as a cultural and tourism forecourt, housing handicraft shops and visitor services while complementing the grandeur of the Abbasi Hotel.

Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Abbasi Square became one of Isfahan's leading cultural gathering places and a prom-

Isfahan moves ahead with restoration of historic Abbasi Square



inent center for bookstores. However, over the past two decades, the site has experienced structural deterioration and a decline in its overall condition. Although the square was registered as a national heritage site in 2021 and preliminary steps were taken to appoint consultants and study restoration plans no restoration work has been carried out since 2021. The Isfahan Urban Renewal Organization has now announced plans to begin restoration based on designs prepared by its architectural team.

The announcement has prompted questions from heritage professionals regarding whether a comprehensive structural assessment has been completed and whether prominent conservation architects will be involved to ensure the site's authenticity and protect its visual identity.

Speaking to IRNA, Narges Derakhshan who is involved in activity related to cultural heritage said that following a joint meeting between representatives of Isfahan Municipality and the provincial cultural heritage au-

thorities, the restoration and rehabilitation of Abbasi Square was identified as a priority. She stressed that detailed technical studies and a comprehensive assessment of the site's condition should precede any executive work.

According to Derakhshan, responsibility for technical evaluations and preparation of the restoration plan has been assigned to the Isfahan Municipality's Urban Renewal Organization to ensure that the project is based on scientific documentation. She noted that the square involves multiple stakeholders, including shop owners, the municipality, and the cultural heritage authorities, making a comprehensive cooperation agreement essential for balancing commercial activities with heritage conservation.

Derakhshan also emphasized that, as a modern heritage site, any intervention should strictly comply with conservation regulations while minimizing alterations to the original architectural fabric.

She added that a detailed assessment must identify struc-



● IRNA

tural weaknesses, areas of damage, and appropriate restoration methods before implementation begins, followed by a final report outlining priorities and estimated costs.

While welcoming the municipality's renewed attention to the neglected site, Derakhshan said restoration should rely on the expertise of experienced conservation specialists in Isfahan.

Mahmoud Darvish, a member of the Association of Iranian Architectures and runner-up in the original design competition for the square in 1971, said the municipality's first priority should be consultation with specialists. Darvish noted that the underground parking area has become unsafe, stone stairways have suffered severe weather-related erosion, and numerous unauthorized alterations have been made over the years, all of which require careful technical evaluation before restoration.

He explained that the square was originally conceived as an extension of the historic Abbasi Hotel, providing facilities that

could not be accommodated within the Safavid-era caravanserai, including restaurants, handicraft shops, and visitor services.

According to Darvish, subsequent changes in property ownership altered the site's original function, with bookstores eventually occupying the arcaded shops surrounding the central sunken courtyard. He argued that the area outside the hotel should be revitalized with the same level of activity and cultural vitality found within the hotel itself.

Seyyed Ruhollah Seyyedolasgari, deputy head of Isfahan Province's Cultural Heritage Organization, said the municipality's restoration proposal was presented to the provincial Technical Council last week and is currently under review.

He said that after nearly five decades without significant intervention, the site requires rehabilitation and improvement. According to Seyyedolasgari, the municipality's proposal focuses on restoration rather than alteration of the monument's original character.

The documented damage as-

essment submitted to the council includes repairs to tilework, restoration of the multi-sided domes surrounding the complex, and improvements to the stone paving.

He added that no structural modifications are planned and that the provincial cultural heritage authorities are expected to announce the council's final decision within one to two weeks. Abbasi Square and the adjoining Abbasi Complex were built by Isfahan Municipality in the early 1970s as part of the redevelopment of the historic Madar Shah Caravanserai, later transformed into the Abbasi Hotel.

The complex was officially inscribed on Iran's National Heritage List in May 2021 by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The cultural complex was designed as a forecourt providing cultural services, handicraft shops, hospitality facilities, and a visual extension of the Abbasi Hotel. In the years following the Islamic Revolution, it became one of Isfahan's best-known centers for bookstores and cultural goods, securing a lasting place in the collective memory of the city's residents.

The Abbasi Hotel itself was recreated from the Safavid-era Madar Shah Caravanserai based on a design by French architect Maxim Siroux, while its exterior was designed by Iranian architect Elias Yassi Gabbay.

As the hotel gained prominence through tourism and official state receptions, Isfahan Municipality acquired the properties opposite the hotel and commissioned Gabbay to design the adjacent urban square, resulting in the creation of today's Abbasi Square in 1971.

Qazvin hosts weekly handicrafts markets to promote local arts

Iranica Desk

Weekly handicrafts markets are being held in Qazvin Province to support local artisans, strengthen the handicrafts economy, and expand the market for locally made products.



● baharnews.ir

Maryam Mahdavi, head of the Qazvin Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said the markets are held every Friday and Saturday.

She explained that every Friday, a handicrafts market is organized in the courtyard of the Chehel Sotoun Palace in Qazvin, where local artisans

display and sell their handmade products directly to visitors without intermediaries. Mahdavi added that every Saturday, another handicrafts market is held at the historic Daee House, where artisans and craftspeople from across

the province showcase their works. The market provides a venue for introducing and selling a wide variety of handicrafts while creating opportunities for direct interaction between producers, residents, and tourists.

She noted that the markets, open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., feature a diverse range of prod-

ucts, including pottery and ceramics, leather goods, woodcarving, traditional jewelry, kilim (flat-woven rugs), traditional textiles, and other handicrafts. Mahdavi said the weekly markets not only support local artisans and handicrafts producers but also help promote the province's cultural heritage and boost tourism.

Residents, tourists, and enthusiasts of Iranian art and culture are invited to visit the markets on Fridays and Saturdays to experience authentic Iranian handicrafts and support local artisans by purchasing their products.

Qazvin Province is known for its rich handicrafts heritage, with artisans practicing a wide range of traditional crafts, including pottery, woodcarving, traditional textiles, leatherwork, and calligraphy-related arts. The province is also home to several nationally recognized handicrafts and continues to support local artisans through exhibitions, training programs, and permanent and seasonal markets aimed at preserving traditional skills and expanding economic opportunities for craftspeople.

International Dargah Sangi Wetland get back to full water level



● chn.ir

Iranica Desk

The internationally recognized Dargah Sangi Wetland in Naqadeh, West Azarbaijan Province, has been fully replenished with water and is currently in excellent ecological and hydrological condition, according to the province's Department of Environment.

Hojjat Jabbari, director general of the West Azarbaijan Province's Department of Environment, said the seasonal wetland has been 100 percent replenished, with both the

water level and surface area reaching favorable conditions, chn.ir wrote.

He added that despite the wetland's seasonal nature, its current depth and water coverage are sufficient for officials to expect favorable conditions to continue throughout the autumn and winter.

Jabbari also emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring of the water transfer route from the Kani Sib Dam to Lake Urmia. He said close cooperation among relevant government agencies, particularly

the Regional Water Company, is essential to protect the lake's environmental water allocation and prevent unauthorized water withdrawals.

He noted that the Kani Sib Dam-to-Lake Urmia water transfer canal was constructed in accordance with the decisions of the Lake Urmia Restoration Headquarters. Under the current plan, 480 million cubic meters of water are transferred annually through the canal to help supply part of Lake Urmia's environmental water requirement.

Iran seeks South Korean expertise to develop creative economy, cultural diplomacy

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran on Saturday described South Korea as a trusted partner in advancing the creative economy, cultural diplomacy, and heritage technologies, as Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri proposed broader cooperation in museums, artificial intelligence, tourism, and cultural exchanges during talks with South Korean Ambassador Kim Junpyo in Tehran.

"South Korea is a trusted partner of the Islamic Republic of Iran in expanding cultural, civilizational, and tourism cooperation," Salehi-Amiri said, adding that Tehran is ready to open a new chapter of bilateral engagement in cultural heritage, handicrafts, creative industries, education, and museum affairs, CHTN reported.

The minister said developing the creative economy has become one of the ministry's priorities, describing South Korea as a leading country in the sector whose



Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri (R) and South Korean Ambassador Kim Junpyo pose with a commemorative gift during a meeting in Tehran on July 11, 2026.
● CHTN

experience could help support Iran's cultural industries. He proposed reciprocal exhibitions of historical artifacts, joint conservation and restoration projects, expanded cooperation between

universities and museums, and wider scientific exchanges. Salehi-Amiri also called for closer collaboration in digital technologies and artificial intelligence, saying Iran is interested in ap-

plying South Korea's expertise to cultural heritage preservation, tourism, and handicrafts. He further proposed inviting South Korean artists, cultural figures, and media influencers to visit Iran

and introduce the country's historical and tourism attractions to international audiences.

He said the anticipated announcement on the Alamut Castle during the UNESCO World Heritage Committee session in South Korea would provide a valuable opportunity to showcase Iran's rich civilization and further strengthen cultural cooperation between the two countries.

The talks took place days before the 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, scheduled for July 19-29 in Busan, South Korea, where member states will review nominations for new World Heritage inscriptions. Iran's Alamut Castle is among the cultural properties

under consideration. Highlighting Iran's cultural wealth, Salehi-Amiri said the country has 29 properties inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List and 58 more sites on its Tentative List, underscoring Iran's prominent place among nations with outstanding cultural heritage.

Kim welcomed efforts to deepen bilateral cultural ties and recalled that Alamut Castle was the first historic site he visited outside Tehran.

"The climb to Alamut was part of its unique appeal," the ambassador said. "I wondered why such an important site had not yet been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List."

He expressed hope that the expected UNESCO decision on the Alamut Castle would introduce more people around the world to Iran's cultural heritage, describing cultural heritage as a shared asset of humanity deserving broader international recognition.

VP lauds country's victory at China Int'l Math Olympiad

Iran's vice president for science and technology has praised the country's national mathematics Olympiad team after it secured first place at the 2026 China International Mathematics Competition (IMSC), describing the achievement as a testament to Iran's scientific potential.

In a message released on Saturday, Hossein Afshin congratulated the team, writing, "Every scientific achievement is more than a medal or a ranking; it is proof that Iran's human capital, despite every challenge, continues to compete at the highest scientific level."

According to Afshin, the championship reflected years of investment in nurturing young talent and demonstrated that Iran remains one of the world's leading sources of outstanding scientific ability, Press TV reported.

The students, he noted, presented a true image of Iran's scientific capabilities to the world through their knowledge, perseverance, and self-confidence.

Ensuring Iranian elites can participate in international scientific events has remained one of the Iranian government's priorities, with such opportunities allowing the country's young scientists to showcase Iran's academic capabilities on the global stage, he maintained.

Afshin also reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting outstanding talent and strengthening opportunities for Iranian elites to play a more active role in the international scientific community.

"Supporting talented students and researchers is not merely support for a select group of individuals, but an investment in Iran's future."

Iran claimed the team championship among 49 participating teams by winning four gold medals and two silver medals, finishing ahead of Poland and Brazil. The Iranian team consisted of Arian Zandi, Arsha Azizoddin, Seyed Amirhossein Tayeb, Alireza Sharifi, Radin Nik-Eghbali, and Ali Joonbakhsh Najafabadi.

'Paper Flowers' wins best animated short at Russian family film festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian animated short 'Paper Flowers' won the Best Animated Short award at the 21st Within the Family International Festival of Family and Children's Films in Russia, the Documentary, Experimental and Animation Film Center (DEFC) said, marking another international accolade for the film after its earlier triumph at the Kazan International Film Festival. Directed by Ramak Amin Kazemi



and produced by DEFC, 'Paper Flowers' claimed the top animation prize at the festival, held in Yaroslavl from July 4 to 7. The

award was presented during the festival's closing ceremony on July 7. "'Paper Flowers' continues its successful international run," DEFC said, describing the latest honor as another milestone for the Iranian production on the global festival circuit.

The short follows a writer who believes he has reached the end of his creative journey, unfolding the story through a poetic visual narrative that explores despair, resilience and renewal.

War inflicts \$300m damage on Iran's research infrastructure

Social Desk

Iran's vice president for science and technology Hossein Afshin said on Saturday that Iran's research infrastructure sustained about \$300 million in damage during the Ramadan war, while knowledge-based companies incurred losses equivalent to 650 trillion rials and \$25 million in foreign-currency terms.

Speaking during a visit to the technology village at the University of Tehran College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Afshin said the government had launched a reconstruction program to restore damaged scientific and technological facilities, IRNA reported.

"The enemy targeted Iran's scientific and technological capabilities, but these capacities will be rebuilt with strength,"

Afshin said the affected projects had focused on emerging technologies with civilian applications and stressed that investment in science and innovation remained essential for national progress.

"Any country that invests in science and technology will succeed,"

He added that Iran was moving toward a more internationally oriented approach to supporting knowledge-based enterprises and that the country's science and technology parks must evolve



beyond first- and second-generation innovation models.

Afshin also said support for knowledge-based companies would increasingly be tied to measurable outputs, allowing firms to attract credit-based assistance in proportion to the value they create.

At the same event, Mohammad Ali Ebrahimzadeh Mousavi said strengthening food security required a comprehensive ecosystem linking innovation, private-sector investment, and scientific support.

"Food security still has a long road ahead in Iran, and achieving food sovereignty requires modern innovation and a systemic approach," Mousavi said. He described the university's Innovation Village for Agriculture, Food Security, and Biosecurity as a model designed to turn scientific knowledge into economic value and enhance national resilience.

Award-winning Iranian shorts headline to Montreal



Arts & Culture Desk

Five award-winning Iranian independent short films will screen at the second Iran Cinema Night in Montreal on Sunday, organizers said, showcasing the latest works by a new generation of Iranian filmmakers to international and Persian-speaking audiences. Hosted at Cinéma du Parc, the event features acclaimed shorts produced in 2024 and 2025 that have competed at major international film festivals. The program was curated by Mohammad Hamzeh'i, directed by Fouad Asadi, and organized in cooperation with Saba Medias.

Organizers said the event aims to spotlight the latest achievements of Iran's independent cinema while expanding cultural dialogue and strengthening ties between Iranian filmmakers and global audiences. All films will be screened with English subtitles. The lineup includes 'Conex' by Dina Rezaei, 'American Dream' by Houra Kian, 'Goodbye Paris' by Ebrahim Shahbazi, 'Old Maid' by Golnaz Izadan, and 'Mia' by Seyed Ali Ghase-mi.

The Montreal edition follows the first Iran Cinema Night, held in October 2025 at Carleton University in Ottawa, as organizers seek to establish the event as a recurring platform for introducing Iranian independent cinema to audiences across Canada.