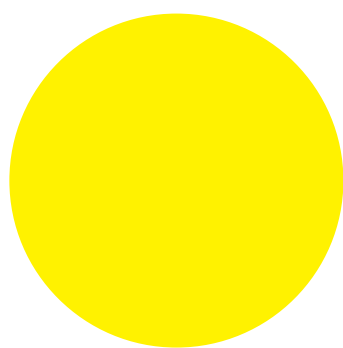


Artists voice solidarity with southern Iranian provinces under attack



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Satellite images published by Iran's news agency Fars on July 15, 2026 show damage to a helicopter hangar housing US choppers at Prince Hassan Airbase in Jordan after a recent Iranian attack on the site.



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Diplomacy remains only rational path out of Iran-US crisis

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran and the United States have once again veered off the diplomatic track and into military confrontation. This comes despite the signing of a memorandum of understanding which had raised hopes of easing the crisis in the short term and paving the way for a comprehensive agreement over the longer run. Although the latest hostilities do not yet amount to an all-out war, the risk of further escalation—and even the involvement of additional actors—cannot be ruled out. Meanwhile, countries with a track record of mediation have yet to make any serious attempt to defuse tensions. In an interview with Iran Daily, international affairs analyst Afjeh Abedi argues



Afjeh Abedi

that the door to diplomacy remains open and that mounting economic pressure will ultimately drive both sides back to the negotiating table, despite the challenges. Attempting to achieve the other side's complete military defeat, she says, would only prolong the war of attrition, while diplomacy remains the only rational path to ending the crisis.

IRAN DAILY: Given the escalating military confrontation between Iran and the United States and the growing exchange of threats, how do you assess the prospects for diplomacy between the two countries? Is there still room for a return to negotiations, or has the situation passed the point of no return?

ABEDI: Despite the current escalation and the collapse of the ceasefire understanding, diplomacy remains the only rational path toward ending this crisis. Attempting to achieve the complete military defeat of the other side would only drag the conflict out and impose enormous costs on both parties. For that reason, the door to diplomacy is still open, although the path

ahead will be extremely difficult due to deep disagreements over the interpretation of the recent understanding—particularly regarding the management of the Strait of Hormuz—as well as Iran's growing distrust and skepticism toward the United States.

What factors could prevent the crisis from escalating further? Do regional or international actors still have both the capacity and the political will to mediate effectively? Why has Pakistan, in particular, not taken a more active role in easing tensions, and what considerations are shaping Islamabad's approach?

Two key factors could help prevent further escalation. The first is the rapidly rising economic cost of the crisis. Continued instability in the Strait of Hormuz would drive up global energy prices and inflict serious damage on the world economy—a burden that would be particularly costly for the United States as it heads toward the midterm elections. That economic pressure is likely to be the strongest incentive for both sides to return to the negotiating table.

The second factor is pressure from mediators, particularly the countries of the southern Persian Gulf. States such as Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan still possess both the capacity and the willingness to mediate. However, it appears that they are currently assessing Iran's resolve and its ability to withstand US military pressure.

Pakistan's silence and reluctance to step into the latest round of tensions likewise seem to stem from a cautious and conservative assessment of both the situation and the motivations of the parties involved. Islamabad appears to be waiting for a more opportune moment to play a more active role. It is also worth recalling that during the previous mediation effort, the United States itself acknowledged that Pakistan had stepped in at Washington's request. In other words, the current absence of mediation may indicate that the United States remains focused on the military track for the time being. Consequently, Iran must also concentrate on imposing greater costs on the United States and its partners in the conflict.

If diplomacy becomes completely blocked, what do you see as the most likely scenario for this crisis? Should we expect a prolonged war of attrition, a temporary understanding, or a further escalation of hostilities?

If diplomacy is completely shut down, the most likely scenario is a prolonged but limited war of attrition over the medium term, rather than a full-scale war. Based on the recurring pattern of recent confrontations, we are likely to see continued exchanges of targeted air and missile strikes, along with attacks on military facilities and commercial shipping, while both sides seek to keep the conflict from spiraling out of control.

At the same time, because any disruption to the Strait of Hormuz would harm the global economy, unwritten understandings allowing commercial vessels to pass through the waterway are likely to emerge. Such arrangements would, of course, have to be based on publicly announced mechanisms and coordinated with Iran. This scenario would signify Iran's upper hand in the current conflict.

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Armed Forces pound US bases in Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain

Over 30 Iranian civilians killed in renewed American aggression

National Desk

Iran's Armed Forces once again pounded American military bases in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan on Wednesday in new round of retaliatory attacks against the US strikes on Iran's southern cities.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said its forces targeted key logistics, command, and military infrastructure following renewed US attacks on Iranian territory.

According to the IRGC, the new wave of Operation Nasr 2 targeted "KJL," which it described as, "the US army's principal logistics and support center in West Asia at Mina Abdullah, Kuwait." The statement said the facility "was set ablaze and destroyed" as a result of the strikes.

The IRGC added that, "The retaliatory operations of our fighters will continue, and the Strait of Hormuz will remain closed until the United States ends its acts of aggression."

The IRGC's Navy also targeted "the NSI Management Center, the Command and Control Center, major warehouses containing military parts and equipment, and fuel depots belonging to the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain." The US base at al-Azraq in Jordan was also struck by the IRGC's Aerospace Force which targeted shelters housing US F-15, F-16, and F-35 warplanes at the outpost and "eliminated a number of US MQ-9 strategic drones stationed at the base," destroying the shelters and the unmanned aircraft.

Iran's Army also launched new round of drone strikes against American targets in the early hours of Wednesday, targeting the al-Azraq Air Base in Jordan with drones. The airbase is home to American troops.

According to the Army's statement, the base was targeted for the second time, with drones striking the F-18 fighter jet shelters as well as large equipment storage hangars belonging to

the US military.

Iran's attacks against US bases came as the United States targeted several locations in Iran, including a barracks belonging to Army which is close to the southeastern city of Iranshahr in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

Iran's Army Ground Force said that a "decisive response" is certain and imminent after the US carried out the pre-dawn attack that deliberately targeted the sleeping quarters of Iranian military personnel. At least seven servicemen – most of them soldiers, were killed and several others wounded in the attack. Explosions were also reported near the port city of Bandar Abbas, on the island of Qeshm and on Bandar Imam Khomeini. Fresh US strikes also hit the southern port city of Bushehr, home to the country's Bushehr nuclear plant.

Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said that since last week, US attacks have



killed at least 30 civilians in Iran.

US President Donald Trump threatened to widen strikes next week to hit power plants and bridges unless Tehran returns to the negotiating table.

"Next week it gets really bad for them," he told Fox News. Despite a return to hostilities, mediated talks between the two sides have not formally ended.

At the heart of the resumption of hostilities has been the dispute over the Strait of Hormuz

which has been closed again by Iran following US violations of a peace memorandum signed between Tehran and Washington in Islamabad.

The waterway is crucial for global oil and gas flows. The United States has staged numerous unwarranted attacks on Iranian soil, especially areas lying along the country's southern coastline, amid its efforts to forcibly enable illegal maritime



Satellite images show a before-and-after view of a military facility in Oman following an Iranian attack on a site housing US troops.

● FARS

traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has shut down the waterway in response to the violations, pledging to retain the closure until the US ends the interference.

Iran outlines 42 US violations of ceasefire pact in letter to UN

Iran formally complained to the United Nations that the United States is systematically violating a landmark ceasefire agreement, documenting 42 breaches and calling on the Security Council to take "immediate, effective, and decisive measures" against Washington.

In a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council on Tuesday, Iran's Permanent Representative Amir Saeid Iravani dismissed US claims of self-defense, declaring that "the United States is the aggressor—not the victim".

The complaint centers on the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, signed on June 17, 2026, and mediated by Pakistan, which was intended to end months of war and establish a framework for resolving outstanding disputes. The agreement included provisions for a permanent cessation of war, reopening the Strait of Hormuz, and lifting a US naval blockade.

Iravani's letter, which Tehran has requested



Amir Saeid Iravani
● IRNA

be circulated as an official Security Council document, states that Washington began undermining the agreement "almost immediately" after its signing.

The letter further asserts that the United States has "persistently failed to fulfill its commitments and has actively and systematically undermined the implementation of the Memorandum". Iravani described the US actions as "deliberate, calculated, and continuing violations" that "have jeopardized regional stability, threatened international peace and security, and demonstrated the United States' blatant disregard for its international legal obligations". Among the breaches,

Iran cites "repeated military attacks against Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the unlawful revocation of licenses for Iranian oil sales, and interference with Iran's arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran states that Paragraph 5 of the memorandum explicitly affirms Iran's responsibility for determining safe passage arrangements through the strait.

Iran says that Washington violated this provision by promoting a parallel maritime route under US military protection, which the letter describes as "blatant interference in Iran's necessary arrangements concerning the Strait

of Hormuz" that has "caused the return of insecurity to the Strait and disrupted international commercial navigation." The letter also references continued Israeli military aggression in Lebanon, which Iran says the United States failed to prevent despite obligations under the agreement.

The documented violations include a chronological record of incidents between June 18 and July 13, citing military aggression, threats of force by senior US officials, new sanctions, and restrictions on Iranian oil exports and frozen assets. US President Donald Trump has announced Washington is "reinstating" a blockade on Iran in the Strait of Hormuz. Iravani said the United States "by using the territory and facilities of countries located on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf to prepare for its military aggression against Iran, has effectively turned these countries into a battleground for its illegal and criminal war against the Iranian people."

Senate Dems block Trump's defense bill in protest to Iran war



International Desk

US Senate Democrats blocked a \$1.15 trillion Pentagon policy bill on Tuesday, as the sprawling legislation became a casualty in the monthslong fight to rein in President Donald Trump on Iran. The National Defense Authorization Act fell well short of the 60 votes needed to advance to the Senate floor. The 50-46 procedural vote saw every Democrat present oppose the bill. The move is a blow to Republicans who had sought to deliver on Trump's record-shattering defense budget ambitions — using a bill that is one of the few measures that reliably becomes law each year. But Democrats had long signaled that they won't support the Pentagon legislation without guardrails on Trump, most notably on the Iran war. Democratic members of the US Congress have recently denounced any renewed war



Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer calls on a reporter during a press conference at the US Capitol in Washington, on June 23, 2026.

● FRANCIS CHUNG/POLITICO

against Iran as unconstitutional, warning that Trump's repeated pursuit of an "unauthorized war" with the Islamic Republic would be an outright catastrophe.

They sharply criticized Trump on Monday, accusing him of bypassing constitutional limits on presidential war powers, misleading the public about the status of military action against Iran, and attempting to continue the war without proper congressional authorization.

The criticism came after Trump formally notified Congress this weekend that the US is once again at war with Iran.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer denounced the renewed military offensive against Iran, writing on X that Trump "must comply" with votes passed by both the House and Senate "to remove our forces from harm's way and end this war now."

"Donald Trump's so-called 'understanding' with Iran fell apart faster than the ink could dry. The House and Senate both voted to remove our forces from harm's way and end this war now. Trump must comply. Enough is enough. End the war," he said.

Diplomacy remains only ...

If the conflict continues to escalate, how likely is direct Israeli involvement, and under what circumstances might Tel Aviv choose to enter the conflict?

The possibility of Israel entering the conflict directly cannot be ruled out. However, it is important to note that despite repeated statements by Israeli officials about continuing the war against Iran, one of the main reasons behind the previous cease-

fire was Israel's inability to sustain simultaneous military operations on both the Iranian and Lebanese fronts. At present, Israel is already fighting alongside the United States against Iran at an unofficial level. However, direct Israeli involvement in the current confrontation in the Strait of Hormuz could further expand the conflict across the region. It should also be borne in mind that as long as the fighting remains concentrated in the Persian Gulf, overt Israeli inter-

vention would be highly sensitive for regional states.

Under the current circumstances, Israel appears to be contributing instead through other dimensions of hybrid warfare against Iran, including cyber operations and cognitive warfare. Any overt expansion of the war through direct Israeli intervention, however, would likely draw resistance groups into the conflict and once again broaden the scope of the war across the region.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



IRGC warns of wider energy disruption if US blocks crude exports

Iran keeps oil sale mechanisms unchanged, minister says



An AFP photo shows ships docked along a pier in the Gulf of Oman.

revoked a temporarily sanctions waiver on Iranian oil after three vessels were targeted in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran strongly condemned the US move, calling it a “flagrant violation” of Clause 10 of the memo signed between Washington and Tehran.

Iran’s oil minister said on Wednesday that the country’s oil sales were continuing under existing mechanisms despite the renewed US measures.

Mohsen Paknejad said that after the waiver took effect, Iran had decided to preserve its sanctions-evasion mechanisms in the oil trade rather than dismantle them, according to Shana News Agency.

Paknejad said the decision was based on what Tehran viewed as Washington’s record of failing to honor its commitments.

“The passage of time confirmed that Washington had violated Clause 10 of the agreement,” he said.

The minister said Iran had moved substantial volumes of crude beyond the blockade line before it was reinstated.

Reuters reported on Wednesday that Iranian vessels had managed to pass through the Strait of Hormuz before the United States brought back the blockade.

Citing shipping data, Reuters said traffic through the Strait of Hormuz increased on Tuesday, with most of the vessels linked to Iranian trade.

Vessel-tracking data from Kpler showed that nine of the 11 ships transiting the strait on Tuesday used Iran’s shipping route.

Economy Desk

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) warned on Wednesday that energy export routes serving the United States and its allies would be disrupted if Washington continued blocking Iran’s oil and gas exports, hours after the US reinstated a naval blockade of Iran’s southern ports. “Now that the [US] pirates have blocked the route for exporting oil and gas to the world through the Indian Ocean, endangering the interests of America’s economic rivals, they should expect the closure of other oil and gas

export routes that serve the interests of the United States and its allies,” the IRGC said in a strongly worded statement. The statement did not specify which export routes could be targeted but noted that regional energy exports would be “for everyone or for no one.” Iran tightened control over the Strait of Hormuz after US strikes resumed against coastal targets in southern Iran last week. The Guards said the key conduit would remain closed “until the end of US aggression and hostile acts” and that it would not reverse its position on preventing

vessels from sailing through the waterway. 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 channel. Under a peace memorandum with the US last month, Iran had pledged safe passage for ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran has said vessels should only use a northern route under Iranian control. The United States restored its naval blockade on Tuesday evening with 20 warships, hundreds of

fighter jets and military drones, as US Central Command (CENTCOM) says, to prevent the Islamic Republic’s oil exports while ensuring maritime security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. During the first blockade, imposed in mid-April and lasting for more than two months, US forces reportedly intercepted dozens of vessels linked to Iran, turned many of them back, seized at least two oil tankers and attacked several others in the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean. Also, the US Treasury on July 7

Iranian firms start work on Afghan rail link to bolster China corridor

Economy Desk

Iranian companies have begun construction of an 800-kilometer railway linking Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan, a project aimed at expanding regional rail connectivity and completing a transport corridor connecting Iran, Afghanistan and China, Iran’s state railway chief said. Jabbar Ali Zakari, deputy minister of roads and urban development, told ILNA that the project is being financed by the Afghan government and will be carried out under a “railway-for-minerals” arrangement, under which Iran will build the railway in return for participating in the development of and investment in Afghanistan’s mining sector. The chief executive of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways said the agreement was based on economic cooperation and the development of Afghanistan’s mining potential. He said completion of the railway would facilitate trade between Iran and Afghanistan, help connect the regional rail network to China, and strengthen Iran’s position in international transport and freight transit corridors. He had earlier told ILNA that freight traffic along the Afghan rail route was expected to continue growing, adding that Iran hoped cargo volumes on the route would reach about 3 million metric tons by March 21, 2027.

Iran trade center in Canada launches exporter support program



Economy Desk

Iran’s Trade Center in Canada has launched a program to help Iranian companies expand into international markets, including Canada, the United Arab Emirates, Africa, the Caucasus and Eurasia, its director said. Mohammad Vahidi Rad told IRNA the initiative was designed to facilitate the entry of Iranian products into overseas markets and was not limited to direct sales in Canada. “This program is not limited to the direct sale of goods in the Canadian market. It uses Canadian business networks, standardization, branding and commercial structures,” he said.

Vahidi Rad said the program is open to companies, manufacturers, suppliers and other businesses with the production capacity, experience or readiness to enter international markets. He said manufacturers, service providers and knowledge-based companies offering products, services, technical expertise or production capacity for overseas markets could also participate, particularly those seeking support with evaluation, export readiness, standardization, packaging, business planning, commercial promotion or specialized networking. “The goal of this program is to identify and select capable and reliable

Iranian businesses whose products and services have the potential to enter, expand and be commercialized in the Canadian market or in other target markets through Canadian business networks,” Vahidi Rad said. He said the Trade Center would support selected companies from the initial assessment stage through export preparation, assessment of export potential, market-entry planning, commercial introductions and the development of cooperation models. “Depending on the product, production capacity, market conditions and the outcome of specialized assessments, this cooperation may include export preparation, packaging improvements, standardization, customized production, joint manufacturing, supply arrangements, partial project financing, product adaptation for target markets, logistics, commercial introductions and B2B marketing,” he said. Vahidi Rad said Canada would not necessarily be the final destination for many projects. Instead, Iranian products could be prepared for export to the United Arab Emirates, Africa, the Caucasus, Eurasia and other markets by using Canadian business networks, branding, standardization, packaging and corporate structures.

ISA: Nahid-3 project in progress; Soleimani constellation’s 1st phase planned



Economy Desk

Iran plans to continue expanding its space program through 2026, including the first phase of the Shahid Soleimani satellite constellation and the unveiling of its first domestically developed radar satellite, Press TV reported. Speaking at a news conference on Wednesday, Hassan Salarieh, deputy information and communications technology minister and head of the Iranian Space Agency (ISA), said the country’s main space projects this Iranian year, which began on March 21, include expanding satellite control centers, launch sites and specialized laboratories, along with progress on the Nahid-2 and Nahid-3 communications satellites and the Shahid Soleimani constellation. “The projects we are pursuing in the space industry fall into several main categories, including infrastructure projects, satellite design and manufacturing projects, as well as data- and imagery-based service projects,” Salarieh said. He said Nahid-3, Iran’s next-generation communications satellite, is being designed to provide services in geostationary orbit (GEO). The project remains in the design stage, while construction of major subsystems, including its propulsion system, is underway. Salarieh said the Shahid Soleimani satellite constellation would be deployed in several phases. The first phase includes 24 satellites — 18 operational and six backup spacecraft — which are planned to be placed into orbit. He said the Iranian Space Agency also plans to unveil additional prototypes of the constellation and launch the satellites once the required launch vehicle is ready. Salarieh said work on Iran’s Earth observation satellites would also continue this year, including preparations to launch the Pars-2 satellite after completing its qualification tests. He said Pars-2, unveiled in February 2025, is one of Iran’s main remote-sensing satellites and is expected to expand the country’s imaging satellite fleet. Salarieh also said Iran would soon unveil the prototype of its first domestically developed radar satellite, Rad-1, while development of the more advanced Rad-2 radar satellite is also underway.

By Bitā Mir-Azimi

Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

The assault upon Lamerd County, southern Iran, during the course of the 40-Day War constituted not merely a security incident or a humanitarian catastrophe; this occurrence, simultaneously, functioned as a trial of the resilience pertaining to one of the most preeminent energy hubs, mineral industries, and strategic infrastructures of the country's southern region. Notwithstanding that the principal component of the attack targeted residential zones and civilian spaces, resulting in the martyrdom or injury of dozens of noncombatant citizens, the proximity of this event to the Lamerd Special Economic Zone directed the attention of analysts toward the geo-economic significance of this territory and its role within Iran's production chain, export apparatus, and energy security. This zone, which today, through the establishment of large-scale industries — including the nation's largest aluminum complex — the possession of uncommon energy advantages, adjacency to South Pars, substantial capacity for renewable energy development, and a noteworthy contribution to the exports of Fars Province, has evolved into one of the propulsive engines of industrial development in southern Iran.

Under such circumstances, the perpetuation of productive activities, the preservation of employment for thousands of individuals, the management of the supply chain, the continuation of exports, and the prevention of disruption to economic infrastructures transformed into one of the most pivotal challenges confronting the administrators of this zone. In the ensuing interview, Amir Borhani Naeini, the Chief Executive Officer of the Lamerd Special Economic Zone, by delineating the dimensions of the attack and recounting that which transpired during the critical days of warfare in this region, discourses upon the measures undertaken for the maintenance of production, support for afflicted families, management of the war's economic repercussions, and the sustained pursuit of investment.

Furthermore, through the proposition of suggestions for attracting the capital of Iranians residing abroad, revising the developmental paradigm of special zones, reinforcing the imperatives of passive defense, and expanding vital infrastructures, he presents a vision of Lamerd's prospective plans; plans whose objective consists of augmenting economic resilience, elevating investment security, and consolidating this zone's status as one of Iran's strategic poles of industry and energy in the years ahead. The full text of this dialogue follows:

CEO of Lamerd Special Economic Zone talks about war-time management

Lamerd; test of Iranian industry's resilience



The photo shows an overview of the Lamerd Special Economic Zone, southern Iran.
● lamerdsez.ir

Amir Borhani Naeini

IRAN: In your estimation, which factors precipitated the inclusion of the Lamerd region and its industrial and economic perimeter within the adversary's list of targets? Does this matter bear relevance to the region's strategic standing within the nation's economy and energy sector?

BORHANI NAEINI: Lamerd is not a large city; it is a municipality situated at the southernmost point of Fars Province, beyond which, subsequent to the counties of Lamerd and Mohr, one effectively exits the territorial bounds of Fars Province. The Lamerd Special Economic Zone is likewise located within this same county and encompasses an area of approximately 5,000 hectares; a landmass that nearly corresponds to the size of Kish Island.

Regarding the recent attack, however, I must clarify a particular point. The assault that occurred during the initial days of the war upon Lamerd did not directly target the Special Economic Zone. Contrary to certain economic zones of the country — such as the Pars Energy Zone, wherein economic objectives were subjected to attack — in Lamerd, the modality of assault was dissimilar. The primary target consisted of a residential compound and a sports hall; a location situated more than 7 to 10 kilometers away from the special zone and positioned within one of the most densely populated urban areas.

The type of ordnance employed likewise indicated that the objective was not exclusively destruction. Four missiles were launched, each containing approximately 180,000 tungsten fragments; hence, a cumulative total of 720,000 projectiles were dissem-

inated across a residential district. This is a city whose population does not even reach 30,000 individuals. This magnitude of incendiary ordnance demonstrates that the aim was the maximization of human casualties and the creation of a humanitarian catastrophe. In our assessment, this attack was entirely premeditated. Of course, during subsequent days, we also experienced impacts in proximity to the Special Economic Zone (Lamerd Airport), which indicated that Lamerd had been positioned upon the adversary's target list, and this occurrence was not fortuitous.

Notwithstanding the human and social dimensions of this incident, its media reverberation was comparatively less pronounced than that of certain analogous events. In your view, which factors caused the magnitude of this occurrence not to be perceived within public opinion and the media to the extent that it ought to have been?

The truth is that during the period of warfare, the country was traversing an exceedingly difficult situation, and the volume of distressing news was extraordinarily high. Perhaps the geographic distance of Lamerd from the center also contributed to this incident being less visible. On the other hand, we ourselves, during the initial days, did not precisely apprehend with which type of attack we were confronted, nor what the actual dimensions of the event were. Interestingly, the first analytical reports concerning this attack were published by certain foreign media outlets, and it was only thereafter that the extent of the destruction attracted greater attention. During that same period, economic administrators



Interestingly, the first analytical reports concerning this attack were published by certain foreign media outlets, and it was only thereafter that the extent of the destruction attracted greater attention. During that same period, economic administrators were likewise prohibited from conducting interviews due to security considerations; a decision that, in my opinion, was entirely correct. Our strategy was to continue economic activities without generating a media atmosphere, so that information would not be exploited by the adversary.

were likewise prohibited from conducting interviews due to security considerations; a decision that, in my opinion, was entirely correct. Our strategy was to continue economic activities without generating a media atmosphere, so that information would not be exploited by the adversary.

Throughout all the days of warfare, the personnel of the Special Economic Zone, the customs administration, and the operational complexes — notwithstanding that some among them had lost their loved ones in this attack — did not permit even a single day of interruption in the zone's economic activity. This self-sacrifice is truly commendable. Today, however, I believe it is our collective duty to speak about this incident and to ensure that this occurrence does not fall into oblivion.

Prior to entering into economic discussions, kindly provide a depiction of the Lamerd Special Economic Zone's standing within the national economy. What are the most significant competitive advantages of this zone, and what role does it play within the country's energy chain and industrial sectors?

Allow me first to mention one point. We are presently a Special Economic Zone; however, we have also submitted a request to the government for the conversion of this complex into a Free Zone. We are convinced that if this transformation materializes, in addition to the expansion of investment, the residents of Lamerd County will also benefit from greater economic advantages, employment opportunities, and facilitations; a matter that could compensate for a portion of this region's deprivations. Lamerd, from an infrastructural perspective, still ranks among the country's less privi-

leged areas, and the conversion of the special zone into a free zone could represent a significant opportunity for development.

The rationale for establishing a Special Economic Zone in Lamerd likewise resides in the existence of substantial energy advantages. This zone is situated in proximity to Asaluyeh, and the principal natural gas transmission lines of the country — including the IGAT 4 and IGAT 8 gas pipelines — traverse its vicinity. Furthermore, active major gas fields and newly discovered fields in the southern part of Fars Province have endowed this region with a very considerable capacity. For this reason, Lamerd is among the few locations in the country where industries encounter the least difficulty in securing energy supplies. On the other hand, this zone possesses an extraordinary capacity in the domain of solar energy. During certain seasons of the year, there exist 16 to 17 hours of direct sunlight with exceptionally low humidity, which has created ideal conditions for the development of solar power plants. In this regard, a 10-MW solar power plant is currently operational within the Lamerd Special Economic Zone, and the plan for expanding this capacity is also on the agenda.

In the days subsequent to the attack, what policies and measures did the Lamerd Special Economic Zone place on its agenda for supporting afflicted families, preserving employment, and preventing the economic consequences of the crisis?

The Lamerd Special Economic Zone today has generated employment for more than 3,700 individuals directly and approximately 12,000 individuals indirectly. Given the county's population, a considerable segment of Lamerd's families have their livelihoods, in one way or another, dependent upon this zone's activities. Hence, we do not perceive our responsibility as confined solely to the industrial domain, and we believe that the special zone bears a serious social obligation as well.

Our first decision following the commencement of warfare was the prohibition of any workforce reduction within the units established in the zone. We conducted numerous meetings with investors and company managers to examine their difficulties and, through the utilization of the banking system's capacities, governmental apparatuses, and the zone's own resources, we prevented any harm to the people's employment.

Fortunately, we succeeded in controlling a considerable portion of the war's economic effects, so that the livelihoods of Lamerd's families would not be placed in jeopardy. Of course, human losses are irreparable. According to the announcement of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs after the enemy's attack, 21 citizens — ranging from a 2-year-old child



Lamerd Hospital is filled with the civilians who were injured during the US-Israeli missile attack on a sports hall and residential areas in the small town in southern Iran.
● IRIB NEWS



A large solar farm has been constructed in the Lamerd Special Economic Zone.
● lamerdsez.ir

to merchants, elites, medical personnel, volleyball players, football players, and various strata of the populace — were martyred, and 128 innocent human beings were injured; many of our colleagues likewise endured severe psychological and emotional traumas. For this reason, in addition to financial support, we arranged programs for the provision of counseling services, psychological assistance, and social support for the affected families.

Our emphasis was that these families should not feel abandoned within the city or the industry. In all programs — including Workers' Day ceremonies, Industry Day events, and other gatherings of the zone — we endeavored to have the families of the martyrs and the afflicted present alongside us. Perhaps these measures constitute only a small fraction of our duty; nevertheless, we firmly believe we must not permit these families to experience a sense of oblivion.

At the same time, we also had colleagues who themselves were martyred in this incident. Mr. Farhad Najafi, our veteran colleague from the customs administration of the Lamerd Special Zone, attained the exalted rank of martyrdom during the US-Israeli missile attack on Lamerd's residential areas. Filling their vacancies is impossible; however, we have striven, within the framework of the law, to support their families and to facilitate the continuation of their life paths.

One of the principal concerns under such conditions is the preservation of production continuity and the prevention of disruption to the supply chain. What effect did warfare and the resultant restrictions exert upon industrial activities, the procurement of raw materials, and the zone's commerce, and how were these challenges managed?

We must adopt a realistic perspective; warfare and maritime restrictions certainly influenced the country's economic activities, including those of the Lamerd Special Economic Zone. We encountered limitations in the importation of goods, maritime transportation, and certain supply chains. To assert that there was no effect would be inconsistent with reality.

Of course, prior to the commencement of warfare, we had planned for such contingencies. Our objective was to secure the raw materials required by industries for a minimum of six months in advance. Fortunately, we succeeded in procuring more than 80% of the projected demand — particularly for the aluminum industry and its downstream and upstream sectors — and, consequently, this industry's market did not confront a serious deficit.

This achievement was not solely the result of the special zone's efforts; rather, it was the outcome of extensive cooperation from the government. From the president himself to the Ministry of Economy, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, the banking network, and other institutions, all parties contributed and, through the facilitation of processes, prevented the production chain from being halted. Admittedly, a portion of the zone's developmental and export programs were affected by the wartime conditions; nevertheless, our most important objective — the preservation of production continuity and the prevention of a crisis in raw material supply — was, fortunately, realized.



Early construction work for building a desalination plant for the Lamerd Special Economic Zone has been done.
● lamerdsez.ir

Whereas many anticipated that industrial activities would suffer interruption, the Lamerd Special Economic Zone sustained its operational tempo. What were the most critical factors underlying this success in maintaining production and service delivery under wartime conditions?

Not even for a single day was the Lamerd Special Economic Zone closed. The city's atmosphere was such that everyone felt they must work with heightened motivation and not permit the enemy to achieve its objective. Perhaps I could state that, on certain days, the volume of activity and service provision even surpassed that of ordinary periods. Civil engineering projects, road construction, infrastructure development, and executive activities likewise continued throughout the entire duration of warfare and were not interrupted.

Of course, for the preservation of personnel safety, we implemented protocols commensurate with wartime conditions; these included the reduction of nonessential staff presence, remote work for certain employees — particularly women whose attendance was not mandatory — and the reduction of workforce density across various sectors. Our aim was that, should an incident occur, the least harm would befall the personnel. However, the zone's primary activity — production, customs services, and project execution — proceeded without interruption.

The occurrence of such crises typically exerts an influence upon the investment climate. What impact did this event have upon the confidence of domestic and foreign investors, and what measures have been undertaken to preserve or reinforce this confidence?

Without any doubt, the sanctions and security threats of recent years — and particularly the recent warfare — have affected the trajectory of investment. A considerable portion of Lamerd's populace has, for many years, engaged in economic activities in Persian Gulf countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and other regional states, and many of them are desirous of transferring

their capital to their birthplace. Unfortunately, however, the atmosphere that has been created has caused these individuals to encounter numerous difficulties; these range from apprehensions regarding travel to Iran to banking restrictions, account freezes, asset seizures, and complications arising from the exceptional circumstances. It is natural that such an atmosphere would influence investors' decisions.

In your remarks, you alluded to the investment capacity of Iranians residing in Persian Gulf countries. Given the region's new circumstances, which policies could channel the capital of expatriate Iranians toward special economic zones, particularly Lamerd?

Fortunately, investment projects are currently being implemented with vigor, and contrary to certain perceptions, capital attraction in the zone has not ceased. Of course, one must remain realistic. To assert that sanctions or warfare exert no effect upon the economy and investment would be an incorrect interpretation. These conditions certainly impact the business environment. One of our serious concerns pertains to Iranians and individuals of Iranian descent who own businesses and capital in Persian Gulf countries — especially the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar — and who are interested in investing in their homeland. Unfortunately, subsequent to the warfare, many of these individuals have faced restrictions, including banking difficulties, legal limitations, and anxieties concerning the security of their assets.

For this reason, we have proposed to the government the establishment of a government-guaranteed fund for the attraction of expatriate Iranian capital; a fund that, through the creation of security and confidence, could facilitate the repatriation of capital to the country. We have initiated preliminary studies for this project, and the matter is also under review in joint sessions with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance and the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones. This plan has not

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yet been finalized; nevertheless, I believe it possesses the potential to become a national model.

What effect did the enemy's recent attack have upon production, employment, and exports within the Lamerd Special Economic Zone?

In the domain of production, fortunately, none of the zone's factories ceased operations, and the production process continued. In the export sector, however, we were compelled to modify our methods. Prior to the warfare, the majority of exports were conducted through southern ports such as Bandar Parsian and Bandar Shahid Rajaei. However, with the imposition of maritime restrictions, a portion of products was redirected to the domestic market and the commodity exchange, while another portion was exported via land routes — including through Iraq and Turkey. Thus, the export pattern changed, and, naturally, the volume of exports was affected during that period. Nevertheless, the crucial point was that the production cycle did not cease, and the zone's industries continued their operations.

What lessons did the recent warfare impart for the enhancement of resilience in the country's industrial and economic infrastructures? Is it necessary to revise the developmental model of special economic zones and the requirements of passive defense?

One of the most significant lessons of this warfare was the imperative of revising crisis management training and passive defense protocols. Over the past years, numerous educational courses have been conducted; however, experience demonstrated that, at the moment of crisis, what truly matters is the operational preparedness of personnel. Therefore, training must transition from a purely theoretical mode toward applied and operational instruction.

Another important matter is the revision of the special economic zone development model. In the past, from an economic perspective, it was rational for each special zone to concentrate exclusively upon a single industry; however, from the standpoint of passive defense, the complete concentration of an industrial chain within a single zone generates vulnerability. If a zone that encompasses the entire capacity of an industry were to be targeted, a large segment of the country's production chain would suffer disruption. For this reason, I believe that the diversification of industries within special zones must be augmented; in such a manner that, alongside mineral industries, a portion of petrochemical, refining, and other industries also develop within these zones. This diversification would enhance the country's economic resilience and mitigate the risk of concentration. Of course, a complete transfor-

mation of the national industrial development map is not feasible in the short term; nevertheless, this matter has today become one of the principal axes of governmental programs and passive defense requirements.

What vision do you envision for the reconstruction, development, and resilience enhancement of this zone? Within this vision, is there also a place for adherence to principles pertaining to environmental protection?

The important point is the emphasis upon development simultaneous with environmental preservation. We have repeatedly stated that economic development, capital attraction, and infrastructure creation are important to us; however, if this development comes at the cost of environmental damage, we shall not accept it. For this reason, environmental protection constitutes a red line for the Lamerd Special Economic Zone.

Over the past year, we have implemented projects such as an air quality online monitoring system, and this process will continue. Furthermore, the head of the Environmental Protection Organization has visited the zone's projects, and environmental programs are being pursued with seriousness. Alongside this matter, we have also drawn upon the experiences of other special zones so that the zone's future development will be grounded in principles of sustainability and environmental conservation.

On the other hand, the government has today arrived at the conclusion that the development of free and special economic zones represents one of the important strategies for the country's economic growth. We, too, with this same approach, are pursuing the program for converting the Lamerd Special Economic Zone into a Free Zone. Additionally, proposals for the amendment of economic incentives — including tax exemptions, regulatory facilitations, and the reduction of investment costs — have been submitted to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance; if realized, these could accelerate the zone's developmental momentum.

In the infrastructure domain, we have also set a target that, over the next 5 years, approximately 70% to 75% of the zone's infrastructure — comprising water networks, electricity, roads, facilities, and service networks — will be completed. The development of renewable energy is likewise one of our principal priorities. Today, the Lamerd Special Economic Zone ranks among the country's leading regions in the development of solar power plants, and we shall continue this trajectory with determination.

Alongside this, the most significant infrastructural project for the coming years is the water transfer from the Persian Gulf to the Lamerd Special Economic Zone; a project whose executive operations have commenced, whose contractor has been selected, a portion of whose pipeline route has been laid, and whose desalination plant construction and transmission line phases are also scheduled.

Our vision is for Lamerd to become one of the country's important poles of industry, energy, and investment; a zone wherein economic development, employment, investment security, environmental sustainability, and public welfare are realized simultaneously.



The Iranian Vice President and the Head of the Department of the Environment Shina Ansari (C) inaugurates two environmental initiatives, including an air quality online monitoring station, within the Lamerd Special Economic Zone on February 03, 2026.
● IRNA

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

WT World Cup Team Championships:

Iran women defeat Thailand to claim bronze

Sports Desk

Iran's women's national taekwondo team secured the bronze medal at the World Taekwondo World Cup Team Championships in Chuncheon, South Korea, after a commanding 2-0 victory over Thailand in the third-place playoff on Wednesday.

Iran bounced back from a semifinal defeat to Russia after opening its campaign with a victory over India, producing a dominant display to finish on the podium.

Coached by Mehrouz Saei, the Iranian squad featured Yalda Valinejad, Baran Nemati, Hasti Mohammadi, with Fatemeh Ahmadi serving as the reserve athlete.

Iran controlled the contest from the outset against Thailand, dictating the pace with aggressive attacks in

the opening round. The Thai team struggled to cope with Iran's relentless pressure as the Iranian women took the first round comfortably. The second round followed a similar pattern, with Iran establishing an early lead and maintaining complete control throughout. Thailand failed to mount a comeback, and Iran wrapped up the round with a convincing 100-45 victory.

Wednesday's medal came after Iran men – the most decorated team in the history of the competition with six titles – had been stunned by Thailand in the first round, suffering a 2-0 loss to miss out on the semifinals.

The three-day event will continue with the mixed team competition today, before the Korea Open G1 event gets underway in the South Korean city on Saturday.



● taekwondo.ir

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games: Golshadnejad, Atrachali named Iran's flag bearers for opening ceremony



World karate champion Atousa Golshadnejad (L) and men's national kabaddi captain Fazel Atrachali will be Iran's flag bearers for the opening ceremony of the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games.

● IRNA

Sports Desk

Reigning world karate champion Atousa Golshadnejad and men's national kabaddi captain Fazel Atrachali have been named Iran's flag bearers for the opening ceremony of the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, the National Olympic Committee (NOC) announced on Wednesday.

The 20th edition of the continental multi-sport event will get underway with the opening ceremony at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya on September 19.

Golshadnejad will be aiming to add an Asian Games gold medal to her already impressive list of achievements following a gold-laden international campaign last year.

The 23-year-old won the second Asian Championships gold medal of her career before claiming the women's kumite -61kg title at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh.

The pinnacle of her season, however, came at the WKF World Championships in Cairo in November, where she etched her name into the history books by becoming the first Iranian woman to win a world karate title in the tour-

nament's 27 editions.

"It is a great honor to carry my country's flag at an event as prestigious as the Asian Games. At the same time, it makes my responsibility even greater," Golshadnejad told IRNA.

"I hope not only our karate team but the entire Iranian delegation achieves outstanding results at the Asian Games," she said.

Golshadnejad also provided a positive update on the injury that ruled her out of defending her title at last month's Asian Championships in Bali, Indonesia.

"Fortunately, my condition is good and I have returned to training. I am highly motivated to succeed in Nagoya and complete my collection of gold medals," she said.

She also praised the unity within Iran's national karate program, saying the athletes and coaching staff work together as one family with the shared goal of raising the Iranian flag on the international stage.

Atrachali, meanwhile, is set to compete at the Asian Games for a fifth consecutive time, having helped Iran win the gold medal in 2018 after previously collecting three silver medals with the national team.

The 34-year-old, who plays for Dabang Delhi in the Indian Pro Kabaddi League, was also a member of the Iran side that finished runner-up at the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup.

The Iranian delegation – named "Angels of Minab" in memory of the 168 victims, including 120 schoolchildren, killed in a U.S.-Israeli airstrike on Shajarah Tayyebah Elementary School in Minab, southern Iran, on February 28 – will comprise 308 athletes (214 men and 94 women) competing across 36 sports. At the previous Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, Iran fielded 289 athletes and finished seventh in the medal standings with 13 gold, 21 silver, and 20 bronze medals – its lowest placing in the past five editions of the Games.

Iran's most successful Asian Games campaign came on home soil at Tehran 1974, where it won a record 81 medals, including an all-time high of 36 golds, to finish second behind Japan in the overall standings.

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

Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship: Iran beats powerhouse Kuwait for flying start

Sports Desk

Iran got off to a flying start at the Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship in Chuzhou, China, defeating Kuwait 29-27 in its Group B opener on Wednesday. Omid Enayatiyoo topped the scoring for Iran with a game-high 12 goals to claim the Player of the Match award, while Amirhossein Karami added four. Mahdi Teimouri, Saleh Abbasi, and Mohammadjavad Mirzaei also contributed to the victory with three goals apiece.

Abdullatif Salmin led Kuwait with 10 goals, followed by Yusef Madwah with six. Coached by Keyvan Sadeqi, the Iranian side produced a composed and disciplined performance against the Asian powerhouse—the most successful team in the history of the competition with five titles—taking control from the opening minutes through strong teamwork and defensive organization to build a 15-13 halftime lead.

Iran maintained its momentum after the break, combining indi-

vidual brilliance with the effective execution of the coaching staff's tactical plans to keep Kuwait at bay. Holding on to its advantage until the final whistle, the Iranians sealed a hard-fought victory.

still to come before concluding the preliminary round against India on Tuesday.

The top four teams from each of the two groups will advance to the quarterfinals.

The championship also serves



● IRIHF

The win gave Iran a major confidence boost ahead of Thursday's clash with three-time champion South Korea, the runner-up to Japan in the previous edition, which edged Qatar 28-27 earlier on Wednesday.

Iran faces a demanding schedule in Group B, with matches against the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and defending champion Japan

as the Asian qualifier for the 2027 IHF Men's Junior (U21) World Championship in North Macedonia, with the four semi-finalists securing places at the global showpiece.

Iran finished fifth in the 2024 edition, while its best-ever result came in 2008, when it claimed the silver medal after losing to Kuwait in the final.

Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Group III: Iran rallies past host Malaysia in opener

Sports Desk

Iran opened its campaign at the Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Group III tournament with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over host Malaysia on Wednesday.

Malaysia struck first in the opening singles rubber, where Darrshan Suresh Kumar defeated Sina Moqimi 2-0 (6-3, 7-5) to give the home side an early advantage.

Iran leveled the tie through Ali Yazdani, who produced a composed display to beat Koay Haosheng in straight sets (7-5, 6-2), sending the contest into the decisive doubles rubber.

Iranian captain Hamid Naddaf paired Yazdani with Samyar Elyasi for the doubles, and the duo delivered under pressure, defeating the Malaysian pair 2-0 (6-4, 7-6) to seal the tie and hand

Iran its first victory of the tournament.

Iran will return to action at the National Tennis Centre in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday against Vietnam, which was beaten 2-1 by Saudi Arabia earlier in the day. The Asia/Oceania Group III competition features eight teams divided into two pools. Pool A consists of Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Jordan, and Singapore, while Pool B comprises Iran, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

The teams finishing first in each pool will earn automatic promotion to next year's World Group II Play-offs. They will be joined by one of the two second-placed teams, with the remaining promotion place to be decided in a playoff between the runners-up on the final day.

Meanwhile, the teams finishing third and fourth in each pool will contest relegation playoffs, with the two losing teams dropping to Group IV.

Iran is one of the more experienced Davis Cup nations at this level, having made its debut in 1962 and contested more than 130 ties. In recent years, it has oscillated between Groups III and IV, although it did not compete in the tournament last year. Last May, Yazdani made history by becoming the first Iranian to win a World Tennis Tour singles title at the M15 Tehran event. Despite not turning 23 until September, he has already played 20 Davis Cup matches and is expected to play a pivotal role in Iran's bid for promotion on its return to the competition.

Alamut castle meets four UNESCO world heritage criteria

Iranica Desk

The Alamut Castle and associated fortifications possess Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) by meeting four of UNESCO's World Heritage criteria, making the complex one of the most significant surviving monuments of the Seljuk era, according to a cultural heritage expert. Speaking to IRNA, cultural heritage researcher Jalil Golshan said the site's exceptional architecture, advanced defensive system, historical significance, and sophisticated engineering qualify it for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List. He added that a successful inscription would further strengthen Iran's cultural and civilizational standing on the international stage. Golshan explained that cultural and natural properties are evaluated for world heritage inscription according to internationally recognized criteria. A cultural property is eligible for inscription if it satisfies at least one of UNESCO's six cultural criteria, while meeting multiple criteria further enhances its significance



● IRNA

and nomination potential. He noted that all world heritage nomination dossiers are prepared through comprehensive historical, architectural, cultural, and scientific studies in accordance with UNESCO standards. Referring to the nomination dossier for the Alamut Castle and associated defensive fortifications, Golshan said the property satisfies four of UNESCO's world her-

itage criteria, placing it alongside some of Iran's most distinguished heritage sites, including Pasargadae, Takht-e Soleyman, and the Soltaniyeh Dome. According to historical sources, Alamut Castle dates to the Seljuk period and is closely associated with Hassan Sabbah. Built atop an inaccessible rocky mountain, the fortress once exercised influence over a vast area extending

beyond the Alamut region, although the valley itself served as its principal center. Golshan said the fortress was protected by four supporting castles, each assigned a specific role within a coordinated regional defense network. Together, these fortifications formed an advanced and integrated military system that made Alamut one of the most formidable strongholds in

Iran. He added that even during Timur's invasions, the fortress posed a significant obstacle to advancing forces and could not be captured easily. The expert also highlighted the site's remarkable engineering achievements, noting that its carefully designed water supply system, food storage facilities, defensive layout, and strategic troop deployment enabled the castle's defenders to withstand prolonged sieges without surrendering. One of the castle's most distinctive architectural features, he said, is its construction on a steep rocky summit. The highest section of the fortress served both as the primary defensive position and as the main base for its defenders, reflecting the builders' sophisticated understanding of military engineering, defensive strategy, and the natural landscape during the Seljuk period. Golshan also explained the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage within UNESCO's world heritage framework. Tangible heritage includes physical monuments, archaeological

sites, and historic architecture, while intangible heritage encompasses cultural traditions, rituals, and indigenous knowledge, such as Nowruz, Yalda Night, Ashura commemorations, and other living cultural practices recognized internationally. He stressed that world heritage inscription marks the beginning rather than the end of the conservation process. Effective site management, continuous monitoring, specialized conservation, and the use of UNESCO's technical and advisory expertise are essential for safeguarding inscribed properties. When necessary, he said, the World Heritage Committee can also facilitate international expert assistance, as it did during the restoration of Choghazanbil Ziggurat in the 1990s. Golshan concluded that world heritage inscription of Alamut Castle would not only reinforce recognition of the site's historical and architectural significance but also provide a strategic opportunity to showcase Iran's rich civilization, strengthen professional conservation efforts, and promote cultural tourism on the international stage.

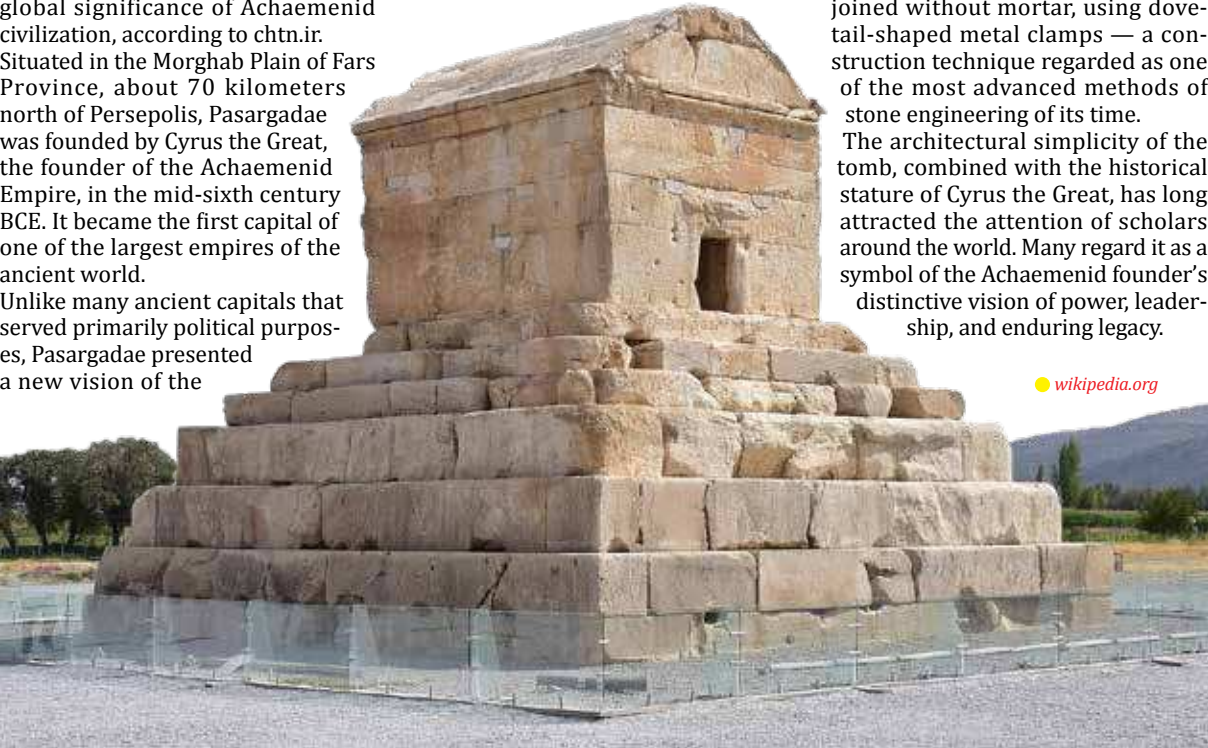
Pasargadae demonstrates origins of Persian Garden design

Iranica Desk

In July 2004, the ancient city of Pasargadae was inscribed as Iran's fifth UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognizing not only the renowned Tomb of Cyrus the Great but also one of the world's earliest and most remarkable examples of royal urban planning, Persian garden design, monumental architecture, and state formation in the ancient world. Among Iran's UNESCO-listed sites, Pasargadae holds a special place as the first capital of the Achaemenid Empire and one of the most influential archaeological complexes in the development of Persian architecture, city planning, and landscape design, according to chtn.ir. During its 28th session, held in Suzhou, China, in July 2004, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee unanimously approved the inscription of Pasargadae as Iran's fifth World Heritage Site, further reinforcing the global significance of Achaemenid civilization, according to chtn.ir. Situated in the Morghab Plain of Fars Province, about 70 kilometers north of Persepolis, Pasargadae was founded by Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, in the mid-sixth century BCE. It became the first capital of one of the largest empires of the ancient world. Unlike many ancient capitals that served primarily political purposes, Pasargadae presented a new vision of the

relationship between power, architecture, nature, and urban planning — an approach that was later reflected in other Achaemenid royal complexes. The world heritage property encompasses some of the finest surviving examples of Achaemenid architecture, including the Tomb of Cyrus the Great, the Private Palace, the Audience Palace, the Gate Palace, the Royal Garden, stone watercourses, Tall-e Takht (the Citadel Terrace), the Tomb of Cambyzes, the Sacred Precinct, the Mozaffari Caravanserai, and the Tang-e Bolaghi archaeological landscape. Archaeologists regard Pasargadae as one of the earliest known examples of an integrated royal capital, where architecture, the natural landscape, water-management systems, and gardens were designed as parts of a unified plan. One of the site's most significant fea-

tures is the Royal Garden of Pasargadae, which many scholars consider the earliest known example of the Persian Chahar Bagh (four-part garden). This design later inspired the creation of historic gardens across Iran, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and even parts of Europe. Its sophisticated water-management system, carefully planned network of stone channels, and harmonious integration of architecture with nature are among the defining characteristics that contribute to the site's Outstanding Universal Value. The most iconic monument at Pasargadae is the Tomb of Cyrus the Great, a limestone structure distinguished by its simple yet enduring architecture. The monument has withstood more than 2,500 years of natural and historical events. The tomb stands on a six-tiered stepped platform, with the burial chamber positioned at its summit. Massive limestone blocks were joined without mortar, using dove-tail-shaped metal clamps — a construction technique regarded as one of the most advanced methods of stone engineering of its time. The architectural simplicity of the tomb, combined with the historical stature of Cyrus the Great, has long attracted the attention of scholars around the world. Many regard it as a symbol of the Achaemenid founder's distinctive vision of power, leadership, and enduring legacy.



● wikipedia.org

Golil; North Khorasan Province's natural, nomadic heritage



● wikipedia.org

Iranica Desk

Nestled in the mountainous landscapes of North Khorasan Province, Golil is one of Iran's most pristine natural areas, renowned for its rich biodiversity, cool summer climate, and deep cultural significance among the region's Kurdish Kormanj nomads. Located north of Shirvan, Golil is a highland plain celebrated for its wildflowers, crystal-clear springs, ancient cypress trees, and diverse wildlife. The area is home to the urial wild sheep, golden eagles, partridges, and many other species, while its refreshing mountain breezes make it a popular summer destination. For generations, the nomadic communities of North Khorasan Province have regarded Golil as far more than a scenic landscape. The name has long appeared in their songs, oral traditions, and historical narratives, symbolizing their identity, homeland, and enduring attachment to the region. Golil is also closely associated with the province's frontier history and the sacrifices of local defenders who protected Iran's northeastern borders. Historical figures such as Sardar Eyvaz remain part of local memory, while sites including Darreh Khooni (meaning Bloody Valley) reflect the area's turbulent past and the resilience of its inhabitants.

According to local tradition, the word Golil means "the beautiful flower of the tribe" in Persian, reflecting the affection that nomadic communities have long held for the region. Each spring, its lush meadows and abundant vegetation have inspired local musicians and storytellers, while its flowing springs have provided a vital source of water for both residents and travelers. Today, Golil is recognized as a biosphere reserve, valued for its unspoiled ecosystems, remarkable plant and animal diversity, and unique ethnic and cultural heritage. The coexistence of rich natural resources with centuries-old nomadic traditions makes the area one of northeastern Iran's most distinctive landscapes. The reserve is also known as a habitat for the Caspian snowcock, the largest partridge species native to Iran. Local nomadic communities have proposed promoting the region as a Border Park of Peace and Friendship, highlighting its potential as a symbol of environmental conservation and cross-border cooperation. Golil Biosphere Reserve is home to approximately 300 plant species and 300 animal species, covering an area of about 144,000 hectares, making it one of Iran's most valuable protected natural areas.



Artists voice solidarity with southern Iranian provinces under attack

Arts & Culture Desk

Leading Iranian actors, musicians and filmmakers voiced support for residents of southern Iran after attacks that began on July 13 and continued over the following days, using social media to express solidarity with affected communities and call for an end to the violence.

The wave of reactions spread across Iran's cultural community as artists from different generations shared messages of empathy for people in Khuzestan, Hormozgan, Bushehr,

Sistan and Baluchestan, and the Persian Gulf islands, where the attacks have dominated public attention in recent days, ISNA reported.

Veteran actress Fatemeh Motamed-Arya posted a series of videos from southern Iran accompanied by traditional southern music, while acclaimed actor Parviz Parastouei wrote, "From Baluchestan to Bushehr, from Qeshm Island to Kish, from Hormozgan to Khuzestan, my life for Iran," underscoring national unity.

Actor Saber Abbar urged Iranians never to become accus-

tomed to war, writing that no one should regard "a burning home, a frightened child, a waiting mother, or a city wounded day after day" as normal. He described southern Iran as "a piece of our heart beating beneath the sound of war."

Pop singer Reza Sadeghi, who hails from the south, pledged unwavering support for his homeland, saying the region's people have defended their land throughout history and would continue to stand by it. Veteran actor Abbas Jamshidi-far echoed that sentiment, praying that "the shadow of war" be

lifted from the Iranian people. Director Mehrdad Khoshbakht, who grew up in Abadan during the Iran-Iraq War, recalled childhood memories of air raids and argued that the reality of war should not be softened through language. "Changing its name does not make war any gentler," he wrote.

Other prominent figures, including actors Sam Dera-khshani, Mehran Ghafourian, Hesam Manzoor, Naeimeh Nezamdoost, Elham Pavhnejad, Ghazal Shakeri, composer Ali Ghamsari, and several musicians, also shared messages



portraying southern Iran as an inseparable part of the nation's identity and expressing hope that peace will soon return.

Digital heritage pact signed to safeguard national archives via cloud tech

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Information Technology Organization and the National Library and Archives of Iran signed a cooperation agreement on Tuesday to expand digital infrastructure, strengthen cloud computing capabilities and launch joint projects aimed at protecting and modernizing the country's written heritage.

The agreement marks a broader push to accelerate the digital transformation of Iran's archival system by combining advanced computing infrastructure with the preservation of historical manuscripts, documents and research collections, IRNA reported.

Mohammad Mohsen Sadr, deputy minister of information and communications technology and head of the Information Technology Organization of Iran (ITO), described the initiative as "a strategic and lasting step" that brings information technology into one of the country's most important cultural missions. "Protecting the nation's valuable data requires modern technologies," Sadr said. "We are ready to support



the National Library and Archives through processing infrastructure, cloud computing, specialized expertise and joint operational projects." He said preserving the country's documentary heritage had taken on greater significance and pledged to begin implementing projects immediately following the signing of the agreement.

Sadr also said the organization would provide the computing infrastructure needed to support the National Library and Archives' digital services while helping integrate its role into Iran's broader digital government architecture. Referring to Iran's digital government ecosystem initiative, he said planning documents covering seven

major digital ecosystems had been completed after more than 90,000 hours of work with universities. The framework, he added, drew positive attention at recent international meetings in Geneva focused on artificial intelligence, the information society and digital development.

Gholamreza Amirkhani, head of the National Library and Archives of Iran, said the country's written heritage forms "the backbone of Iran's identity and civilization" and increasingly depends on digital technologies for long-term preservation. "A substantial share of our documentary heritage has moved from paper to digital platforms," Amirkhani said. "This agreement opens a new chapter in strengthening technological infrastructure, expanding digital services and delivering tangible results in preserving and sharing Iran's written legacy."

He added that the National Library and Archives remains a leading research center for Iranian studies, the Persian language, Islamic studies and the Islamic Revolution, serving scholars worldwide through its electronic databases and digital services.

Iran seeks to unlock tourism investment with faster project execution

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, on Tuesday ordered officials to accelerate tourism investment projects by removing administrative bottlenecks and coordinating with relevant agencies during a meeting with private investors and business leaders in Tehran, according to the ministry.

The high-level session focused on resolving implementation challenges facing tourism developments and speeding up investment across the sector, bringing together ministry officials, provincial representatives, and private-sector investors. After reviewing individual projects and hearing investors' concerns, Salehi-Amiri instructed the ministry and related government bodies to promptly follow up on outstanding cases and eliminate obstacles delaying



project execution. "Investment is a key driver of tourism development, and barriers must be addressed through coordinated action," the minister said, directing officials to expedite administrative procedures and facilitate project implementation.

Among those attending the meeting were Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, head of the ministry's Investment and Economic Affairs Center; Behzad Moridi, director

general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts for Fars Province; and Ahmad Tajari, director of the ministry's Office for Investment, Infrastructure and Tourism Model Areas.

The meeting forms part of the ministry's efforts to strengthen private-sector participation in tourism development by improving the investment climate and accelerating the rollout of tourism infrastructure projects across the country.

Tehran keeps museum treasures secure pending clearance



Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran's most valuable museum collections will remain in secure storage despite the ceasefire until Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts formally declares conditions safe for their return, a cultural heritage official said. Tehran City Council Heritage Committee Chairman Ahmad Alavi said the artifacts had been transferred to protected vaults as a precaution and would not be returned to museums until the ministry issues an official authorization.

"The security of historical artifacts is our red line," he said, adding that all decisions are being made in line with expert assessments by the relevant authorities.

He also said damage assessments have been completed for museums and historic sites affected during the recent conflict, with restoration and structural reinforcement now underway, particularly at properties managed by Tehran Municipality. Separately, Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage Ali Darabi said 149 historical sites, 54 museums, seven historic districts and five nationally registered monuments in 18 provinces sustained damage during the conflict. He said Iran has sent more than 17 communications to UNESCO and other international bodies regarding the losses.

Darabi said the country operates seven secure heritage repositories and is extending backup storage facilities, financial assistance and loans to private museums to strengthen the protection of their collections.

He added that museums will reopen fully once stable conditions are officially confirmed.

He also announced plans to launch a nationwide virtual museum platform to broaden public access to Iran's cultural heritage.

Golestan eyes Kazakh medical tourists through Aktau air link

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's northern Golestan Province is stepping up plans to attract visitors from Kazakhstan by expanding medical and cultural tourism around the direct Gorgan-Aktau flight, provincial tourism officials said after talks with Kazakhstan's Consul General Yerbol Abanuly Akhmetov in Gorgan on Wednesday.

Yaser Ghandehari, deputy director for tourism at Golestan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, said the direct air route has created "a valuable opportunity" to increase visitor flows and launch joint tourism initiatives between northeastern Iran and western Kazakhstan, CHTN reported.

He identified medical tourism as the partnership's top priority, saying Golestan's healthcare infrastructure



positions the province as a potential destination for Kazakh patients. Ghandehari said specialized meetings bringing together travel agencies, universities and medical centers will be organized to develop joint tourism programs, with similar initiatives planned in Kazakhstan. The official also called for

stronger private-sector participation in designing joint travel packages, saying tourism businesses should play a larger role in cultural events to translate people-to-people exchanges into sustainable economic opportunities. Ghandehari said training would underpin the initiative, with universities and academic institutions from

both sides expected to cooperate on language instruction, cultural awareness and professional tourism education to improve services for international visitors.

The Gorgan-Aktau direct flight, launched in June 2025, became the first scheduled air connection between Golestan Province and western Kazakhstan, opening a new corridor for tourism and business travel across the Caspian Sea.

Golestan is home to one of Iran's largest ethnic Kazakh communities, whose shared language, traditions, music, traditional attire and handicrafts have long linked the province with Kazakhstan. Those cultural affinities have increasingly been incorporated into tourism planning, including Iran-Kazakhstan cultural nights held during the 17th International Festival of Iran's Ethnic Groups in Gorgan in November 2025.