Iran Daily

Vol. 8167 ● Sunday, July 19, 2026 ● Tir 28, 1405 ● Safar 04, 1448 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Minister:
Highway network expansion top priority in 'war of corridors'

3

Iran suspends MoU commitments after US breaches: *Deputy FM*

FM spox says Tehran 'never initiated any violations'

2

US military bases come under Armed Forces' fresh blitz

50 killed, 500 injured in anti-Iran American aggression

2

The screengrab from a video released on July 18, 2026 shows a missile launched from an undisclosed location in Iran toward US military assets in the region.
Tasnim

The MoU lies in ruins

Why Iran should treat it as terminated

By Ali Karimi Magham
Senior policy analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The United States has, through a deliberate sequence of military strikes and economic reversals, rendered the June memorandum of understanding inoperative. US kinetic operations against Iranian targets in early July, the revocation of oil sales authorisations, and the re-imposition of sanctions represent not peripheral disagreements but fundamental breaches of the agreement's central commitments: the immediate cessation of hostilities and the suspension of economic coercion. Under established principles of international law, a material breach of this nature relieves the injured party of any continuing obligation to perform or negotiate further under the instrument. Iran, therefore, has both the legal right and the strategic necessity to treat the MoU as terminated. Returning to the negotiating table while these violations remain unaddressed would neither serve Iranian interests nor constitute rational statecraft.

The MoU was constructed on two non-negotiable foundations. The first required an immediate and permanent end to military operations on all fronts. The second envisaged concrete movement towards economic normalisation, beginning with relief on oil sales and a halt to new sanctions pressure. US actions have directly assaulted both foundations. Strikes on Iranian territory after the agreement was signed reintroduced the use of force that the text explicitly sought to suspend. The simultaneous rollback of economic concessions eliminated the very incentives that were meant to create space for substantive talks. These steps are not implementation frictions; they constitute the reassertion of the coercive instruments the MoU was designed to contain. A party that resorts to force and sanctions while simultaneously demanding Iranian restraint has forfeited the minimal credibility required for any serious negotiation.

From a strategic standpoint, the argument for withdrawal is decisive. Conducting talks while Iranian territory remains under active threat and new sanctions are being applied normalises the use of military and economic pressure as routine negotiating tools. It communicates to Washington that periodic displays of force can reset the diplomatic baseline and extract further Iranian flexibility.

This dynamic directly undermines the deterrence posture Iran has sought to rebuild since 2018. Each round of engagement conducted under the shadow of fresh attacks teaches the adversary that escalation carries low cost and high reward. Iran's experience with the JCPOA already illustrated the consequences of entering comprehensive agreements with a party that regards its own commitments as provisional and reversible.

Page 2

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Development-oriented middle class prevents collapse of Iranian society

4

Restoration underway for war-hit historical sites

7

Tehran, Bishkek sign cultural pact to foster arts, heritage cooperation

Salehi says Iranian civilization has long paired peace with defense of national dignity

8

US military bases come under Armed Forces' fresh blitz

50 killed, 500 injured in anti-Iran American aggression

International Desk

Iranian Armed Forces on Saturday continued their retaliatory attacks on US military bases in regional countries in response to renewed US strikes which have so far claimed the lives of at least 50 people in Iran.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Saturday that its forces launched new attacks on US bases in regional countries, warning that countries hosting US forces should be prepared for reciprocal response if their territories are still used for attacks on Iran.

In Kuwait, the IRGC said its forces destroyed a radar installation at Ali Al Salem Air Base as well as a site where the US forces are stationed at the Camp Arifjan.

Jordan, another US ally in the region, was also hit by Iran's strikes, with the IRGC saying that its Aerospace Force destroyed at least two US fighter jets and three other military aircraft during a missile and drone strike at the Al Azraq military base in the Arab country.

Jordan's Army, however, claimed that it had shot down 10 missiles.

Another IRGC operation targeted a US fleet's fuel support pier at Kuwait's Mina Al Ahmadi Port and an intelligence data center in Bahrain known as "Batelco".

The Iranian Army also said it targeted an air base used by the US forces in Bahrain.

Drones targeted "aircraft shelters and parking areas, fuel storage tanks of the US military at Sheikh Isa Air Base, as well as several connecting bridges", the Army said in a statement on Saturday.

Army's drones also targeted the ammunition depot of the US military in Kuwait's Al-Udairi Camp, the headquarters and ammunition depots of the US military in the Ali Al Salem air base, and several communication bridges in the Arab country.

However, Kuwait accused Iran of targeting civilian sites and vital infrastructure after a strike on the power plant forced several power generation units to be deactivated.

The Iranian Army added that the fuel tanks used by the US military in the Al-Azraq base in Jordan were also struck by drone attacks.

The attacks were carried out in response to days of US new strikes on Iran, which has targeted the country's infrastructure in several southern cities after US President Donald Trump threatened to widen strikes to hit power plants and bridges unless Tehran returns to the negotiating table.

Iran's Health Ministry said on Friday that 50 people have been killed and more than 500 injured since the renewed US strikes broke out a week ago.

The latest casualties were reported in the southern province of Hormozgan where US attacks killed three people and wounded eight others.

Local authorities said 116 telecommunications towers had been knocked out of service, with landline, mobile and internet connections down in some northern areas of the province.

In Khuzestan Province, the deputy provincial governor said the US had attacked 95 locations in 12 cities over the past 10 days, according to Iran's Tasnim news agency.

Eight people had been killed in the attacks, he said.

Iranian authorities also said the supply of drinking water to several villages in the south had been cut off after the US had struck power facilities and desalination plant pumps in the village of Bonji, according to Tasnim.

The screengrab from a video released on July 18, 2026 shows missiles launched from an undisclosed location in Iran toward US military assets in the region.
TASNIM

Iran suspends MoU commitments after US breaches: *Deputy FM*

FM spox says Tehran 'never initiated any violations'

International Desk

Iran's deputy foreign minister said on Saturday that the Islamic Republic has suspended the implementation of all its commitments under the "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding" after the United States violated its own obligations by attacking Iran.

"The United States has practically trampled on all of its commitments, stopped implementing all of them, and we have also suspended all of our commitments under that memorandum. We are not implementing any of them at present," Kazem Gharibabadi told the state broadcaster on Saturday.

"We are now focused on defending the country and responding to aggressors."

In response to a question about any contact between the two countries for resumption of negotiations, the Iranian official said, "We were already engaged in negotiations, but unfortunately it was the Americans themselves who carried out these aggressive actions and violated their commitments under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding."

Gharibabadi said Iran's immediate priority is to defend the country in a "unified and decisive manner," adding that the United States had already received a response showing that its aggressive actions will go nowhere.

"If they are wise, they should choose other approaches," he said.

The deputy foreign minister said Iran's current course of action is "the decisive defense of our country and teaching the aggressors a lesson."

Kazem Gharibabadi
IRNA

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said in an exclusive interview with Sulaiman Ahmed, an independent British journalist and geopolitical analyst, that the Islamic Republic has never violated any agreements and invariably adhered to obligations.

When asked whether Iran had revoked the Islamabad MoU, Baqaei replied, "We never initiated any violations. No commitment we have made — whether the JCPOA, which was violated by the United States, or this MoU — has ever been revoked by Iran. The United States violated this agreement."

The spokesman added, "From day one, we made it clear that commitment is met with commitment. Since the United States violated its obligations, Iran will not fulfill its commitments either, as this is a reciprocal action. We made it clear that as long as this violation continues, Iran will be unable to implement its commitments."

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his American counterpart Donald Trump digitally signed the agreement on June 18 to end attacks on all fronts, remove a US blockade affecting Iranian ports and the reopen of the Strait of Hormuz which was closed by Iran following the US-Israeli aggression in February.

The 14-point MoU also includes a commitment to clinch a final deal within 60 days on sanctions imposed on Iran as well as the country's nuclear program. However, the US violated the agreement by launching new aggression against Iran, forcing Tehran to abandon its commitments under the MoU.

A top Iranian military adviser also warned that if the US continues the war for another two to three days, the country will enter an "offensive and destructive" phase. Mohsen Rezaei, military adviser to Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, said in an interview that the policy of "both war and negotiation" has ended, adding that if US attacks continue, Iran's Armed Forces will no longer limit themselves to retaliatory strikes, and US bases and forces will no longer be safe within any political borders.

Rezaei said Iran has so far exercised restraint to prevent the war from expanding into a broader regional and international crisis.

He warned that if the United States continues its anti-Iran actions, Iran will deploy additional military capabilities, including ground forces, and the war's scope will expand.

Iran files criminal charges against Reza Pahlavi over actions against nation

REUTERS

National Desk

Iranian prosecutors have opened a criminal case against Reza Pahlavi, son of the former Shah of Iran, and several other people for acting against the Iranian people during recent developments across the country, Judiciary spokesperson Asghar Jahangir said on Saturday.

Jahangir said the case was launched by the Tehran Prosecutor's Office following a complaint filed by the country's Prosecutor General.

He said the case relates to actions carried out during the 12-day war launched by the United States and the Israeli regime on Iran and Washington's recent aggression against Iran.

According to Jahangir, they are accused of collaborating with "hostile governments."

He said they had called for military action against Iran, backed the country's partition and helped pave the way for attacks on infrastructure and military facilities.

Jahangir said investigations had found that the defendants, through networks affiliated with them inside Iran, had encouraged people to engage in violence, urban unrest, attacks on public and government buildings, the burning of mosques and copies of the Qur'an, and other violent acts.

He said the investigation also alleged that the defendants had sought to establish terrorist networks and had planned bombing operations and other acts of sabotage.

The MoU lies ...

Repeating that experience while Iranian soil is still exposed to direct military ac-

Page 1 ›

tion would not constitute prudence; it would compound a known vulnerability.

Iran's negotiation team carry a specific institutional responsibility in this context. The team's function extends beyond managing procedural steps to safeguarding the integrity of Iran's core positions and the credibility of its deterrence posture. Continued engagement under present conditions produces three measurable harms. It risks fracturing domestic and elite consensus at a moment when cohesion is indispensable. It cedes control of the international narrative to the United States, which can portray Iran as the party obstructing diplomacy while its own actions violate the ceasefire and economic provisions. Most dangerously, it generates incremental momentum towards concessions on the nuclear file without any corresponding, irreversible American steps on the military or sanctions tracks. Any resumption of talks in the current environment will be interpreted in Washington and allied capitals as confirmation that Iranian resistance has defined limits and can be eroded through calibrated aggression.

The United States has violated not only the specific terms of the MoU but the elementary prerequisites of good-faith diplomacy. Its conduct reveals a consistent pattern in which agreements are treated as tactical pauses rather than binding constraints. The 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA despite Iran's verified compliance, followed by the current post-MoU strikes and sanctions reversals, demonstrates that American commitments remain subject to unilateral revision whenever domestic or regional calculations shift. Under these circumstances, continued participation in the present negotiation track does not advance Iranian security; it subsidises American pressure and erodes the very leverage Iran seeks to preserve.

A rational response, therefore, requires clarity. Iran should record the material breaches, declare the relevant provisions of the MoU suspended or terminated as a direct consequence of US conduct, and redirect national effort towards the consolidation of military readiness, economic resilience, and strategic partnerships. Future engagement, should conditions change, must be predicated on verifiable prior actions by the United States: sustained cessation of military operations, full restoration of economic measures, and credible guarantees against renewed coercion. Until those conditions exist, the only coherent course is to treat the agreement as having been rendered void by the party that systematically violated it. Iran's negotiation team has a professional obligation to present this assessment without equivocation.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

Minister: Highway network expansion top priority in 'war of corridors'

Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd
IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd said on Saturday that completing the country's highway network along key transport corridors was the ministry's top priority, describing transport links as strategically important as Iran continues to face attacks on civilian infrastructure.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the start of construction of the Ardakan-Meybod Expressway, Sadeq Malvajerd said the ministry's top priority is completing the expressway network in the corridor routes with private-sector participation.

The project would be built with 70% private-sector financing and 30% government funding, according to IRNA. The six-lane, dual-carriageway expressway on Iran's north-south transport corridor is expected to take five years to complete.

"Today's war is a war of corridors. The enemy seeks not only to create dead ends inside the country but also to cut Iran's connections with other countries," she said.

"It is therefore the responsibility of the Roads and Urban Development Ministry to rapidly restore these routes and counter such actions."

Sadeq said the Ardakan-Meybod Expressway would help reduce fuel consumption, speed up cargo transportation, improve road safety and complete Iran's north-south corridor. She expressed hope that sections of the route would eventually be linked continuously from the country's northern borders to the southern port of Bandar Abbas.

Iran has remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks on the country in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure during a 40-day conflict. After a pause of several weeks, attacks on Iran's infrastructure resumed on July 7 after three vessels were targeted in the Strait of Hormuz.

The United States restored its naval blockade with 20 warships, hundreds of fighter jets and military drones, as US Central Command (CENTCOM) said, to prevent the Islamic Republic's oil exports while ensuring maritime security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

In the latest attacks, bridges on the route linking Bandar Abbas to Bandar Khamir and Lar, along with part of Hormozgan Province's railway network, were damaged on Thursday night and early Friday.

Early Saturday, during the seventh consecutive night of attacks, several more bridges and tunnels on transport routes in Hormozgan were targeted, while the Bonji desalination plant in the west of Jask and a desalination facility on Qeshm Island were also damaged.

The attacks disrupted roads connecting Hormozgan with Fars and Kerman provinces, while damage to railway lines forced changes to passenger travel schedules.

According to Fars news agency, rail operations at the Bandar Abbas railway junction, which had been suspended following the US airstrike on Friday, resumed after the necessary repairs were completed.

The railway junction, located about 10 kilometers west of Bandar Abbas, connects passenger and freight rail lines with Shahid Rajaee Port and the Bandar Abbas railway. Two people were injured in Friday's airstrike on the facility.

Petroiran completes second South Pars infill well, lifts gas output

Economy Desk

Petroiran Development Group — a subsidiary to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) — has completed drilling, completion and delivery of the second infill well at the SPD15 platform of Iran's South Pars gas field, adding 2.2 million cubic meters (mcm) of natural gas per day to production, the company's chief executive said.

According to IRNA, Ali Daqayeqi, chief executive of Petroiran Development Group, said the second infill well had entered production and represented "an effective step toward increasing output and ensuring the country's stable energy supply."

"The drilling, completion and delivery of the second infill well at the SPD15-05 platform were successfully completed, relying on the engineering and operational capabilities of Iranian specialists despite complex operating conditions," IRNA quoted him as saying.

He said the well had added 2.2 million cubic meters of gas per day to production from the South Pars joint field after entering service.

Daqayeqi said the average daily output of South Pars wells is currently about 1 million cubic meters of gas, adding that the new well was producing more than twice the field average.

"The well has delivered production at more than double the field average, demonstrating outstanding performance beyond expectations and reflecting the high quality of the project's design, drilling and technical execution," he said.

He said the infill well was drilled and completed at a depth of more than 5,100 meters in one of the most complex reservoir layers of South Pars in cooperation with Pars Oil and Gas Company.

"The completion of the SPD15-05 well not only fulfills the production increase program but also demonstrates Petroiran's technical and operational capability in managing complex drilling and development projects," Daqayeqi said.

"The achievements of this project provide valuable support for sustaining production from the South Pars joint field and advancing the development goals of the country's oil industry," he said.

South Pars, which Iran shares with Qatar, accounts for 70% of the country's natural gas supply and provides 40% of the feedstock required for gasoline production.

Date: 1405/4/28 - No.:568010
ADDENDUM NOTICE
INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER
Second Announcement
GRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Further to Tender Notice no.483124 published in Tehran Times and Savalan on 30/6/2026 and Etellat and Iran Daily on 1/7/2026, please be advised that the terms and conditions of tender for the purchase of 3×50000±5% MTS of Granular Triple Super Phosphate (GTSP) will be available from Saturday dated 18/7/2026 until Monday dated 20/7/2026 again.

All qualified and interested companies that were unable to obtain the tender documents are invited to receive them from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of IRI. Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30-character identification code of 339039782263500650000000000008.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Saturday** dated **15/8/2026** (During official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelops will be on **Sunday** dated **16/8/2026** at **10:00 a.m.** with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

Other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and http://iets.mporg.ir or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

Public Relations and International Affairs of Agricultural Support Services Company

Tehran, Moscow agree to boost AI ties, draft auto roadmap

IRIB

Economy Desk

Iran and Russia agreed to expand technical cooperation on artificial intelligence and develop a joint roadmap for new automotive standards during a meeting on the sidelines of a BRICS gathering in Bengaluru, India, ILNA reported.

Farzaneh Ansari, head of Iran's National Standards Organization, and Anton Shalaev, head of Russia's Federal Agency on Technical Regulating and Metrology, agreed to finalize and exchange within two months an implementation roadmap covering standards for electric vehicles, intelligent systems and automotive cybersecurity.

The two sides also emphasized closer cooperation in metrology, standardization, conformity assessment and training.

The officials reviewed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in standardization, metrology, conformity assessment, education and participation in international organizations.

Standardization of artificial intelligence was identified as one of the main areas of cooperation. The two sides agreed to exchange technical expertise, hold specialized meetings and workshops, enhance experts' capabilities and cooperate in developing international AI standards.

Cooperation in conformity assessment, particularly in the automotive industry, was another focus of the talks. The two sides emphasized cooperation on electric vehicles, advanced driver-assistance systems, battery safety, automotive cybersecurity and connected vehicles, and agreed that the implementation roadmap for the sector would be finalized and exchanged between the two organizations within two months.

Separately, on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting of heads of national standards bodies, Ansari met with Sanjay Garg, director general of the Bureau of Indian Standards.

The two sides welcomed the expansion of bilateral ties in standardization and stressed broader technical cooperation, exchanges of professional expertise and greater use of shared capacities in standardization and quality infrastructure.

They also reviewed bilateral cooperation and discussed opportunities to expand collaboration.

A memorandum of understanding between Iran's National Standards Organization and the Bureau of Indian Standards was also discussed, with both sides emphasizing the importance of finalizing the document in the near future as a framework for future technical cooperation within the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

The meeting of heads of national standards organizations from BRICS member countries was held in the Indian city of Bengaluru on July 16-17.

A girl without hijab holds the famous Iranian flag of the Valiasr Street in Tehran that has symbolically changed hands and stayed upright without using a pole since March 29, 2026, in the midst of the US-Israeli war against the country.
MEHR

Development-oriented middle class prevents collapse of Iranian society

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Ali Asghar Saeedi

Iranian society in recent years has encountered economic difficulties and certain social fissures, yet the experience of the recent war demonstrated that some dissatisfactions do not necessarily signify national rupture. Ali Asghar Saeedi, sociologist and associate professor at the University of Tehran, in an exclusive interview with Iran Newspaper while emphasizing the role of historical memory, national identity, social resilience, and the formation of a cultural middle class, states that external threat activates more profound layers of Iranian identity, and this very phenomenon engenders national solidarity. He simultaneously warns that this social capital will prove durable only if, subsequent to the US-Israeli war on Iran, it is accompanied by reforms in administrative methods, economic reconstruction, and the provision of public welfare. The translated interview that you shall read below concerns this fundamental question: why, despite certain internal dissatisfactions, Iranian society achieved cohesion when confronted with external threat, and how might this social capital be preserved and transformed into development in the postwar era?

IRAN: Iran withstood the military aggression of the United States and Israel, and this very resistance prevented the aggressors from attaining their objectives. In what do you discern the secret and origins of this national resistance? Which components thereof appeared most worthy of contemplation to you?

SAEEDI: Your question, from the perspective of political sociology, historical sociology, and studies pertaining to social resilience, is extremely significant. Answering this question necessitates extensive field research, and I am unaware whether such research has been conducted. Nevertheless, if we endeavor to synthesize the viewpoints of specialists — what domestic analysts and experts have propounded to date concerning the secret of Iran's resistance under conditions of external pressure, prolonged sanction, internal social crises, and direct warfare — several principal axes may be accentuated.

The first, and perhaps most crucial, factor is that which in the lexicon of social sciences is designated the distinction between internal conflict and external threat. Numerous researchers maintain that Iranian society, notwithstanding certain cleavages in economic, political, and social domains, does not necessarily acquiesce to foreign intervention. In Iran's historical experience, from the Iran–Iraq War to diverse regional crises, a behavioral pattern has been observed whereby the populace, even if critical of the government, manifests a form of defensive solidarity when confronting external power. This phenomenon in political science is termed the "Rally Around the Flag Effect" — that is, at the moment of external peril, internal disagreements temporarily recede to the periphery.

The second factor is the substantial weight of Iranians' historical memory. Many Iranian sociologists have noted that Iranian society possesses a profoundly deep historical memory of experiences with foreign intervention — from the Russo-Persian Wars of the 19th century, to the coup d'état of August 19, 1953, and then the eight-year war. This historical memory has engendered in a segment of society, even under critical circumstances, acute sensitivity toward any project suggestive of partition, occupation, or external imposition. In other words, history in Iran is not merely the past but partially constitutes contemporary political behavior.

The third component is that which some researchers term defensive nationalism. In many societies, national identity under ordinary conditions may appear feeble or diffuse, yet under external threat it suddenly becomes activated. In Iran, national identity comprises a synthesis of civilizational, historical, linguistic, and cultural elements that operate beyond everyday political cleavages. Even groups that are severe critics in domestic matters may, when they perceive the nation's territorial integrity to be imperiled, incline toward defense of the country as a whole.

The fourth factor is the capacity for social resilience arising from years of crisis. Iran is a society that has experienced decades of sanction, inflation, economic instability, and various regional crises. Some economists and sociologists contend that this very condition has produced a type of social adaptation to difficult circumstances. In the scientific literature, this phenomenon is denominated "social resilience" — that is, society learns how to preserve its primary functions even under intense pressures. A society that has long lived in crisis does not necessarily collapse quickly when confronted with a new crisis.

The fifth factor is the failure of external calculations concerning the relationship between populace and government. Some analysts believe that foreign actors typically assume the existence of social protests, economic dissatisfaction, or political cleavages will automatically lead to rapid collapse. Yet political sociologists have repeatedly asserted that social protest is not equivalent to the collapse of political order. Citizens may simultaneously criticize the government while also harboring serious concerns regarding national security, territorial integrity, or the country's future. This is precisely the distinction between "dissatisfaction with the government" and "acceptance of national ruin" — two phenomena that external analyses sometimes conflate.

The sixth factor is the existence of informal networks of social solidarity. In Iran, unlike many modern individualistic societies, the extended family, local relationships, ethnic bonds, and especially religious networks and informal groups still play a significant role in preserving social cohesion. During crises, these networks can function as shock absorbers and prevent the rapid disintegration of social order. Yet the more important question is: how do people who protest economic, social, and political issues suddenly become cohesive? The answer of many theorists is that human beings simultaneously possess multiple levels of identity. A citizen may be dissatisfied with economic policies, social restrictions, or corruption, but when external danger is felt, a deeper layer of identity becomes activated: national identity and a sense of belonging to the homeland. In social identity theory, this is termed the "activation of superordinate identity under threat".

Ultimately, perhaps the most important lesson this experience demonstrates is that society ought not be measured solely through indicators of dissatisfaction. A society may simultaneously be dissatisfied, critical, angry, and protesting, yet still, at the moment of peril, possess a high capacity for collective cohesion. Protest does not always signify collapse; sometimes society maintains a clear distinction between "demanding internal change" and "resisting external pressure".

If we wish to summarize this discussion in the form of a sociological proposition, perhaps we might state: "Iranian society demonstrated that internal dissatisfaction does not necessarily signify national rupture; under conditions of external threat, the deeper layers of historical identity, collective memory, defensive nationalism, and the historical experience of foreign intervention can rapidly become activated and generate a cohesion unobservable under normal circumstances." This perhaps is the most crucial point that many external analysts have repeatedly overlooked in their comprehension of Iranian society.

> In Iran's historical experience, from the Iran–Iraq War to diverse regional crises, a behavioral pattern has been observed whereby the populace, even if critical of the government, manifests a form of defensive solidarity when confronting external power. This phenomenon in political science is termed the "Rally Around the Flag Effect" — that is, at the moment of external peril, internal disagreements temporarily recede to the periphery.

Two Iranian women, who were participating in a nightly gathering in support of troops during the US-Israeli war against the country, hold signs that read in Persian, "From soldier to the commander: message received; we will stay in the streets."
BBC

The matters you have mentioned are all in some way connected to sociological discourse. From this same angle, please offer an assessment of the middle class in Iran and its performance during the war. After all, in modern transformations, the middle class is regarded as the engine driving societal change. How did you perceive the role of this class?

From the standpoint of political sociology and sociology, social classes are highly worthy of contemplation, and in my estimation, this is one of the most important variables that is frequently underappreciated in conventional analyses, particularly external analyses concerning Iran.

If we observe carefully, one of the significant transformations of Iranian society subsequent to the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was the formation and expansion of a new type of middle class — a class that, unlike the classical middle class predicated on economic ownership, relies not so much on economic capital as on cultural capital; a concept introduced into sociological literature by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. This class encompasses a broad spectrum of academics, teachers, engineers, physicians, technical experts, specialized civil servants, cultural activists, owners of knowledge-based enterprises, technology specialists, and a large cohort of educated urban forces that, over the past four decades, have become one of the most important social forces in Iran. The first characteristic of this class is a high level of awareness concerning the political and economic complexities of the contemporary world. Owing to greater access to higher education,

media, specialized knowledge, and global communications, this class can usually comprehend the real consequences of war, foreign intervention, and the collapse of political order better than other social groups. Contrary to the prevailing assumption that political dissatisfaction necessarily leads to welcoming any change in the political system, this class often understands that external attack or political instability can generate a chain of uncontrollable consequences: excessive depreciation of currency, breakdown of public services, large-scale emigration of elites, destruction of infrastructure, economic insecurity, and even partition or civil war.

The second important characteristic of this class is its preference for development over chaos. The new middle class is generally not a revolutionary class. In the literature of development sociology, it is stated that the middle class, rather than desiring fundamental transformation, seeks gradual reform and sustainable development. The reason is clear: this class has made the greatest investment in education, expertise, profession, and foresight, and any severe instability could destroy that long-term capital. For this reason, even if under normal conditions it criticizes economic, social, or cultural policies, at the moment it perceives the overall structure of the country to be exposed to external threat, it alters its behavior.

The third characteristic is the intense dependence of this class upon institutional order and modern infrastructure. Unlike traditional classes, whose economic life may be partially independent of complex modern structures, the new middle class has organized its daily existence in direct connection with the university, the banking system, the internet, the specialized labor market, formal education, modern commerce, digital communications, and bureaucratic structures. For this reason, this class knows better than others that foreign war or political collapse would destroy precisely these infrastructures before anything else.

The fourth characteristic is rational calculation. This class typically regulates its political action not merely on the basis of emotions but rather on a cost-benefit calculus. Under normal conditions, it may criticize, advance political and social demands in the public sphere, participate in certain protests, or abstain from certain elections, but when confronted with external danger, a rational reassessment occurs. This class asks: "Is the available alternative superior to the current condition, or will its costs prove far more costly?"

This is why, under conditions of external threat, the behavior of this class usually changes. This change does not necessarily signify active political support; rather, it sometimes manifests as a temporary suspension of criticism. I want to use this point to recommend to officials that, should war unfortunately commence again, they should not disconnect the internet because even if access to the internet and the public sphere remains open and the possibility of continued criticism persists, a segment of this class will consciously reduce its level of criticism or remain silent, and many of them will express support, because their mental priority will have shifted from "demanding change" to "preventing collapse".

Amid the ongoing US-Israeli aggression, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) visits a chain store in the country's capital, Tehran, on March 27, 2026, to ensure that the supply chain is not disrupted and the stores are fully stocked.
IRNA

From a theoretical perspective, one may say this class distinguishes between two conditions: first, dissatisfaction with the performance of internal structures; second, a threat to the existence of the country. These two are not identical for them. An individual may criticize internal policies yet still believe that foreign war or severe instability would eliminate any possibility of future development.

Another important point is that the Iranian middle class over recent decades has become intensely globalized. This class studies the experiences of various countries and observes contemporary examples: Iraq after 2003, Libya after 2011, Syria during its war. For a significant portion of this class, these experiences constitute a historical warning, demonstrating that the collapse of the central government, whether by external force or externally instigated, even if initiated under the slogan of freedom or change, can lead to years of instability.

Consequently, one may argue that one of the most important factors in Iran's social resistance to external pressure is not merely nationalist sentiments or political mobilization but rather the presence of a broad, educated, forward-looking, and development-oriented cultural middle class — a class that, although it may criticize many existing conditions, at the moment of external threat, owing to greater awareness of the costs of collapse, prefers to prevent the country from entering a path of chaos. Perhaps one of the significant errors of many analysts from foreign forces is precisely this: they assume every critical society is necessarily a society ripe for collapse, whereas the existence of a development-oriented middle class can produce exactly the opposite outcome.

> The new middle class is generally not a revolutionary class. In the literature of development sociology, it is stated that the middle class, rather than desiring fundamental transformation, seeks gradual reform and sustainable development. The reason is clear: this class has made the greatest investment in education, expertise, profession, and foresight, and any severe instability could destroy that long-term capital.

The American-Israeli war against Iran brought together numerous political forces with diverse positions in solidarity against foreign aggression. What is your proposal for the continuation of such solidarity?

The 40-day war brought together diverse political and social forces against external aggression — both domestically and abroad — but one must distinguish between "wartime solidarity" and "sustainable postwar cohesion". Wartime solidarity typically forms due to the presence of a common threat, and after the danger subsides, political, economic, and social disagreements reemerge. Therefore, expecting the same silence and unanimity to persist is neither realistic nor necessarily desirable. What can be preserved is the national core of this solidarity: the acceptance that Iran is the common homeland of all Iranians and that political disagreement should not lead to exclusion or reliance upon foreign intervention. I observed many compatriots abroad who, despite the hardships they had witnessed in the past, were intensely concerned about Iran.

For the sustainability of this social capital, several actions are essential.

First, no faction should interpret the people's resistance as complete endorsement of itself. Many people stood up to defend the country.

Second, a distinction must be made between the domestic critic and the one aligned with the enemy. A citizen may simultaneously be a critic yet loyal to Iran.

Third, postwar solidarity must be reciprocated with openness, the reduction of certain restrictions, the hearing of diverse groups' voices, and genuine popular participation.

Fourth, economic reconstruction, inflation control, an increase in employment and public services, and the reduction of insecurity regarding the future must be placed at the center of postwar policies. National solidarity is not preserved by slogans alone; it must have tangible effects on people's daily lives. Among these, the new middle class plays an important role.

During wartime, this class, due to its awareness of the consequences of collapse and instability, may temporarily reduce its criticism. After the war, it expects to have a share in the administration of the country and that development, stability, civil liberties, and connection with the world will be strengthened. Consequently, preserving the very unity of the wartime period is not possible, but it can be transformed into a kind of "solidarity amid disagreement". The condition for this is that the government respond to the people's solidarity with trust, governance reform, justice, development, and the acceptance of pluralism. The people granted the country an opportunity for survival during the war; postwar policy must grant the people an opportunity for participation and a better life.

Alongside popular solidarity, we witnessed an increase in political cohesion and inter-institutional coordination at the national level, which appears to have prevented the collapse of the country's administrative structure. How do you evaluate the government's role in this coordination and cohesion?

In my estimation, if we wish to evaluate the government's role in this war from the perspective of the sociology of the state, we must distinguish between public contestation and governance capacity. These two are not necessarily identical. A government may face serious challenges in public satisfaction yet simultaneously possess high institutional capacity for crisis management; and vice versa.

In the case of Iran, one point that many domestic and foreign analysts have noted is that, contrary to the expectations of some observers, the country's administrative structure did not disintegrate during the war. Ministries, provincial governorates, service institutions, relief networks, the health sector, the energy network, banks, security councils, and military and law enforcement forces were able, despite intense pressure, to maintain their primary functions. This is what in the literature of political science is termed institutional resilience.

The experience of many countries demonstrates that the onset of state collapse usually occurs when essential services such as electricity, water, healthcare, transportation, the banking system, and commodity distribution cease to function. In Iran, despite damages, these services did not completely halt, and this very fact contributed to the preservation of relative social calm. Recent research also emphasizes that war does not necessarily lead to the collapse of institutions and that the quality of governance during crisis plays a decisive role in preventing collapse.

Nevertheless, the experience of various countries shows that success in war management transforms into sustainable capital only when the mobilization and coordination capacity of the crisis period is converted, in the postwar era, into efficient governance, economic reconstruction, increased public trust, and institutional reforms.

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

Iranian soldiers of various classes pose with victory signs and a flag of their country during the Iraqi-imposed war of the 1980s.
IMNA

FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League:

Iran finds relief with survival despite Slovenia setback

Iranian outside hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh (L) spikes the ball during his team's 3-0 defeat to Slovenia in the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League in Belgrade, Serbia, on July 17, 2026.
VOLLEYBALL WORLD

Sports Desk

Iran endured yet another frustrating day at the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League, losing 3-0 (27-25, 25-19, 26-24) to Slovenia in Belgrade on Friday.

Despite suffering an eighth defeat in 11 preliminary-round matches, the Asian side still had reason for relief earlier in the day after Belgium's straight-set loss to Japan ensured head coach Roberto Piazza's men, who sit 13th in the 18-team standings, avoided relegation ahead of today's final preliminary fixture against Turkey.

Outside hitter Rok Možič led the European side with 19 points, including five blocks, while opposite hitter Nik Mujanović added 15.

Opposite Ali Hajipour was the only Iranian to reach double figures with 11 points, while outside hitters Ali Haqparast and Morteza Sharifi contributed nine apiece.

Despite the latest setback, Piazza said he remains optimistic about the future of his young squad, whose ultimate goal is to qualify for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

"I told the players that you can always look at a glass from two perspectives: half empty or half full. For me, the glass is always full," the Italian said after the match.

"We gave everything we had today, but we were playing with limited energy and were not in our best physical condition because we had spent so much the day before."

Iran claimed only its third preliminary-round victory when it came from behind to beat Germany in a five-set thriller on Thursday.

"Had we performed better yesterday and finished that match sooner, we could have been in better condition today. That's the way I see it," Piazza added.

"That match [against Germany] could have been easier, but in tournaments like this, when you have to play on consecutive days, the energy you lose cannot be fully recovered by the next day.

"Today, this was all the energy we had available. Even so, I'm proud of my team because the players left everything they had on the court."

Piazza also lamented his side's inability to close out tight sets.

"I want to review how many sets we've lost by just a couple of points," he said. "Today we lost two sets 27-25 and 26-24. On many occasions we were only one point away from winning a set. In the third set, for example, we were leading 24-23."

Iran also squandered a five-point advantage at 14-9 in the third set.

The Italian coach said his players must learn to remain patient instead of trying to finish sets at the first opportunity.

"The first instinct is to think we have to end the set right away," Piazza said. "But we don't yet have the patience to accept that if the first attack doesn't work, we may need a second or even a third chance to score the decisive point.

"When we fail to finish it at the first opportunity, we begin to feel pressure because the initial attempt didn't succeed. That's not the right mentality, and it's my job to change that habit."

Piazza stressed that responsibility for the defeat rested with the team as a whole rather than any individual player.

"I don't want to blame anyone or point the finger at any player. This concerns the entire team," he said.

Asian Cadet Judo Championships:

Hakimi wins gold as Iran finishes third with four medals

Iran's Sobhan Hakimi (L) won the men's -81kg gold medal at the Asian Cadet Judo Championships in Amman, Jordan.
YJC

Sports Desk

Iran collected four medals, including two golds, to finish third in the team standings at the Asian Cadet Judo Championships in Amman, Jordan.

Uzbekistan dominated the competition with an impressive haul of 11 gold, four silver, and five bronze medals. Kazakhstan, which also won two golds, edged Iran for the runner-up spot thanks to seven silvers and six bronzes.

Sobhan Hakimi headlined Iran's medal haul on the final day of the event by claiming gold in the men's -81kg division with a victory over Samandar Sunnatov in the final.

The teenage sensation began his campaign by defeating Indonesia's Satrio Yulianto before overcoming Kyrgyzstan's Baiel Isakov to secure his place in the title bout.

Joining Hakimi on the podium was fellow Iranian Hossein Novin, who bounced back from a semifinal defeat to Sunnatov by beating Yulianto to claim bronze.

An all-Iranian contest saw Amirreza Alizadeh defeat Mohammad Barfaraz in the bronze-medal bout of the men's -90kg division to add a second bronze to Iran's tally.

The highlight of Iran's campaign came on the penultimate day of the competition, when Mahsa Shakibaei made history by winning the country's first-ever women's gold medal at the continental championships, defeating Chinese Taipei's Lin Pei-Hsin in the -52kg final.

Shakibaei produced a series of commanding performances en route to the title, opening her campaign with a victory over Uzbekistan's Kumushbibi Ergasheva before defeating Syria's Sham Almawardi in the semifinals to book her place in the gold-medal contest.

The triumph added to an already impressive résumé for Shakibaei, who also won gold at last year's Asian Youth Games in Bahrain, further underlining her status as one of the country's brightest young prospects.

Elsewhere, Mohammad Hadidi narrowly missed out on a podium finish in the men's +90kg division after losing to Kyrgyz judoka Nurel Dildebekov in the bronze-medal bout.

Reza Nejadkachiani (men's -55kg) and Elsana Boroumandi (women's -63kg) were the other Iranians in action in the Jordanian capital, finishing seventh in their respective weight classes.

Sitting Volleyball World Championships:

Iran coach Rezaei calls for greater support after securing world title

Sports Desk

Iran men's sitting volleyball head coach Hadi Rezaei has called for greater investment and long-term support to help the national team maintain its dominance after securing a record-extending ninth title at the Sitting Volleyball World Championships in Hangzhou, China.

Iran successfully defended its crown by defeating Bosnia and Herzegovina in the final, also booking its place at the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games, where it will chase a ninth gold medal.

Friday's victory was Iran's second over its familiar rival in Hangzhou, following a 3-1 win in the pool stage. It also marked Iran's fourth consecutive victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina in a major final, having also prevailed in the title deciders in 2018 and 2022, as well as the gold-medal match at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

Speaking after the triumph, Rezaei said winning the world title and securing Paralympic qualification had been the team's primary objectives, regardless of the world rankings.

"With Egypt finishing seventh, Brazil fourth and Bosnia and Herzegovina second, the world rankings could change," Rezaei said. "We will wait and see whether we return to the No. 1 spot, but what mattered most to us was winning the world championship and qualifying for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympics."

Iran entered the tournament ranked fourth in the world.

The veteran coach thanked fans and officials for their congratulatory messages but stressed that sustained success would require far greater backing from sports authorities.

"This team has been winning world and Paralympic titles for many years, but if we want to continue this success in the future, we need funding, better facilities, overseas training camps and international warm-up matches," he said.

"We went to the World Championships with maximum motivation but minimal preparation. I hope that after the team's return, special attention will be given to sitting volleyball because sustained success is impossible without proper support."

Iranian players celebrate after winning the men's title at the Sitting Volleyball World Championships in in Hangzhou, China, on July 17, 2026.
FLICKR

Rezaei acknowledged that maintaining Iran's supremacy would become increasingly difficult and said a fresh approach was needed to keep the team at the top.

"Winning the world title and qualifying for the Paralympics despite all the challenges we faced was a major achievement," he said. "Our task will be even harder in the coming years, and we need a new vision for sitting volleyball."

The coach also expressed hope that Iran's women's sitting volleyball team could eventually emulate the men's achievements by reaching the top of the podium and qualifying for the Los Angeles Paralympics.

"That will only be possible if we have an independent budget and proper preparation," he said.

Iran's women defeated Japan in straight sets to finish seventh, their best-ever result in five appearances at the World Championships.

Rezaei revealed that Iran claimed the world title despite entering the tournament without playing a single official warm-up match over the past two years, relying solely on domestic training camps.

"Encouraging messages are appreciated, but if we want to succeed at future events, especially the Los Angeles Paralympics, sitting volleyball needs real support and greater attention from officials," he said. "Only then can we continue winning titles."

Restoration underway for war-hit historical sites

Iranica Desk

Restoration work is underway for historical and cultural heritage sites damaged during the recent military conflict, including museums, historic urban fabrics, and UNESCO World Heritage properties, according to the deputy minister of cultural heritage.

Ali Darabi, deputy head of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said 149 sites across 18 provinces were damaged during the Israeli-US military attacks. The affected properties include 54 museums, seven historic urban fabrics, and five sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Speaking to IRNA, Darabi said restoration has so far been completed at 10 historical sites, while work is currently underway at 21 other cultural heritage complexes.

He said emergency conservation and restoration have been completed at Tehran's Golestan Palace, Sa'dabad Palace, the Glassware and Ceramic Museum of Iran, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Decorative Arts, the Under Glass Painting Museum, and the ministry's headquarters.

Restoration has also been completed at two historical buildings in West Azarbaijan Province, as well as at Khansari Tekyeh, Baba Rokn al-Din Tekyeh, and Madar Shah Tekyeh, the Jobehkhaneh Mansion in Isfahan Province, and the Ziaei House in Zanjan. Repairs to the windows and equipment of the Grand Mosque of Qom have also been completed.

nournews.ir

IRNA

Darabi added that work on Chehel Sotun Palace in Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square and the Rakibkhaneh building is in its final stages. Documentation of the Gonbad-e Kabud Monument in Maragheh and another historic house in East Azarbaijan Province has been completed, while restoration of Khosroabad Mansion and Moshir Mansion in Kurdestan Province is ongoing.

He said documentation for structural reinforcement of the Tomb of Baba Taher in Hamedan is underway. In Lorestan Province, military authorities have completed debris removal within the protected zone of Falak-ol-Aflak Castle, while repairs to museum windows and display cases are in progress. Repairs to the Darreh Shahr Museum have also been completed, although structural reinforcement of the building continues.

According to Darabi, only 38 of the 149 damaged sites are directly owned by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, while the remaining 111 belong to private owners, military institutions, religious endowments, municipalities, and other organizations.

He said restoration teams have not yet been able to access some sites because of military restrictions, although access has improved over the past two weeks. Many of the inaccessible sites are located in southern Iran, where conditions have not yet fully stabilized.

Responding to a question about sites outside the ministry's ownership, Darabi said Iranian law requires each responsible institution to carry out restoration and conservation of historical properties under its control.

He added that the ministry has issued emergency restoration guidelines, including preserving visible traces of the war where appropriate, and has offered technical supervision through its experts.

Darabi said the ministry is completing a comprehensive database of damaged heritage sites and will continue to press relevant institutions to fulfill their restoration responsibilities.

He noted that 21 heritage complexes are currently undergoing restoration and said the ministry has held a series of expert meetings with veteran specialists and distinguished figures in the field to develop a national roadmap for post-war reconstruction and restoration.

The deputy minister also stressed the need to prohibit the establishment of high-risk facilities near historical monuments. While expressing appreciation for the armed forces, he said fuel storage facilities and other hazardous installations should not be located near museums and archaeological sites. He added that the ministry is preparing a letter to senior national authorities calling for such facilities to be relocated away from heritage sites during peacetime.

On international assistance, Darabi said the ministry has sent more than 17 official communications to international organizations, including UNESCO, ICOM, ICOMOS, and ICCROM, but described the response so far as disappointing.

He added that despite meetings with the Chinese ambassador and follow-up efforts through international heritage protection networks, Iran has not yet received financial assistance. UNESCO, he said, has conditioned any technical assistance or deployment of experts on the restoration of security and the reopening of air routes.

Referring to legal measures, he said the ministry is documenting damage in preparation for international legal action, noting that attacks on cultural property constitute a violation of the 1954 Hague Convention. However, he acknowledged the political challenges facing international institutions and said Iran is primarily relying on domestic expertise and resources.

Darabi praised ministry staff for safeguarding museum collections during the conflict, saying that thanks to preventive measures and the transfer of valuable artifacts to secure storage facilities, not a single historical object was damaged.

He also announced that a nationwide public movement, including a 110-night human chain described as a symbol of national unity during the recent conflict, has been inscribed on Iran's National Cultural Heritage List to preserve its historical record for future generations.

Calling on philanthropists, entrepreneurs, and investors to support restoration efforts, Darabi said the damaged monuments would be restored with the same quality and craftsmanship that previous generations had entrusted to the nation.

Asked when museums would reopen, Darabi said the decision depends on security conditions and directives from the country's senior authorities. "Our hearts long for the reopening of museums," he said, noting that summer is an important season for visitors and tourists, but stressing that museums should reopen only when conditions are safe and stable.

West Azarbaijan's archaeological treasures trace Iran's ancient past

Iranica Desk

Hasanlu Hill
visitiran.ir

Scattered across the landscapes of West Azarbaijan Province, ancient archaeological hills stand as enduring symbols of the region's rich history, preserving the legacy of civilizations that flourished thousands of years ago. Each site tells a unique story of Iran's past, offering invaluable insights into the cultural, political, and social development of one of the country's oldest inhabited regions.

These archaeological hills have yielded remarkable discoveries over decades of excavation, many of which have transformed scholars' understanding of the ancient Near East. While numerous sites remain only partially explored, they continue to hold the promise of revealing new chapters in Iran's long history, according to IRNA.

Among the province's most renowned archaeological sites is Hasanlu Hill (Hasanlu Tappeh) in Naqadeh, one of Iran's best-known prehistoric settlements. Iranian and international archaeologists estimate that the architectural remains uncovered at Hasanlu date from approximately 1400 to 800 BCE.

The site's most celebrated discovery is the Golden Bowl of Hasanlu, regarded as one of the masterpieces of ancient Iranian art. Weighing about 950 grams and standing 21 centimeters high with a diameter of 25 centimeters, the vessel is currently preserved at the National Museum of Iran in Tehran.

Dating to around 800 BCE, the gold bowl is decorated with intricate reliefs depicting mythological and heroic scenes that scholars believe may illustrate an epic narrative. It remains one of the most significant archaeological discoveries ever made in Iran.

Located about 12 kilometers southwest of Lake Urmia and nine kilometers northeast of Naqadeh, Hasanlu has been under archaeological investigation since 1956. Excavations have uncovered nearly 7,500 artifacts made of bronze, bone, and pottery.

The site also contains large columned halls, elongated porticos, spacious rooms, and substantial stone architectural remains dating back nearly 3,000 years. Since 2004, Hasanlu has served as one of Iran's national archaeological sites dedicated to scientific research and conservation.

Another important archaeological site is Qalaichi Hill, situated near Qalaichi village, about 12 kilometers northeast of Bukan. Archaeological excavations began there in 1985, revealing remains dating to the first millennium BCE.

Excavations have uncovered a central temple, defensive towers and walls, a paved courtyard, stairways, numerous rooms, and beautifully decorated glazed bricks bearing human, geometric, and floral motifs. The discoveries have significantly expanded knowledge of the ancient Mannaean Kingdom, which once ruled parts of northwestern Iran.

Nearby, Hajji Firuz Hill (Hajji Firuz Tappeh), located about two kilometers southeast of Hasanlu in the Solduz Valley, preserves evidence of one of the earliest farming communities in the region. Archaeologists have identified sixteen occupation layers and eleven major construction phases at the site.

Excavations indicate that during the sixth millennium BCE, the settlement consisted of separate residential units containing living rooms, kitchens, storage spaces, and large jars used for preserving food supplies. Archaeologists also discovered that children were buried beneath house floors, a funerary practice common among Neolithic communities.

The buildings were primarily constructed from mud walls and handmade mud bricks, while some interior walls were coated with a mixture of plaster and straw. Traces of red pigment have been found on both walls and floors, and the site's painted pottery represents one of the defining cultural features of the Hajji Firuz tradition.

Another major archaeological landmark is Gug Hill (Gug Tappeh), located about six kilometers southeast of Urmia. Measuring roughly 455 meters from north to south and 600 meters from east to west, the mound rises approximately 24.5 meters above the surrounding plain.

Among its most notable discoveries is a bronze plaque depicting the Mesopotamian hero Gilgamesh lifting two wild bulls, an artifact dating to the eighth century BCE. Archaeologists also uncovered a Babylonian-style cylinder seal nearly eight meters below the surface, believed to date to around 2,000 BCE. The seal is currently housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Scientific excavations have identified seven successive occupational layers at Gug Hill, documenting continuous settlement from the fourth millennium BCE through the first millennium BCE.

Archaeologists believe the surrounding village of Gug Hill has significant potential for development as an archaeological park, combining cultural heritage with sustainable tourism.

Another important site near Urmia is ancient Kordlar Hill, situated approximately 25 kilometers east of the city beside Kordlar village. Excavations have revealed architectural remains dating from the fourth to the first millennium BCE.

The settlement was primarily constructed using mudbrick and packed-earth walls, many of which have deteriorated over time. Covering roughly two hectares, the oval-shaped mound has yielded pottery fragments and the remains of ancient dwellings uncovered by Iranian and Austrian archaeological teams.

According to some historians, Kordlar may represent one of the earliest locations along the shores of Lake Urmia where permanent urban settlement first emerged.

Also overlooking the Urmia Plain is Bash Qal'eh, also known as Bash Gala, an imposing archaeological mound located near the Shahid Kalantari Road. Rising prominently above the surrounding farmland, the site has attracted travelers' attention for centuries.

According to Behrouz Khan Mohammadi, an archaeologist with West Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heritage Department, Bash Qal'eh dates back approximately 2,700 years to the Urartian period during the first millennium BCE.

He explained that the fortress originally functioned as a military outpost responsible for guarding the surrounding region. The surviving architectural layout strongly reflects its defensive purpose, and before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the site attracted archaeological missions from Germany and Italy.

West Azarbaijan Province is home to more than 1,800 nationally and internationally registered historical monuments. Among its UNESCO World Heritage properties are Takht-e Soleyman in Takab, the Monastic Ensembles of the Armenian Churches of Iran — including Qara Kelisa (St. Thaddeus Monastery) and the Chapel of Dzordzor — and the Shah Abbasi Caravanserai of Khoy, underscoring the province's exceptional place in Iran's cultural heritage.

License Holder: Islamic Republic News Agency
Publisher: Iran Cultural & Press Institute
Chair of ICPI Board of Directors: Sadegh Hossein Jaberi Ansari
ICPI CEO: Ali Motaghian
Senior Editor-in-chief: Hadi Khosroshahin
Editor-in-chief: Asgar Ghahramanpour

Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 84711560
Address: 208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran
Advertising Dept. Tel/Email: +98 21 88500601/irandaily@iranagahiha.com
Website: www.irandaily.ir/newspaper.irandaily.ir
Email: irandaily@icpi.ir

Iran Daily

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Vol. 8167 • Sunday, July 19, 2026 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages

Tehran, Bishkek sign cultural pact to foster arts, heritage cooperation

Salehi says Iranian civilization has long paired peace with defense of national dignity

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Culture Minister Abbas Salehi and Mirbek Kemelovich Mambetaliev, the Minister of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic signed a broad cultural and artistic cooperation agreement on the sidelines of the 23rd Meeting of Culture Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), expanding bilateral collaboration in cultural exchanges, cinema and heritage preservation.

Speaking during the gathering, Salehi said Iranian civilization had consistently pursued "a culture of peace alongside the defense of national dignity," describing the country's historical identity as one rooted in both cultural continuity and peaceful coexistence, farhang.gov.ir reported.

The memorandum outlines joint cultural initiatives through 2029, including reciprocal cultural weeks in Iran and Kyrgyzstan, expanded cooperation in the film industry, exchanges of expertise on the registration of historical sites, and collaboration on the protection, restoration and promotion of cultural heritage.

During a meeting with Kyrgyz scholars, Iranologists, Persian-language professors and academics, Salehi described Iran as one of the world's oldest continuously living civilizations, saying its uninterrupted historical continuity had enabled it to preserve a vast cultural legacy while serving for centuries as a crossroads connecting East and West.

"Iranian civilization has always pursued a culture of peace alongside the defense of national dignity," Salehi said, adding that Iran's historical experience demonstrated both resilience and a commitment to peaceful coexistence. He said those holding hostile views toward Iran's geography, history and future should reconsider their calculations.

Iranian Culture Minister Abbas Salehi (L) and Kyrgyz Minister Mirbek Kemelovich Mambetaliev sign a bilateral cultural cooperation agreement on July 18, 2026, on the sidelines of the 23rd SCO Culture Ministers' meeting.
farhang.gov.ir

Drawing parallels between the legendary Persian hero Rostam and the Kyrgyz epic figure Manas, Salehi said both traditions celebrate courage while valuing restraint and avoiding bloodshed whenever possible. He said the shared cultural ethos reflected common civilizational values linking the two nations.

As part of his four-day visit, Salehi also met Zamir Kary, chairman of the Kyrgyz Council of Ulema, where the two sides agreed to deepen cooperation between religious and academic institutions through scholarly conferences, exchanges of professors and students, and educational programs for religious scholars. Salehi said closer cooperation between the two countries' religious institutions could strengthen unity across the Muslim world through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Kary welcomed broader cooperation and proposed joint programs marking the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), while also seeking to benefit from Iran's experience in religious education and curriculum development.

Salehi also held meetings with Salkyn Sarnogoeva, Kyrgyzstan's deputy culture minister, the heads of the National Historical Museum of the Kyrgyz Republic and National Library of Kyrgyzstan, and Archbishop Sergey Zagrebelny, head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Kyrgyzstan. Zagrebelny described Iran as "a great civilization" and said the minister's visit would help broaden cultural and interfaith ties.

The minister attended a gathering honoring Siavash Janidi, a Persian-language poet from Kyrgyzstan recognized for three decades of literary contributions promoting Persian language and literature in Central Asia.

The SCO culture ministers' meeting, running from July 16 to July 20 in Kyrgyzstan, also includes bilateral ministerial meetings, the opening ceremony of the ministerial conference, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization International Film Festival awards ceremony and official cultural events hosted by Kyrgyzstan.

Tehran Auction sells 96 works for record $2.4m in fierce bidding

Arts & Culture Desk

The 25th Tehran Auction posted a record-breaking 4.643 trillion rials in sales, equivalent to about $2.41 million, after 96 of the 100 works offered went under the hammer at Tehran's Parsian Azadi Hotel on Friday, according to the organizers.

The sale set a new benchmark for Iran's art market, with Sohrab Sepehri's Ofoq-e Rafi' (High Horizon) becoming the most expensive artwork ever sold in the auction's history, IRNA reported.

The result marked a sharp leap from the previous Tehran Auction, which generated 1.472 trillion rials in sales, underscoring sustained demand for Iranian modern, classical and traditional art. The auction featured 100 works by 80 artists, including paintings, calligraphy, sculptures and pictorial carpets, with only four lots remaining unsold.

Sepehri's High Horizon fetched 385 billion rials, or nearly $199,800, at the hammer, eclipsing the auction's previous record. Under Tehran Auction rules, buyers also pay a 10% premium, lifting the artwork's final price to 423.5 billion rials, or roughly $219,800.

Sohrab Sepehri's Ofoq-e Rafi' (High Horizon)
tehranauction.com

The second-highest sale went to Mohammad Ehsai's celebrated calligraphic painting Mohabbat (Affection), which sold for 335 billion rials at the hammer, or about $173,800. Including the buyer's 10% premium, the final price reached 368.5 billion rials, equivalent to about $191,200. An untitled work by Parviz Kalantari ranked third with a final price of 275 billion rials, or approximately $142,700.

Six works crossed the 250-billion-rial threshold, surpassing the previous auction record of 220 billion rials for a single artwork. Overall, 64 works sold for more than 10 billion rials, while 20 works realized prices between 50 billion and 100 billion rials, reflecting robust competition among collectors.

Organizers said 63 buyers participated in the auction, including eight first-time collectors, signaling fresh momentum in Iran's visual arts market. Among female artists, Leyly Matine-Daftary achieved the highest sale, with her untitled work selling for 82 billion rials, reinforcing the growing visibility of women artists in Iran's art scene.

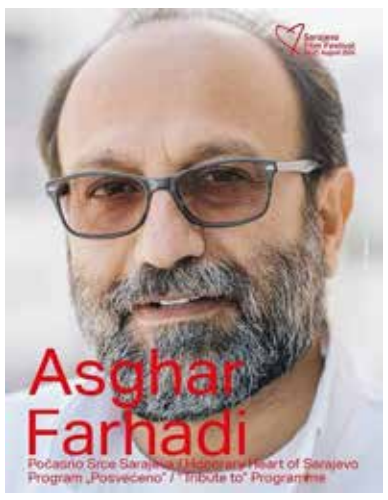
The auction showcased leading figures of Iranian modernism, including Sohrab Sepehri, Bahjat Sadr, Parviz Tanavoli, Aydin Aghdashloo, Mansour Ghandriz, Nasser Assar and Mohammad Ehsai, alongside classical Persian painting, miniature art, calligraphy and traditional pictorial carpets, highlighting the enduring appeal and diversity of Iran's artistic heritage.

Farhadi to receive honorary Heart of Sarajevo award

Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi will receive the Honorary Heart of Sarajevo in person at the 32nd Sarajevo Film Festival in Bosnia and Herzegovina on August 14-21, festival organizers announced, recognizing his outstanding contribution to the art of cinema while honoring his internationally acclaimed body of work through a special 'Tribute to' retrospective.

Farhadi returns to Sarajevo eight years after presiding over the Feature Film Competition jury in 2018, when his film 'Everybody Knows' was also screened in the festival's Open Air program. This year's edition will also honor British actress Emily Watson, who is set to chair the festival jury.

"It is difficult to overstate Asghar Farhadi's importance to world cinema," Sarajevo Film Festival Director Jovan Marjanović said. "His remarkable body of work reminds us that the most profound dramas are often hidden within everyday life. His films offer no easy answers but invite us to look more closely, listen more carefully and engage more deeply with life's complexities. We are honored to welcome Farhadi back to the festival."



Born in Iran in 1972, Farhadi began making short films after joining the Young Cinema Society in Isfahan in 1986. He later earned a degree in dramatic arts from the University of Tehran before completing a master's degree in theater directing.

His feature debut, 'Dancing in the Dust,' was followed by 'About Elly,' which earned him the Silver Bear for Best Director at the Berlin International Film Festival. Global recognition came with 'A Separation,' winner of more than 70 international awards, including the Academy Award and César Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Farhadi later directed 'The Past' in France before returning to Iran for 'The Salesman,' which won Best Screenplay and Best Actor for Shahab Hosseini at the Cannes Film Festival and secured his second Academy Award. His 2021 film 'A Hero' received the Cannes Grand Prix, while his latest feature, 'Parallel Tales,' premiered at the 2026 Cannes Film Festival.

Moscow exhibition displays centuries of Iranian miniature art

Arts & Culture Desk

A major exhibition showcasing masterpieces of Iranian miniature painting opened in Moscow on July 16, bringing together works inspired by horses and highlighting centuries of Persian artistic tradition as Russian and Iranian officials hailed cultural exchanges as a bridge between the two nations.

Titled 'From Rope to Horse Tack,' the exhibition features reproductions of celebrated miniatures by renowned Persian masters, including Kamal-ud-Din Behzad, alongside works by contemporary artists such as Mahmoud Farshchian, Hossein Esmati, and Reza Badrossama. The collection spans national, religious, mythological, and mystical themes rooted in Iranian culture.

Olga Vladimirovna, director of Moscow's Museum of Horse Breeding, described artistic cooperation with Iran as "highly valuable," calling the exhibition "an effective step toward expanding cultural diplomacy."

Nasser Tabaei, deputy head of the Russia-based Avicenna Foundation for Iranian Studies, said such initiatives deepen mutual understanding between the two peoples. "The language of art and culture can foster international peace and friendship," he said.

Zahra Rashidbeigi, deputy cultural attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Moscow, also stressed the need to further strengthen cultural ties between Iran and Russia.

Among the highlights are depictions of horses drawn from Iran's rich miniature tradition, reflecting the animal's enduring place in Persian history, literature, and visual arts. The exhibition also presents paintings, sculptures, and fashion works by Iranian and Russian artists, underscoring the breadth of contemporary cultural collaboration.

Running through September 26, the exhibition is jointly organized by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, Moscow's Museum of Horse Breeding, and the Avicenna Foundation for Iranian Studies.