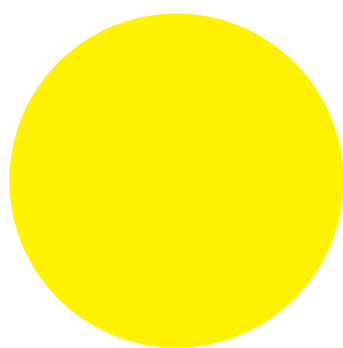


Iran's reprisals
reshape West
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President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd L) holds a meeting with senior Oil Ministry officials in Tehran, Iran on July 19, 2026, as Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (L) looks on.

Joint chamber: Tajikistan could become Iran's trade hub in Central Asia

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Tajikistan could serve as Iran's trade hub in Central Asia as disruptions to southern maritime routes increase the country's strategic importance, the vice chairman of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Chamber of Commerce said. Kazem Shirdel told Iran Daily that Iran should redirect more of its trade through northern road and rail corridors as disruptions to southern maritime routes and the declining commercial role of the United Arab Emirates reshape regional logistics.

The United States restored its naval blockade on Iran's southern ports after a pause of several weeks to prevent the Islamic Republic's oil exports and trade. Iran has remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks on the country in late February.

The blockade, first imposed in mid-April to pressure Iran into a peace deal to end the war, covers the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

Iran is redirecting cargo and logistics operations to northern ports as well as ports in Pakistan, India and Oman after activities at the United Arab Emirates' Jebel Ali port stopped under wartime conditions. Shirdel said the trade routes already existed but would be expanded. One of the main corridors runs from China through Kazakhstan and then Uzbekistan or Tajikistan before entering Iran through the Sarakhs border crossing, he said. "While part of the cargo could also be transferred across the Caspian Sea to Iran's northern ports."

He added that the necessary infrastructure would be developed in coordination with relevant authorities to make greater use of the corridor for trade with Russia and other Central Asian countries.

The official said Tajikistan should not be viewed solely as an export market, but also as a gateway to neighboring countries, including Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states, citing the two countries' shared language and cultural ties.

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US war on infrastructure would end once costs outweigh gains

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

As fighting in the Strait of Hormuz has intensified, the United States has now begun targeting some of Iran's infrastructure, while Tehran has threatened to retaliate in countries hosting US bases. These developments have heightened concerns about the risk of the war expanding in both intensity and scope, with no clear indication of how far these exchanges of fire could go. Speaking to

Iran Daily, Mehdi Paknia, an expert on US affairs, said that infrastructure warfare is inherently a costly and cumulative form of conflict, and that this phase is likely to end when it is concluded that continuing to strike creates more instability, economic costs and regional risks than gains.



Mehdi Paknia

Given the recent US attacks on bridges, roads and other vital infrastructure in Iran, can it be said that the conflict has entered a phase of "infrastructure warfare"? What is the main objective behind the US targeting of infrastructure, and how does this phase differ from conventional military attacks?

Yes, the available evidence suggests that the conflict between Iran and the US has entered a phase of "infrastructure warfare." The difference between this phase and conventional military attacks is that the objective is no longer limited to destroying direct combat capabilities. Rather, it is about disrupting Iran's capacity to maintain operational control, provide logistical support and manage vital territorial and maritime hubs.

Within this framework, Chabahar is of particular importance, because the port is not merely a commercial hub. It is Iran's only oceanic port and a link connecting the country to the Gulf of Oman, Afghanistan, Central Asia and transit corridors. Knocking out its coastal radars, communications tow-

ers, maritime control systems and access routes does not necessarily mean occupying the port. The aim could instead be to leave Chabahar under Iranian ownership while preventing Iran from independently controlling the surrounding area.

The same logic applies to Kharg Island and oil export terminals. Here, the more likely approach would be to apply pressure through a naval blockade, threats to insurance and shipping, limited disruption to loading operations and the severing of Kharg's connection with the mainland, rather than launching a direct and destructive attack. The primary objective is not necessarily to destroy Iran's oil, but to create a situation in which Iran has oil but cannot export it safely or at normal capacity. Therefore, at this stage, the US appears to be seeking not so much a broad occupation as the "operational detachment of the south" and the erosion of Iran's ability to control its coastline, islands, exports and the Strait of Hormuz.

What considerations and red lines would Iran face in choosing potential

targets in response to US attacks on its infrastructure? What locations could become potential targets, and which countries would it refrain from targeting?

Iran faces a classic but highly sensitive dilemma in responding: on the one hand, it must preserve its deterrence and show that attacks on its infrastructure will not come without a cost; on the other, it must avoid allowing the war to spiral out of control.

For that reason, Tehran would likely first consider targets directly linked to the US presence, operational support for the attacks, or regional energy and maritime security. The Strait of Hormuz, maritime routes, support bases and infrastructure serving operations against Iran would be of particular importance in this regard. If pressure on Chabahar, Kharg or the islands intensifies, Iran would probably respond by focusing in turn on maritime and energy hubs, because these areas would have the fastest impact on Washington's calculations and the regional market.

But Tehran's main red line is to avoid, as far as possible, directly targeting

countries that have not yet openly entered the war. In particular, regarding the UAE and some southern Persian Gulf states, Iran understands that a direct attack on their ports, airports, power plants or critical infrastructure could turn them from indirect supporters into direct parties to the war.

Therefore, as long as the role of these actors remains limited to intelligence, logistics or facilitation, Tehran will probably exercise restraint. But if their involvement moves from support to overt operational intervention — for example, over the issue of the islands or control of maritime routes — that restraint could give way to a direct response.

How long can this exchange of fire on infrastructure continue? What factors could lead the conclusion of this phase of the conflict?

This phase will continue until both sides still believe they can gain greater concessions by wearing the other side down. But infrastructure warfare is inherently a costly and cumulative form of conflict.

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Armed Forces escalate retaliatory campaign against US regional bases

CENTCOM: Two soldiers killed in Iranian strikes on Jordan

International Desk

In the latest bout of reprisal strikes on Sunday, Iran's Armed Forces downed another American advanced drone over the southern part of the country and targeted US military's ammunition depot and Patriot and air surveillance radars in Kuwait as they continued to respond to US attacks with full force. The Army said in a statement on Sunday that it targeted two key US bases in Kuwait in response to deadly American aerial assaults on civilian infrastructure, including bridges in Iran.

It said that the large-scale attack involved launching explosive drones at the US army's ammunition depot in Al-Adiri Camp, as well as Patriot and air surveillance radars belonging to the US military in Ali Al Salem Air Base.

Located approximately 104 kilometers from Iran's borders, Al-Adiri Camp serves as a major logistical support and force-reconstitution center for American forces, it added, saying disruptions at the base would have a

significant impact on the US Army's logistical support operations throughout the region. Ali Al Salem Air Base serves as the principal airlift hub and a primary gateway for the deployment of military forces into West Asia, the Army said. The base also plays a central role in the US military and logistical strategy in the region. Kuwait claimed on Sunday that Iran hit a power and water plant causing a fire, while Bahrain also accused Tehran of targeting civilian infrastructure.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also said on Sunday its forces intercepted and shot down an American MQ-9 Reaper drone over the skies of the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz. This is the fourth American MQ-9 drone shot down by Iran in the last eight days, according to Iranian authorities. These are expensive and sophisticated drones used for both surveillance and attack. Iran says it has downed more than 150 US drones since the beginning of the war, with about 30 of them being MQ-9s.

Iran's attacks came after the US military said it had completed an eighth straight night of

attacks against Iran after earlier announcing that two US military personnel were killed in Jordan and another was missing following an Iranian attack.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said the two deaths occurred on Friday and that a third US service member was missing in action. The announcement brought the number of American soldiers killed since the war began to 16, while more than 420 have been wounded.

Iran's Mehr news agency said the US carried out an attack near Sirik in southern Iran, adding that no casualties or damage to infrastructure have been reported. The Tasnim news agency said the US military also targeted a location near Shadegan, a city close to the border with Iraq.

The new flare-up came after the US violated the Pakistan-brokered Memorandum of Understanding of June 18 by attempting unauthorized naval movements through the Strait of Hormuz, with the Iranian Navy intercepting the vessels to enforce the agreement. Since then, the US military has launched new



The screen grab taken from video footage released on July 16, 2026 by Iran's Sepah News website shows a missile being launched from an undisclosed location towards US targets in Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain.

aggression against Iran by targeting military sites, infrastructure civilian facilities. Iran's Health Ministry said on Friday that at

least 50 people have been killed and more than 500 injured since the renewed US strikes.

Unity cast as pillar of Iran's defense strategy after Leader's call for cohesion

National Desk

The Iranian Parliament speaker and top military commander described national unity as a central pillar of the country's defense strategy and a key for success in confronting the enemies a day after Iran's Leader said that preserving national unity is among the country's "most fundamental priorities at the current juncture."

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf called for greater national unity, saying adherence to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei's call for "sacred unity" is key for Iran's success in confronting the enemies.

In a post published on his X account on Sunday, Qalibaf said unity should be regarded not only as a moral or social principle but also as a strategic requirement for the country's security and resilience. "Insistence on sacred unity is not merely a moral or social recommendation; it is a necessary condition for victory in the struggle against the enemy," Qalibaf wrote.

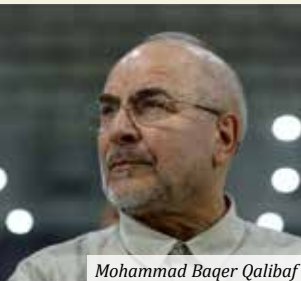
Qalibaf's remarks came a day after Ayatollah Khamenei, in a statement, stressed that maintaining "sacred unity" at



Ali Abdollahi



Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei



Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf

all levels of society and government is essential to realizing the lofty ideals of the Islamic Revolution and safeguarding Iran's dignity and independence, particularly in the face of the "criminal and deceitful American enemy." Ayatollah Khamenei said the United States' repeated violations of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) have once again proven that the American president's signature is "utterly worthless and invalid."

The Leader emphasized that US actions have exposed that "bullying, hegemony, and savagery" are inseparable components of American behavior and conduct.

"Today, the Great Satan has once again revealed its true and unmasked face," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "This dark experience of crime and broken promises serves as

yet another solid document of America's dishonesty, irrationality, untrustworthiness, and vileness."

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that preserving national unity is among the country's "most fundamental priorities at the current juncture."

The Leader said maintaining "sacred unity" at all levels of society and government is essential to realizing the lofty ideals of the Islamic Revolution and safeguarding Iran's dignity and independence, particularly in the face of the "criminal and deceitful American enemy."

The commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters, Iran's top military command unit, also reaffirmed allegiance to Leader of the Islamic Revolution and emphasized national unity as a central pillar of the country's defense strategy.

Major General Ali Abdollahi asserted that the Armed Forces would continue to follow the guidance of the Leader while dedicating all available capabilities to strengthening cohesion among the military, the Iranian people, and state institutions.

The statement also addressed the United States, describing Washington as "the Great Satan" and warning against any hostile action towards Iran.

"Acting in accordance with the directives and guidance of our Leader, we also remind the Great Satan and the criminal, duplicitous, and deceitful American enemy that any act of covetousness, coercion, hegemonic ambition, or brutality will be met with a decisive and devastating response from the faithful, courageous, and powerful servicemen of the Armed Forces," he added.

Iran's reprisals reshape West Asia security structure: *Araghchi*

International Desk

Iran's retaliatory strikes against regional US bases during the 40-day war with the United States and Israel "transformed" the security architecture of West Asia, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in remarks published on Sunday.

"[Countries in] the region could not believe that we would strike across the region and they would not be able to respond. This was a major development that transformed the region's security structure," Araghchi said in a lengthy video interview released online under the title "The Story of the War." The hostilities broke out on February 28 when the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran, prompting the Islamic Republic to strike back in "two hours" according to the top diplomat by firing barrages of missiles and drones at US military bases in Arab countries that had served as launch points for the offensive, as well as at Israel. US media later reported that the Iranian attacks, which continued for the whole wartime, inflicted significant damage.

Araghchi said Iran's Armed Forces carried out retaliatory strikes in "the whole region" and spared no country, including Oman, which he described as "a friend of Iran," because an Omani company supplied fuel to US naval vessels from one of the country's ports. He said Omani authorities later halted that company's activities.

"The fact that not even one country in the region could respond shows that

the regional security structure can no longer remain as it was before," Araghchi said, describing the outcome as "a strategic achievement."

He also said that on the third day of the war he held a telephone conversation with an unnamed Arab foreign minister who threatened an independent military attack on Iran.

Araghchi said he warned that if that country bombed Iran, Iranian forces would strike the country itself rather than only US military bases located there. "The war will begin between us and you," he quoted himself as saying. According to Araghchi, Iran kept up strikes against that country until the ceasefire in early April because it continued to allow the United States to use its bases for operations against Iran. He said the country "never repeated its threat" to attack Iran for the remainder of the war.

Elsewhere in the interview, Araghchi accused the United States of deliberately bombing a primary school in the southern city of Minab on the first day of the conflict, which left 156 people dead, including 120 schoolchildren.

"The enemy's plan was to dishearten and terrorize the people. They deliberately hit the Minab school, and one of their objectives was to frighten people and show them the full scale of the disaster," he said. Araghchi added that the United States repeatedly targeted infrastructure during the conflict to test whether Iran would back down and to push the country to the point of surrender. He said those efforts failed to achieve their objective.

US war on infrastructure ...

If bridges, rail lines, coastal routes, electricity, telecommunications, fuel depots and island support networks in southern Iran are targeted, the issue moves beyond the military sphere and spills over into domestic resilience, everyday life and the capacity to govern. In this context, even traditional boats, fishing vessels, small jetties and vessel-repair workshops could come under fire, because they are not just means of livelihood; in wartime, they are also part of the flexible logistics network supporting the coast and islands.

At the same time, water, electricity, telecommunications towers and control towers in the hot southern climate are not simply urban services; they are part of the capacity to sustain operations. Cutting off fresh water, electricity and communications can disable ports,

bases and coastal cities without any ground occupation.

On the other hand, if this pressure disrupts Kharg, Hormuz or Chabahar and consequently drives up oil prices and energy insecurity, the cost for the United States and its allies will also rise rapidly. Therefore, this phase is likely to end when both sides conclude that continuing to strike at each other is generating more instability, economic costs and regional risks than actual gains.

When the United States began attacking Iran's infrastructure, did it factor in Tehran's potential retaliation and the possibility of damage to the infrastructure of regional countries?

These risks were most likely part of the US calculations, but Washington appears to have assessed them as "manageable." The United States seems to be

acting on the assumption that, without launching a classic invasion on the scale of Iraq in 2003, it can shift the balance through the operational detachment of the south, the isolation of the islands, disruption in Chabahar and Kharg and, if necessary, the use of special forces and air assault operations to temporarily control sensitive points.

Under this model, the objective is not necessarily to occupy Bandar Abbas or Hormozgan, but to create a situation in which Iran is forced into a costly battle to retain or retake operational control of its coastline and islands.

So, yes, the United States has probably factored in these costs from the outset. But the central issue is that in the Persian Gulf and eastern Iran, the distance between a "manageable cost" and the regional spillover of the crisis is very short.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Pezeshkian calls for integrated management across oil, gas sectors

‘Flare gas recovery as a technical, economic necessity’



Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called for integrated communication and management systems across the country's oil and gas sectors, saying the industry should align with global standards, advanced technologies and modern monitoring systems. According to IRNA, Pezeshkian made the remarks during a visit to the Na-

tional Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) on Sunday, where he said that despite progress in monitoring and surveillance, some issues could still go undetected, according to IRNA. He said developing integrated management systems and expanding training in new technologies should be among the Oil Ministry's priorities. Pezeshkian also described flare gas recovery as a technical and economic ne-

cessity, saying better management and the use of modern technologies could reduce energy waste and improve refinery efficiency. He called for faster implementation of flare gas recovery projects. The remarks come as Iran has accelerated flare gas recovery projects under the current administration. According to the National Iranian Oil Company, flare gas collection has increased from

about 5 million cubic meters per day at the start of the administration to more than 9 million cubic meters per day, with a target of 35 million cubic meters per day by the end of the government's term. The Oil Ministry has said projects including the \$1.6 billion NGL 3100 development are expected to eliminate several major flare sites, significantly reduce gas wastage and supply additional feedstock to the country's gas network. The World Bank has identified Iran as one of the world's largest gas-flaring countries. Its latest report said gas flaring in Iran increased 12% in 2024, reflecting higher oil output and insufficient investment in projects to capture and utilize associated gas. Pezeshkian also described technological development as essential for competing in global markets, saying the oil industry should continuously assess its strengths and weaknesses to improve productivity. He also urged officials to send specialists abroad for technical training if needed to update their expertise. During the visit, the president received briefings on oil and gas production and consumption, energy management during the country's two recent wars, flare gas recovery and the progress of national oil industry projects. Iran came under a 12-day US-Israeli attack in June 2025 and another war that began in late February 2026, during which parts of the country's oil and gas infrastructure were targeted.

Gov't prioritizes war-scarred regions as summer power strains loom



Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi speaks to reporters in Hormozgan Province, Iran, on July 19, 2026. ● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said on Sunday that regions suffering from war-related infrastructure damage are being prioritized for electricity supply, as the country grapples with enemy attacks on its power grid and peak summer heat. Aliabadi, accompanied by the Executive Vice President and the Minister of Roads and Urban Development, arrived in the southern Hormozgan Province on Sunday morning for a one-day trip to attend a provincial crisis meeting, IRNA reported. "During recent attacks, the enemy has targeted four 400-kilovolt transmission lines," the minister added. 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, the US resumed attacks on Iran's infrastructure on July 7, it said, after three vessels were targeted in the Strait of Hormuz. "During recent attacks, the enemy has targeted four 400-kilovolt transmission lines," the minister said. Emphasizing the implementation of a nationwide "Solidarity Initiative" for the fair distribution of electricity, Aliabadi stated that under current conditions, priority for energy supply is given to provinces whose infrastructure has been attacked and are in greater need. "Currently, Hormozgan Province and southern provinces, which are facing problems caused by enemy attacks for various reasons, including damage to power plants, transmission lines, and substations, are being prioritized, and we are repairing and managing this damage to restore normal conditions as quickly as possible," he said. Aliabadi stressed that the prioritization is not limited to the north or south of the country. He noted that any region subjected to attacks and in need will be prioritized, adding that the country would collectively share its available resources and would not be alone in this path. "We ask the public to assist the power grid in these difficult days by conserving energy, even if it is just by turning off a single light bulb," he said. Iran was already experiencing energy shortages prior to the attacks, a situation that has been exacerbated by the conflict and the peak of the summer heat season. Separately, Ardeshir Mozkouri, CEO of the Iran Grid Management Company, said at a peak load management meeting that rising temperatures across the country are driving up demand. Based on current forecasts, if consumption trends continue, electricity demand this week will surpass this year's recorded peak of 74,801 megawatts, he added.

Joint chamber: Tajikistan ...

Shirdel said a delegation of Iranian traders and business representatives recently visited Tajikistan, where they held talks with the country's Chamber of Commerce and Investment Committee on coordinating imports through Tajikistan. Shirdel encouraged Iranian businesses to consider Tajikistan as a destination for trade and exports to the region, saying their linguistic and cultural similarities provide favorable conditions for expanding economic cooperation. He said that if trade restrictions on southern routes continue, Iran could import part of its raw materials, industrial machinery and essential goods through Tajikistan and Central Asia from China, Kazakhstan or Russia. Shirdel also said repeated increases in Tajikistan's customs tariffs during the current calendar year had slowed Iranian exports and reduced bilateral trade. He said the tariff hikes were mainly aimed at raising Tajikistan's budget revenues and called on Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade and Trade Promotion Organization to negotiate preferential tariffs with the Tajik side. Although Shirdel did not provide further details, news reports indicate that Tajikistan's latest customs tariff increases, which took effect in late June, are part of a broader regional trend. For example, Uzbekistan raised import tariffs on cement from Tajikistan from \$35 to \$300 per metric ton in November 2024, with such reciprocal measures affecting the regional trade environment. Shirdel said annual trade between Iran and Tajikistan currently stands at about \$300 million, with more than 95% of the trade historically in Iran's favor, although efforts have recently been made to increase imports from Tajikistan. He said Iran mainly imports cotton, aluminum and edible oils from Tajikistan, while its exports to the country include food products, steel products, detergents, construction materials and petrochemical products. Shirdel said Tajikistan has substantial reserves of metals, minerals and particularly gold, although most of its gold mines are controlled by Chinese companies. He said Iran could cooperate with Tajikistan in developing the country's mining sector. He added that Iran's main competitors in the Tajik market are China, Turkey and Russia, but said Tajik consumers generally prefer Iranian products when locally available because of the two countries' shared language and cultural ties.

AEOI raps US strike on Darkhovin nuclear plant construction site



Iran's Darkhovin nuclear power plant, Khuzestan Province ● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI) on Sunday condemned a US strike on the construction site of the Darkhovin nuclear power plant in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, saying the attack violated international law and targeted a peaceful nuclear facility under international safeguards. In a statement, the AEOI said the attack took place at about 3:39 a.m. local time, when the US launched "a number of projectiles" at the site under construction, Press TV reported. The organization described the attack as "an aggressive and barbaric act in violation of international law," saying it was intended to obstruct Iran's scientific progress and independence. "The Darkhovin construction site, one of the symbols of the Iranian nation's scientific dignity and self-sufficiency, was targeted in an unjustifiable terrorist attack," the statement said.

The AEOI stressed that the facility is "fully subject to the supervision and safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement between Iran and the Agency," adding that its activities are "peaceful and lawful." The organization also cited IAEA General Conference Resolutions 444 and 533, saying they explicitly declare threats or attacks against peaceful nuclear facilities to be contrary to international law, the UN Charter and the IAEA Statute. Calling on the IAEA to respond, the statement said Iran expects the agency's director general "to move beyond silence and inaction, condemn this crime, which further undermines the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear safeguards system and the IAEA Statute, and fulfill his statutory responsibilities."

IAEA opens investigation into reports
In a statement, the IAEA an-

nounced that it has opened an investigation into the reports, saying, "The facility is in the very early stages of construction and contained no nuclear material when last visited by the IAEA." "While the reported attack is not believed to pose any radiological risk, DG @rafaelmgrossi (the director general, Rafael Grossi) reiterates the call for military restraint in the vicinity of all nuclear-related sites," the statement added. The IAEA also confirmed it has contacted Tehran about the reports and will provide further information as it becomes available. Iran's Atomic Energy Organization also urged "peace-loving, freedom-seeking and truth-seeking countries" to condemn the "aggressive act" and reject a course of action that poses an increasing threat to international peace and security. The statement concluded that such actions "will not create the slightest disruption in the Iranian nation's iron will," but will instead strengthen the determination of the country's nuclear specialists to continue pursuing "progress, advancement and self-sufficiency." The United States has resumed its criminal aggression against Iran since last week by targeting civilian sites across southern Iranian provinces. A US-Israeli coalition launched attacks on the country in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure during a 40-day conflict.

Assault on Iran's infrastructure revenge for strategic defeat

The aggressive American assaults on Iran's civilian infrastructure — from a hospital in Ahvaz to railways and bridges in Hormozgan, and to the maritime control tower of Chabahar, whose sole function was search-and-rescue operations for fishermen and the security of maritime commerce — have once again exhibited a stark depiction of American brutishness. Although these attacks were executed with the objective of compensating for the American defeat in the military arena, they yielded, in reality, no fruits other than the reinforcement of an unprecedented unanimity among diverse political factions in defense of Iranian security and national interests. For the targeting of public infrastructure and vital centers of a nation constitutes not an action against a government, but rather an aggression on the life, security, and interests of a populace; and whenever the territorial integrity and security of Iran are at issue, political disagreements yield their place to concord. From the perspective of numerous observers, Iran's enemy, laboring under the delusion that an assault on infrastructure might, by disrupting the everyday rhythm of popular life, deepen internal fissures and direct public opinion pressure against the establishment, has committed a miscalculation; for antecedent experiences have likewise demonstrated that external threats, far from engendering divergence, have furnished the groundwork for national convergence and cohesion. According to political operatives from various schools of thought, the defense of national security is not merely a political choice, but rather a legal right and a sovereign responsibility.

For this reason, the common message of the political elite in Iran is that the enemy, through its attack on Iranian infrastructure, will not only fail to achieve its intended objectives, but will, through the intensification of internal solidarity and its consequent support for the right of legitimate defense, incur increased political and security costs. The strategy of pressure on the Iranian nation does not, in any way, weaken national cohesion; on the contrary, it reinforces the shared resolve of disparate political movements to safeguard security, independence, and national interests — and this is precisely that reality which the adversary has once again proven incapable of apprehending in its calculations.



This bridge near Bandar Khamir, Hormozgan Province, southern Iran, has collapsed as a result of US missile strikes on July 17, 2026, setting fire to a fuel truck as well.

● TASNIM

Deterrence, necessity of real understanding of enemy



By Abbas Salimi Namin

Conservative political activist

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

The attack on Iran's infrastructure, although executed under the pretext of confronting its Islamic Establishment, in practice targets the populace. The destruction of infrastructure directly affects the tranquility, security, and comfort of citizens, and its pressure is mainly applied to the people; consequently, it must be met with a resolute response. Nevertheless, the more critical point is that this experience, too, must lead to a more profound comprehension of the United States. We had achieved an accord according to which the es-

calation of tensions was to be prevented, and specific benefits for Iran had been envisaged. Even numerous Western experts maintained that this accord was more advantageous to Iran than to the United States. Of course, setting aside the perspectives of Western experts, within the country as well, the majority of experts believed that this accord could, to a considerable extent, guarantee Iranian interests. Even if we assume the minority expert opinion to have been correct, Trump's action in withdrawing from the accord nonetheless demonstrates that the accord was not beneficial to the United States. Had the achievement of the Iranian negotiating team been entirely aligned with American interests, there would have been no reason for its violation. Hence, the assertion by

certain political movements that this accord constituted "treason" is inconsistent with the existent realities. If a state has obtained complete concessions, it does not violate the accord, just as, throughout history, great powers have not abandoned treaties that served their interests. Therefore, the American withdrawal from the accord indicates that Iranian diplomacy had succeeded in securing an achievement that did not align with the bellicose objectives of the United States. For this reason, they once again adopted the path of pressure and confrontation; that is, an endeavor to weaken Iranian positions, impose pressure, and obtain further concessions in prospective future negotiations. Consequently, today more than ever, we must be vigilant lest

false internal conflicts emerge. It is immaterial whether these disagreements are instigated by electoral motives, the elimination of rivals, or any other political objective; the outcome will be the infliction of damage on the country. Hence, the costs borne by the Iranian nation must result in an increased public comprehension of American conduct. We must not presume that everyone possesses an accurate recognition of the United States. A segment of the domestic public opinion, and even of global public opinion, still lacks a precise understanding of American policies. Should we accurately recognize the adversary, we will understand that we require the cooperation of all domestic capacities as well as global public opinion. The United States possesses extensive influence within the

structure of the international system, enjoys vast experience in diplomacy, in exerting pressure on nations, and in directing public opinion; therefore, effective confrontation with such an adversary is not feasible without the persuasion of public opinion. Hence, it is anticipated that all those who are devoted to Iran and to national interests will not permit the formation of artificial disagreements and unproductive polarizations within the country. We must exploit this opportunity to augment public awareness regarding American conduct because, in confronting the United States and Israel, the accompaniment of public opinion constitutes a strategic asset, and negotiation can likewise play an effective role in this trajectory. In the current circumstances, we must concentrate on those com-

mitments that the United States has violated and, by harnessing the capacity of public opinion, increase the costs of that country's behavior. In numerous instances, the pressure of public opinion can prove more effective than military pressure. On the other hand, given that the adversary has more than before targeted infrastructure in its recent attacks, it is imperative that every aggression be met with a decisive and deterrent response, so that the costs of hostile actions for the opposing party may be increased; however, this does not signify the abandonment of diplomacy. Deterrence and diplomacy are two complementary methods that must be pursued simultaneously, in order that the United States be compelled to accept the reasonable and rational demands of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Enemy's miscalculation



By Behnam Saeedi

Iranian lawmaker

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

The American action in targeting Iranian civilian infrastructure is not merely a military operation; rather, it constitutes a manifest aggression against international law and humanitarian principles, and is justifiable by none of the accepted international norms. Such conduct is a clear exemplar of a policy that, instead of respecting the rights of nations, is predicated on the logic of force and pressure, and for this reason merits explicit condemnation by all governments, international bodies, and global public opinion.

The American government has consistently endeavored to present itself as the defender of international order and human rights; however, the attack on the infrastructure of a sovereign state reveals, more than

anything else, the contradiction between the United States' claims and its actions.

In the face of such aggression, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in accordance with the recognized principles of international law, particularly the right of legitimate defense, possesses the right to defend its security, sovereignty, and national interests. Legitimate defense is a right that the United Nations Charter has recognized for states, and no country can expect that, by violating the sovereignty and security of a nation, it will remain immune from the consequences of its actions. It is self-evident that the United States, the Zionist regime, and any other party that has played a role in supporting and facilitating this aggression must likewise accept responsibility for their actions.

On the other hand, the selection of public infrastructure as the target of attack, rather than being an indication of strength, signifies a shift in American strategy following its failure to achieve its stated objectives in

the field. When declared objectives are not realized through the path of direct confrontation, the endeavor to impose economic and psychological costs on the populace substitutes for military successes. This is the same strategy of attritional warfare, pursued with the aim of increasing pressure on the target state and creating disruption in the normal course of people's life.

Nevertheless, experience has demonstrated that the Iranian nation, in the face of such pressures, has not retreated; on the contrary, it has defended its rights and national interests with greater cohesion. The Islamic Republic of Iran has likewise repeatedly shown that, in response to any hostile action, while considering national interests and at the appropriate time and place, it will deliver a proportionate and deterrent response. This approach does not derive from adventurism, but rather from the consolidation of the principle of deterrence and the prevention of the repetition of such aggressions.



A naval traffic control tower at Chabahar Port, Iran, appears to collapse following repeated attacks by US Army in this image shared on X by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on July 17, 2026. The approximately 60-meter structure was used to monitor and coordinate maritime traffic at the commercial port.

● X

War against people of Iran

 **By Gholamreza Zarifian**
Former university professor

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

One of the most fundamental principles of international humanitarian law is the immunity of civilian infrastructure during wartime. Vital facilities such as water and electricity networks, power plants, roads, bridges, medical centers, and hospitals are not merely a collection of physical structures; rather, they constitute the vital arteries of popular life. For this reason, international documents and regulations have not only condemned attacks on these infrastructures, but have, in numerous instances, treated such attacks as war crimes. The rationale for this sensitivity is likewise clear; the destruction of infrastructure directly affects the lives of millions of citizens, and its consequences are not limited to financial damages. The outage of a power plant is not merely the extinguishing of household lights; this event can endanger the life of a patient undergoing cardiac surgery in the operating theater, disrupt the operations of hospital intensive care units, and remove vital medical services from public access. The destruction of bridges and communication routes likewise does not signify merely damage to a road; rather, it precipitates a crisis in relief operations, patient transport, the

provision of essential commodities, and even the everyday existence of the populace. From this perspective, the attack on public infrastructure must be regarded as an attack on the people because the primary and most direct victims thereof are ordinary citizens — those who play no direct role on the battlefield, yet bear the heaviest costs of war. The thought-provoking point is that in a world that incessantly speaks of human dignity, human rights, and humanitarian values, we witness behaviors that stand in open contradiction with these very declared principles. Countries that introduce themselves as defenders of democracy, liberty, and human rights either maintain silence in the face of attacks on civilian infrastructure or even, through various forms, extend political and media support to the perpetrators. This duplicity has engendered serious questions within global public opinion concerning the integrity of the existent human rights regime. In such circumstances, global public opinion is, more than before, capable of distinguishing between rhetoric and reality. The experience of recent wars has likewise demonstrated that the destruction of vital infrastructure is not a sign of strength, but rather a sign of incapacity to adhere to the humanitarian rules of warfare. The images and narratives pertaining to attacks on Iran's bridges, service centers, and urban areas revive, within the public consciousness, the bitter memories of some of the most savage wars of the 20th century, and subject these

actions to the judgment of the global conscience. The human examples of these attacks, more than any legal argument, attest to the depth of the catastrophe. When, as a result of the targeting of a bridge or communication route, a family is bereaved, a mother loses her life, or a child sustains severe injuries, it is no longer possible to analyze these actions solely within the framework of military objectives; these are the direct consequences of a war on the lives of the people. At the same time, this experience has once again demonstrated that, although defensive and military capacity is an undeniable necessity for the preservation of national security, it is not sufficient in itself. Countries that possess technological and armaments superiority are capable of inflicting extensive damage on infrastructure. Hence, in addition to strengthening defensive capacity, all national capacities — from social cohesion and active diplomacy to the utilization of legal and political instruments on the international stage — must be employed to confront such illegal and inhumane actions. What ultimately matters is the protection of popular life and the safeguarding of those infrastructures on which the continuity of societal existence depends. The attack on these infrastructures, irrespective of any political or military justification, constitutes an action against fundamental human rights, and the awakened global conscience will, sooner or later, render its judgment thereon.



Following the criminal US strikes near Shahid Baqaei Hospital in Ahvaz, southwestern Iran, on July 15, 2026, a patient is evacuated from this medical facility, which had "211 patients undergoing chemotherapy," to be transferred to other treatment centers.
● IRNA

All of Iran is our home

 **By Fatemeh Mohajerani**
Iranian government's spokesperson

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

The geography of Iran is not merely the borders of its territory; it is the shared narrative of a people whose destinies are intertwined in every part of this land. For this reason, any aggression on any corner of this territory is a wound on the body of Iran. From the very first hours of the recent criminal American attacks on our country's soil, the government has defined its responsibility with this very perspective; a perspective that distinguishes not between north and south, east and west, or the center of the country, and regards the security, tranquility, and dignity of all Iranians as equally valuable. For the government, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and the other provinces that, in these days, have been more exposed to enemy aggression than other parts of the country, are inseparable parts of Iran — just as are Tehran, Tabriz, Mashhad, Shiraz, Kermanshah, or any other city. If the adversary endeavors, through the targeting of certain parts of the country, to create a sense of insecurity and fragmentation, our response shall be nothing other than the reinforcement of national solidarity and effective presence alongside the people. In these days, the government does not perceive its duty solely as crisis management. Our responsibility is to preserve, insofar as possible, the normal course of popular life; to continue public services; to support relief and medical institutions; to secure essential needs; to maintain the stability of infrastructure; and to accompany those families that bear a greater burden. Within this same framework, all executive bodies have been obligated to continue, with maximum capacity, the services required by the people without interruption, and to ensure that no disruption occurs in the provision of cit-

izens' basic needs. What transpires in the field is the product of the round-the-clock collaboration of a collection of executive, relief, medical, and service-providing institutions. Many of these actions may not be exposed to the view of public opinion, but their outcome must be perceptible in the lives of the people, in the continuity of services, in attention to the afflicted, in the provision of essential commodities, in the maintenance of vital networks, and in the endeavor that will help families surmount these difficult days with the least possible concern. In such circumstances, close communication with local administrators and the continuous receiving of field reports constitute an important part of the government's decision-making process. Each province, in accordance with its own conditions, possesses different needs and requirements, and decisions are made accordingly. The objective is that the nation's resources and capacities be placed, in a just manner and in proportion to circumstances, at the disposal of those people who, today, are more exposed to harm than others.

Alongside all executive measures, another important responsibility rests on the government; the preservation of public trust. The Iranian people have, throughout all historical periods, demonstrated that, in difficult days, the principal asset of the country is national solidarity and empathy. This asset is reinforced when the people are assured that the government stands beside them, hears their voices, pursues their concerns, and will spare no effort to alleviate hardships. War does not proceed solely on the battlefield; the preservation of hope, tranquility, and social cohesion is likewise a part of that field. The adversary endeavors to disseminate a sense of insecurity throughout the entire country and to create a distance between the people and officials. The government's response to this strategy is its continuous presence alongside the people, the continuation of service, accountability, and the effort to resolve their issues. No province shall be left alone in this path, and no Iranian should feel excluded from the purview of government attention. Simultaneously, planning for the com-

pensation of damages, support for affected families, and the swiftest possible restoration of normal conditions to the affected regions constitute a part of the government's responsibility, which will be pursued with seriousness. We believe that surmounting these difficult days is possible only through reliance on national capacity, popular empathy, and the continuation of service delivery. Iran is the common home of us all. The security and tranquility of this home are not divisible, and no part of it is separate from another. If today a point of this territory has become the target of enemy attacks, all of Iran stands beside it, and the government deems itself obligated to remain, with all its capacity, alongside the people at that very point, until the day when tranquility returns to their lives. The government will continue its path with this same conviction; a conviction that is not a slogan, but rather the foundation of our action and accountability: All of Iran is our home.

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



Mohammad Ashouri Taziani (2nd-R), the governor of Hormozgan Province, Iran, personally inspects the damages inflicted by the recent American air strikes on the southern province's infrastructure to better manage reconstruction efforts.
● IRNA

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Asian Boys' U18 Volleyball Championship: 'Exceptional' Iran beats Japan to win first title in 12 years

Sports Desk

Iran came from behind to defeat Japan 3-1 (23-25, 25-22, 25-17, 25-22) in the final and claim a record-extending eighth Asian Boys' U18 Volleyball Championship title in Haikou, China, on Saturday.

Iranian prodigy Abolfazl Pasha-Amiri capped off his remarkable campaign with 26 points before picking up the Most Valuable Player and Best Opposite awards at the closing ceremony.

Outside hitter Nima Piri and middle blocker Milad Salari-Toumaj also reached double figures, contributing 11 points apiece, as Iran lifted the trophy for the first time since 2014 after finishing runner-up to Japan and China in the 2022 and 2024 editions, respectively.

Japanese opposite and captain Hikaru Tanaka led all scorers with 28 points, though it was not enough to help his team claim a fourth title in six editions. Japan opened the final with confidence, edging a tightly contested first set through disciplined defense and precise attacking. Iran responded immediately, raising its level in the second set to level the match.

From there, Iran took control of the contest. The eventual champions dominated the third set 25-17 before holding off a determined Japanese fightback in the fourth, closing it out 25-22 to complete the four-set victory.

The triumph marked another memorable achievement for Iran's rising stars, whose resilience, teamwork, and



Iranian players celebrate on the podium after winning the Asian Boys' U18 Volleyball Championship title in Haikou, China, on July 18, 2026.

consistency carried them through the week-long tournament. There was further joy for the Iranians as Pedram Heidari Sefat was named

joint Best Middle Blocker alongside Japan's Haru Sawano, while Amir-Ali Shams received the Best Setter award. "My players were outstanding. They

produced an exceptional performance against Japan today," Iran head coach Abdolreza Alizadeh said after the match.

"They devoted themselves to the team for three months and showed honor, determination, discipline, and exemplary behavior throughout the campaign."

"We were better than Japan from a technical point of view. We performed better in first-ball attacks and transition play, defended very well, and also had the edge in serve reception. Japan was only better in serving, where they scored three more points than us. Overall, we deserved the 3-1 victory, and I am delighted to have won the championship," said the former Iran international setter.

"I dedicate this sweet victory and the Asian title to the people of Iran, as well as to Volleyball Federation president Milad Taqavi for his confidence in us and to the coaches' committee for entrusting this young coaching staff with the team," Alizadeh said.

He also paid tribute to his assistants, who worked tirelessly throughout the team's preparations.

"My coaching staff worked around the clock for three months. The team trained four sessions a day as we selected the final squad," he said.

Iran completed a clean sweep of Pool B, defeating the Philippines and India in straight sets on either side of a 3-1 victory over Bahrain to advance to the quarterfinals.

Alizadeh's side then defeated South Korea 3-1 (25-19, 25-19, 11-25, 25-18) in the quarterfinals before edging host nation and defending champion China in a five-set thriller on Friday to book a final showdown with Japan.

The tournament also served as the qualification pathway for the FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship, with Iran, Japan, China, and Chinese Taipei securing places at next year's event by reaching the semifinals.

Iran will be looking to add to its two world titles, won in 2007 and 2017, after finishing fourth at the previous edition in Tashkent in 2025.

Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship: Iran edges Qatar to get back to winning ways



Iran's Saleh Abbasi celebrates a goal during a victory over Qatar at the Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship in Chuzhou, China, on July 19, 2026.

Sports Desk

Iran edged five-time champion Qatar 26-25 in Group B on Sunday to remain on course for a quarterfinal berth at the Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship in Chuzhou, China. Omid Enayati-joo led Iran with eight goals and was named Player of the Match, while Mahdi Teimouri and Amirhossein Karami added six and five goals, respectively.

The two sides traded blows throughout a closely contested encounter, with Iran's youngsters repeatedly taking the lead against one of the tournament favorites.

Qatar, which has long relied on naturalized players to bolster its squad,

struggled to cope with Iran's disciplined tactics and energetic play. Iran goalkeeper Hossein Khojasteh produced a string of crucial saves in the closing stages to frustrate the Qataris and preserve his team's narrow advantage. The victory, Iran's second in four matches, lifted the team to second in the Group B standings with five points, level with the United Arab Emirates but behind on goal difference. Iran began its campaign with an impressive 29-27 victory over Kuwait—the most decorated team in the tournament's history alongside Qatar—but suffered a 29-28 defeat to South Korea, the runner-up in the previous edition, before sharing the

spoils with the UAE in a 25-25 draw on Friday.

Iran will return to action today against two-time defending champion Japan before concluding the preliminary round against India on Tuesday.

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

The championship also serves as Asia's 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.

Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Group III: Iran beats Jordan to complete unbeaten campaign

Sports Desk

Iran defeated Jordan 2-0 in the final on Monday to complete an unbeaten run and win the Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Group III title in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Having already secured a maiden promotion to the World Group II Play-offs, Iran capped off its campaign by overcoming Jordan in both singles rubbers. Samyar Elyasi gave Iran the early advantage, rallying from a set down to defeat Mousa Alkotop 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 in the opening singles rubber.

Play was then suspended for several hours because of heavy rain before action



● WORLD TENNIS

resumed after conditions improved.

Ali Yazdani sealed the title for Iran in the second singles rubber, also recovering from a set down to beat Mohammad Alkotop 4-6, 6-4,

6-1 and hand his team an unassailable 2-0 lead.

Coached by Hamid Naddaf, Iran completed the tournament without defeat, having also beaten host Malaysia, Vietnam, and

Saudi Arabia during the group stage.

The Asia/Oceania Group III competition featured eight teams split into two groups. Iran, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Vietnam competed in Group B, while Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Jordan, and Singapore made up Group A.

The top three finishers earned promotion to the 2027 Davis Cup World Group II Play-offs, with Iran booking its place by reaching the final before going on to lift the championship trophy.

Saudi Arabia defeated Singapore 2-0 earlier in the day to join Iran and Jordan in securing promotion.

Iranian striker Moghanlou joins Tractor SC

Sports Desk

Iran international striker Shahriar Moghanlou has joined Tractor SC as a free agent following the expiration of his contract with Ittihad Kalba, the Persian Gulf Pro League club announced on Sunday, ending weeks of speculation over his future. The 31-year-old scored 17 goals and provided eight assists in 52 appearances across all competitions for Kalba after joining the Emirati top-flight side two

seasons ago. A two-time Persian Gulf Pro League Golden Boot winner with Sepahan, Moghanlou is expected to replace Croatian forward Domagoj Droždek in Tractor's attack. Moghanlou, who won the Iranian league title with Persepolis in 2021, was part of Iran's squad at the 2026 FIFA World Cup in North America.

He started Iran's opening Group G match, a 2-2 draw against New Zealand, before making substitute ap-

pearances in the goalless draw with Belgium and the 1-1 draw against Egypt, as Iran finished third in the group and failed to advance to the knockout stage. Moghanlou becomes Tractor's fourth major signing of the summer after Hadi Habibinejad, Mohammad Daneshgar, and Parsa Jafari, as the Tabriz club strengthens its squad ahead of its Persian Gulf Pro League title defense and AFC Champions League Elite campaign.



Soltaniyeh Dome displays grandeur of Ilkhanid era architecture



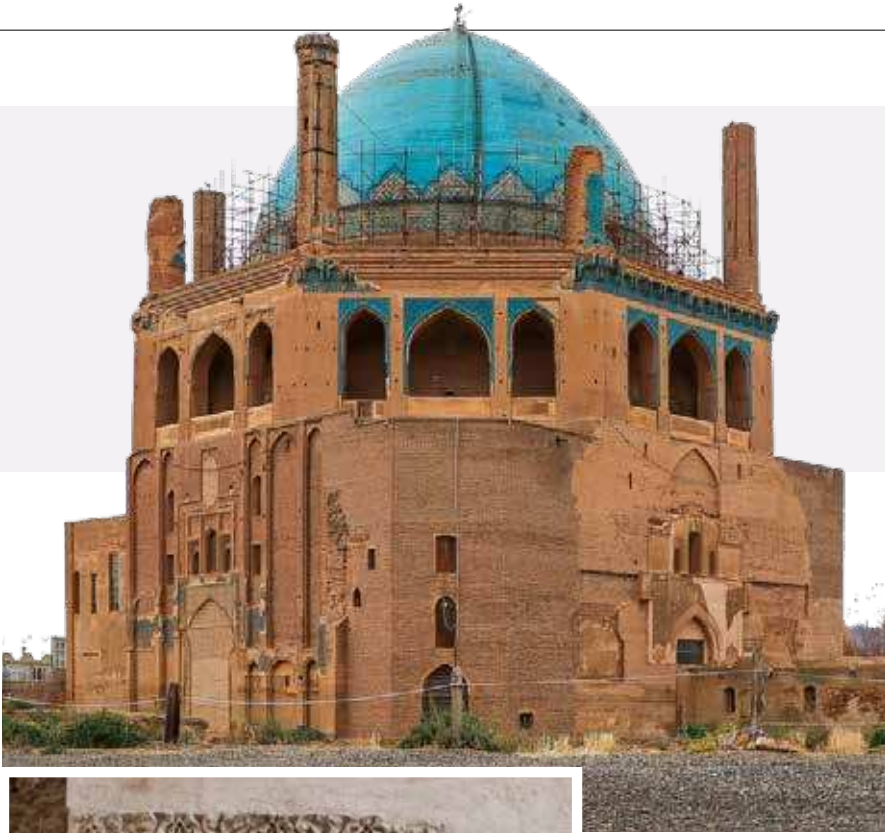
Iranica Desk Among Iran's UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Soltaniyeh Dome holds a distinguished place as one of the finest achievements of Ilkhanid architecture and one of the most remarkable examples of structural engineering, architectural design, and decorative art in the Islamic world. At its 29th session in 2005, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee inscribed the Soltaniyeh Dome as Iran's seventh World Heritage property, recognizing its Outstanding Universal Value and securing its place among the world's most important historic monuments, according to chtn.ir.

The city of Soltaniyeh, in Zanjan Province, became the capital of the Ilkhanid dynasty in the early 14th century under the rule of Sultan Mohammad Khodabandeh, better known as Oljeitu, the eighth Ilkhan ruler. During this period, construction began on the monumental mausoleum that is today known as the Soltaniyeh Dome. Built between 1302 and 1312 CE (702-712 AH), the monument was one of the most ambitious architectural projects of its time. Drawing upon the expertise of Iranian architects and craftsmen, it became a lasting milestone in the history of world architecture. The monument's most striking feature is its monumental double-shelled dome, ris-

ing approximately 48 meters high with a span of nearly 25 meters. It remains the largest brick dome in the world and is widely regarded as a masterpiece of medieval engineering. Its innovative double-shell design, advanced structural load distribution, precise geometric proportions, and masterful use of brickwork have made the monument one of the greatest engineering achievements of the Middle Ages. Architectural historians believe that the engineering techniques employed in the construction of the Soltaniyeh Dome influenced the development of later large domed structures, including several landmark buildings of the Renaissance. The monument is also re-

nowned for its exquisite turquoise tilework, intricate brick decoration, delicate stucco ornamentation, Qur'anic inscriptions, geometric motifs, and masterful calligraphy, creating a harmonious blend of architecture, art, and spirituality. Its inscriptions, executed in Thuluth and Kufic scripts, feature verses from the Holy Qur'an and religious texts, adding exceptional artistic and spiritual value to the interior spaces. The octagonal layout, surrounding ivans, slender minarets, and carefully balanced spatial proportions are among the defining characteristics of the monument. Experts regard this geometric composition as a brilliant fusion of aesthetics and structural

engineering, providing both visual grandeur and remarkable stability that has enabled the building to endure for more than seven centuries. UNESCO inscribed the Soltaniyeh Dome on the World Heritage List in recognition of its Outstanding Universal Value, citing its architectural innovations, technical achievements, artistic excellence, and lasting influence on the evolution of both Islamic and world architecture. Today, the Soltaniyeh Dome stands not only as a symbol of the grandeur of Ilkhanid architecture but also as enduring testimony to the continuity of Iranian engineering, craftsmanship, and artistic traditions during one of the country's



most significant historical periods. Beyond the mausoleum itself, the historic landscape of Soltaniyeh preserves the archaeological remains of one of the most important urban centers of the Ilkhanid period. Excavations and historical studies indicate that the medieval capital once included royal palaces, administrative buildings, religious com-

plexes, bazaars, residential quarters, and an extensive network of fortifications, reflecting the city's political, economic, and cultural prominence during the height of Ilkhanid rule. Although much of the ancient city has disappeared over the centuries, ongoing archaeological research continues to provide valuable insights into its urban planning and architectural

development. Situated on the fertile Soltaniyeh Plain in present-day Zanjan Province, the region has been inhabited since at least the first millennium BCE, according to archaeological evidence. Its rich grasslands and strategic location contributed to its selection as the capital of the Ilkhanid dynasty in the early 14th century. Soltaniyeh is now one of Zanjan Province's leading cultural tourism destinations, where visitors can explore not only the magnificent UNESCO-listed dome but also the archaeological remains of the former Ilkhanid capital and other historic sites that preserve the legacy of one of medieval Iran's most influential cities.

Ancient Hesar-Dashtak road preserves legacy of Sassanid engineering

Iranica Desk Few experiences evoke the feeling of traveling through time quite like walking along a historic road. When that road dates back to the Sassanid era and the centuries that followed, the journey becomes even more extraordinary. Fars Province, widely regarded as the cradle of ancient Iranian civilization, is home to countless archaeological treasures from the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid periods, many of which have been inscribed on Iran's National Heritage List and the UNESCO World Heritage List. Among the province's most renowned historical landscapes is the Marvdasht Plain, where the ancient cities of Persepolis, Pasargadae, and Estakhr once flourished. Today, Persepolis, Pasargadae, Naqsh-e Rostam, and Naqsh-e Rostam are among Iran's best-known archaeological sites, attracting large numbers of domestic and international visitors, particularly during the Nowruz holidays and the summer travel season, according to IRNA. Yet these celebrated monuments represent only part of the region's rich cultural heritage. Numerous lesser-known sites continue to offer remarkable opportunities for visitors interested in Iran's ancient past. One of these hidden treasures is the historic Hesar-Dashtak Road, located in the mountain-



ous area of Dorudzan District in Marvdasht. The road lies approximately 600 meters north-east of Hesar village, on the slopes leading toward Dashtak village. The ancient route was first identified during a preliminary survey conducted in 2016 as part of the research project Study of the Achaemenid Royal Road from Susa to Persepolis. Although the road has not yet undergone comprehensive archaeological investigation, available evidence suggests that it dates to the Sassanid and early Islamic periods. Its present name is derived from the neighboring villages of Hesar and Dashtak, between which it extends. According to documentation prepared by the Fars Province's

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, the road served as an important passage for local communities over several centuries and underwent repeated repairs and continued use throughout its history. Today, however, sections of the road have been damaged or destroyed by floods, landslides, and natural erosion. Despite these losses, substantial portions remain intact, offering adventurous travelers an opportunity to experience one of the region's most remarkable but little-known archaeological landmarks. Cultural heritage experts believe the road's greatest significance lies in its sophisticated engineering. Its builders carefully controlled the steep moun-



tain gradient, allowing travelers to ascend what is almost a vertical rocky slope with surprisingly little difficulty. Constructed from two types of limestone — dense dark-gray stone and softer cream-colored limestone — the historic route stretches for about 750 meters. It is generally around two meters wide, although certain sections narrow to approximately one meter. Because of the mountain's steep incline, stone steps were carved at regular intervals, each about 20 centimeters high. In one section, the rock face itself was cut to create elongated recessed steps measuring roughly 1.5 meters in length and 30 centimeters in width. Similar stairways can also be found along the historic roads of Firuzabad and

Khuyiz, as well as beside the Ab Darvazeh structure at Estakhr. Ancient Iranian engineers designed the road in a winding, switchback pattern to ease the ascent. Numerous stone terraces were constructed along the route to stabilize the mountainside and support the roadway. Natural cave-like cavities are also found beside the road. Some are naturally formed, while others were excavated and enlarged by human hands through carving the interior rock surfaces. One of these chambers measures approximately five by five meters, with a ceiling height of about two meters. Farther uphill, another series of steps has been carved directly into the rock. Unlike the earlier staircase, these steps are broad

and relatively flat, averaging about 180 by 45 centimeters with a height of roughly 25 centimeters. At one point, builders also cut into the mountainside to create a level platform that likely served as a loading or resting area. The upper sections of the road preserve their terraces and foundations more completely. Some retaining platforms reach heights of up to five meters, while protective stone parapets line much of the outer edge of the route. According to specialists, the Hesar-Dashtak Road represents one of the finest surviving examples of ancient Iranian engineering. Its builders successfully overcame an exceptionally steep mountainside through innovative design and careful construction. Walking along the road offers visitors a tangible connection with the past, following a route traveled by generations of Iranians more than a thousand years ago. Even in its weathered state, the surviving remains continue to convey the ingenuity and endurance of those who built and used it. Experts, however, warn that the monument is increasingly threatened by the expansion of the nearby villages of Hesar and Dashtak. Without effective conservation measures, continued development could cause irreversible damage to this unique archaeological heritage.



Iran pitches seven SCO cultural initiatives, from Silk Road heritage to video games

Salehi says culture 'true alternative' to violence, unilateralism

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran proposed seven regional cultural initiatives, ranging from joint Silk Road heritage nominations to collaborative animation and video game production, at the 23rd Meeting of Culture Ministers of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, on Sunday. Culture Minister Abbas Salehi described culture as "the true alternative to violence and unilateralism" and reaffirmed Iran's readiness to deepen cultural cooperation across the bloc. Addressing ministers from SCO member states, Salehi described culture as "the common language of nations and a bridge to mutual understanding and solidarity," saying the organization has, for more than two decades, treated culture as a pillar of confidence-building and peo-

ple-to-people ties rather than a peripheral field, farhang.gov.ir reported. He said Iranian civilization, with its millennia-old cultural heritage, has consistently regarded culture as the foundation of sustainable development, justice, peaceful coexistence and human dignity. "Iranian civilization has always pursued a culture of peace alongside the defense of national dignity," Salehi said, adding that Iran, like all independent nations, seeks "justice, national sovereignty and human dignity." Calling SCO members heirs to one of the world's richest civilizational spheres, shaped by centuries of exchanges along the historic Silk Road, Salehi said their shared legacy places a collective responsibility on member states to preserve, revive and pass it on to future generations.

To strengthen that mission, Iran unveiled seven proposals for expanded cultural cooperation. They include preparing joint UNESCO nominations for Silk Road cultural and intangible heritage, establishing an SCO network of civilizational and cultural studies centers linking universities, libraries and research institutes, and organizing regular cultural weeks among member states. Salehi also proposed expanding co-productions in cinema and documentaries centered on family, ethics, identity, historical heritage and the Silk Road. He further called for reciprocal translation and publication of major literary works, closer cooperation among national libraries and archives to digitize and restore manuscripts, and joint projects in creative industries, animation, video games and digital content to engage



Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi participates in the 23rd SCO Culture Ministers Meeting in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan on July 19, 2026.
● farhang.gov.ir

younger generations. He said the region's future should be built not on "exhausting rivalries" but on mutual cultural understanding, respect for civilizational diversity and broader human cooperation. "Today, more than ever, we need cultural diplomacy," Salehi said. "A diplomacy that brings nations closer together and defends reason, ethics and humanity against hatred and war." The minister said Iran stands ready to work with all SCO members to build "a future based on mutual respect, cultural diversity, justice and shared prosperity." On the sidelines of the ministe-



rial meeting, Salehi is scheduled to hold bilateral talks with his counterparts from participating countries, meet Iranian studies scholars, Persian-language professors and academics in Kyrgyzstan, attend the SCO International Film Festival awards ceremony, and participate in official events hosted by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Culture.

The 23rd Meeting of Culture Ministers of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization is being held in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, from July 16 to July 20, bringing together cultural leaders from the organization's member states to advance cooperation in heritage preservation, cultural exchange and creative industries.

Veteran archaeologist Yaghmaei dies after lifetime safeguarding national heritage



Arts & Culture Desk

Esmail Yaghmaei, one of Iran's most distinguished archaeologists whose five-decade career helped uncover and preserve some of the country's most significant ancient sites, died on July 17 in a Tehran hospital after suffering a stroke. Yaghmaei, born in 1941, devoted more than half a century to excavating, documenting and protecting Iran's archaeological heritage. A graduate of the University of Tehran in archaeology and art, he began his professional career with the National Archaeology Department in 1967 and went on to lead or participate in dozens of landmark excavations across the country, IRNA reported. Jebrael Nokandeh, director of the National Museum of Iran, extended condolences to Yaghmaei's family and the archaeological community, saying his contributions "will remain etched in the memory of Iran's archaeology and history." He praised the late scholar for standing "firm in defense of Iran's heritage," adding that generations would remain indebted to his lifelong commitment to preserving the nation's cultural legacy. Yaghmaei played a pivotal role in archaeological research at major historical sites, including Haft Tappeh, Susa, Shahr-e Sukhteh, Chogha Gavaneh, Marvdasht, Kangavar, Kermanshah, the Qazvin Plain, Gorgan, Kerman and northwestern Iran. His fieldwork significantly advanced scholarly understanding of the civilizations that shaped the Iranian plateau. Beyond excavation, Yaghmaei left a lasting literary legacy through works such as 'Susa: Archaeological Excavations in the Fifteenth City of the Middle Elamite Period', 'A Thousand-Year-Old Tress: Memories of an Archaeologist', 'That Palace Which Jamshid...', 'Safe Points' and 'When I Was a Kid'.

Uzbek art academy chief to showcase contemporary works in Tehran virtual exhibition



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Academy of Arts will open a virtual exhibition on July 20 featuring more than

27 paintings by Akmal Nuriddinov, president of the Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan, in a cultural initiative aimed at deepening artistic

exchanges and strengthening cultural diplomacy between Iran and Central Asia. Hosted on the Academy of Arts' online portal, the exhibition introduces a selection of works by one of Uzbekistan's leading contemporary painters while expanding scholarly and artistic cooperation between the two countries, IRNA reported. Organizers said the program is designed to foster mutual understanding of artistic traditions, encourage exchanges among artists and researchers, and pave the way for broader regional cultural

engagement. Nuriddinov described his artistic vision as one that unfolds "between the visible and the hidden," where the physical world meets humanity's inner and spiritual experience. Rather than merely depicting external reality, he said his paintings seek to reveal "silence, longing, love, solitude, memory and the human yearning for the absolute." He added that his work draws deeply on the philosophical and cultural heritage of the East, particularly the Sufi understanding of

love, viewing art as a path toward self-discovery. A prominent figure in Uzbekistan's contemporary art scene, Nuriddinov has exhibited widely in Moscow, Tashkent, Leningrad, Skopje, Istanbul, Seattle, Washington, Hangzhou and other international venues. His paintings are held in major public and private collections, including the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, the Samarkand State Museum of History and Architecture, Seattle's Davidson Gallery and the Credit Suisse art collection.

Eight medals go to Iranian students at global chemistry, biology Olympiads



Iranian students delivered another strong performance on the international academic stage, winning a total of eight medals, including three gold medals, at the 2026 editions of the International Chemistry Olympiad (ICHO) and the International Biology Olympiad (IBO). At the 58th International Chemistry Olympiad (ICHO 2026), held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from July 10 to 19, the Iranian team earned three silver medals and one bronze while competing against more than 350 students from 90 countries, Press TV reported. Ali Shamsi-Mofakhar, Mahyar Najjar, and Amirreza Hosseini

each won a silver medal, while Ariyo Seyrafi claimed the bronze, showcasing the scientific excellence of Iran's young chemistry talents. Iran's success continued at the 37th International Biology Olympiad (IBO 2026), held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from July 12 to 19, where the national team secured an even stronger result, taking home three gold medals and one silver among more than 300 contestants from over 80 countries. Radin Bayani, Mohammadreza Vaezi, and Amirhossein Nosrati Zagloujeh captured gold medals, while Amirhossein Hemmati earned silver, underscoring the high caliber of Iranian students in the life sciences. The achievements at the two prestigious international Olympiads add to a string of international successes by Iranian students in science and technology this year. Earlier this month, Iran's nation-

al physics team claimed three gold and two silver medals at the 56th International Physics Olympiad (IPHO 2026) in Bucaramanga, Colombia, where more than 400 students from over 90 countries competed. The country's young mathematicians also made headlines after winning the fourth International Mathematics Competition of Shanghai (IMSC 2026), securing the overall team title with four gold medals and two silvers to finish ahead of Poland and Brazil. Iranian students have likewise excelled beyond academic Olympiads. At the RoboCup 2026 World Championship, the country's robotics teams earned multiple distinctions, including the Best Technical Presentation award, and advanced to the world's top four in several leagues, further highlighting Iran's growing presence in international scientific and technological competitions.



Notice of AMENDMENT for the bid submission tender for export sale No. Z/1405/09
Golgochar Mining and Industrial Company

With reference to Tender Notice Z/1405-09, we hereby informed that the bid submission and bid opening have been revised as follows:

All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 09:00 A.M. on 22. July 2026 to Golgochar complex in Sirjan (50 km in Shiraz road).

Bidders are invited to the transactions commission office of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 09:00 A.M. on 22. July 2026 at the office of the Seller.

GOLGOCHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.