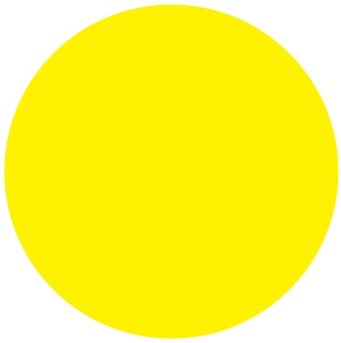


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This AI enhanced screen grab, taken from undated UGC video footage posted on social media and verified by AFP, shows clouds of smoke rising after missile strikes by Yemen's Houthis on an Aramco refinery in Jizan, Saudi Arabia on July 25, 2026. ● AFP

Yemen's actions shift balance in Iran's favor in conflict with US

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Yemen's Ansarullah movement on Thursday targeted two Saudi oil tankers sailing through the Red Sea and an Aramco refinery in the city of Jizan with missiles and drones. The move, which came amid the ongoing conflict between Iran and the United States over the Strait of Hormuz, has placed another vital global shipping route under threat and drawn a sharp response from the US president. US President Donald Trump threatened that if the Houthis attacked Saudi ships again, Iran would be held responsible and both would be dealt with.



Iran Daily spoke to international affairs analyst Mohsen Farkhani about these developments and their impact on the Iran-US confrontation. Farkhani believes that Ye-

men's alignment with Iran's military doctrinal shift against the United States, without direct Iranian involvement, has altered the balance in Iran's favor and paved the way for Trump to be forced to accept Iran's new conditions.

IRAN DAILY: What impact do Ansarullah's actions in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandab Strait, which have led to higher oil prices and heightened concerns over energy security, have on the balance of power and calculations in the faceoff between Iran and the United States? Could these actions drive up the economic and political costs of the war for the United States and its allies?

FARKHANI: Ansarullah's actions in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandab are aligned with the shift that has taken place in Iran's defense doctrine, which has moved away from a phase of strategic patience. These actions have been designed to increase the economic costs for the United States and its allies. Yemen's alignment with Iran's military doctrinal shift, without direct Iranian involvement, has threatened the West's energy

supply chain and shifted the balance in Iran's favor.

Higher costs for consumers will mount global pressure on Trump because of energy inflation, paving the way for the US president to be forced to accept Iran's new conditions. To shore up the narrative of America's ability to maintain deterrence, Trump has threatened Iran and Yemen's Ansarullah with a firm military response. This indicates his disarray in the face of the economic and political losses and costs he has incurred as a result of Iran's legitimate military responses and Ansarullah's actions.

These costs include pressure on oil and transport, as well as pressure on America's Saudi and European allies, which has highlighted the United States' inability to manage or control the world's waterways.

Can it be said that the United States faces the risk of a geographically expanding and increasingly multilayered confrontation? What limitations does this situation impose on Washington's ability to manage multiple fronts simultaneously?

Clearly, because of Trump's action error

in entering an illegitimate war with Iran and his classical perception of America's military capabilities, the United States has fallen into the trap of a multilayered and geographically expanding confrontation. In this context, the Houthis have added the Red Sea front to the crisis surrounding America's inability to seize control of the Strait of Hormuz, increasing the potential for the conflict to escalate in the Persian Gulf and Lebanon and potentially spill over into Syria, Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Trump administration, given its involvement in the Ukraine conflict, the consumption of a large portion of its military hardware in the war with Iran, and a range of economic difficulties at the domestic and global levels, is facing extremely intense political and partisan pressure. This limits the room for maneuver available to the United States in the ongoing war.

To what extent could international pressure on the Trump administration to end the war grow? Which countries or economic actors could play a more effective role in this regard?

Given the renewed surge in global oil prices and the return of fuel-price pressure on consumers in Europe and the United States, competitors such as China and Russia will have an opportunity to put pressure on the US government. Because of its strategic alignment with Iran, China has kept itself away from the oil crises. At the same time, it will open avenues for diplomatic and economic pressure on the United States through international organizations such as BRICS and the United Nations, seeking to reduce the impact of America's efforts to exert oil pressure by preventing oil exports to China through waterways and Arab countries in the region.

Russia, meanwhile, given its confrontation with Ukraine, has tied the hands of Europe and the United States in seeking concessions to end the war in Ukraine through its implicit support for Iran's positions and actions. Arab countries and America's European allies, facing energy crises, the loss of some infrastructure shared with the United States and economic instability, are concerned about an escalation between the United States and Iran.

Yemen's retaliatory missiles, drones hit Saudi oil facilities, airbase



REUTERS

International Desk

The Yemeni military launched missile and drone strikes on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities and a major airbase on Saturday in retaliation for the latest Saudi military aggression as hostilities between the two neighboring countries resumed after four-year lull. Yemen's Armed Forces said that they

launched missile strike on a major airbase in Saudi Arabia's southern region of Asir with local media outlets reporting that the ballistic missiles hit designated targets inside King Khalid Air Base near the Saudi city of Khamis Mushait early on Saturday. The development came shortly after the Yemeni Armed Forces struck an oil facility belonging to the state-owned petroleum

and natural gas company Saudi Aramco in Saudi Arabia's southwestern border region of Jizan, using several ballistic missiles. Local outlets reported that some areas of Jizan experienced electricity blackouts following strikes in the area. Additionally, powerful explosions rocked the Saudi port city of Yanbu.

In a video statement, military spokesman Yahya Saree said Yemen's Armed Forces targeted sites operated by the Saudi oil giant Aramco in Jizan and Yanbu, threatening to expand the response if attacked by the monarchy.

A video circulating on social media showed dark clouds rising above a refinery belonging to Aramco in Jizan. Live flight trackers that show air traffic in real time reported that flights to Riyadh and other cities were diverted after Yemeni forces launched strikes. Prince Abdulmohsen Bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Yanbu and King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Airport, also known as Jizan International Airport, suspended their operations as a result.

Saudi aggression on Yemeni soil

Late on Friday, Saudi fighter jets launched air raids against telecommunications fa-

cilities and oil depots in Yemen's strategic coastal province of Hudaydah, but there were no immediate reports about the extent of damage caused.

The developments followed a missile strike by Yemen against Saudi Arabia after accusing the kingdom of bombing an airport in Yemen on the pretext of breaking the blockade on Yemen by an Iranian plane. Yemen's Armed Forces on Monday said they were declaring "a maritime embargo against the criminal Saudi enemy, based on the equation of 'an eye for an eye', effective immediately".

Yahya Saree said in a televised address that the blockade was in response to a "continued Saudi siege" on Yemen, and that the country's Armed Forces were ready to meet any Saudi retaliation with "a total and harsh escalation". A full closure of the Bab el-Mandeb strait, the southern gateway to the Red Sea, would halt Saudi oil exports to Asia and could reduce global oil supply by 7%.

Saudi Arabia has diverted 70 percent of its energy exports through the Red Sea. A disruption of the path of transit could become a larger issue for the global energy crisis sparked by the US-Israeli aggression against Iran. Growing concern over new

threats to shipping in the Red Sea helped push the price of crude oil back over \$100 a barrel this week – the highest level since May.

No military solution

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reacted to the developments in Yemen, saying on Saturday there was no military solution to the escalating conflict between Saudi Arabia and the and Yemen.

"We believe that there is no military solution to the issue of Yemen, Bab el-Mandab, and other regional issues," said Araghchi in an interview published on Saturday by Iran newspaper, calling for "dialogue."

He said the situation in Yemen "cannot be attributed to Iran," and that the incidents occurring in the area of the Bab el-Mandab Strait were "rooted in old disputes and issues between Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the countries of the region."

Yemen has been at war with a Saudi-led coalition since 2015, in a devastating conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands and triggered a major humanitarian crisis. However, fighting in the poverty-stricken Arabian Peninsula country had been largely frozen since a UN-negotiated truce in 2022.

New regional push to revive Iran-US peace talks

Security chief vows anti-US strikes until 'enemy's total surrender'

International Desk

There are reportedly new efforts by mediator Pakistan and China to resume stalled Iran-US talks over ending their nearly five-month-old war as the two appeared stopped attacking each other after nearly two weeks.

Three Pakistani sources said Islamabad is exploring a path toward a resumption of negotiations following a push initiated by China.

The sources said exploratory discussions took place during a visit by Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni to Islamabad this week — his second within the last 10 days, during which Momeni met with Pakistani government leaders and army chief Asim Munir.

All three sources cautioned that the obstacles to any talks with the US remain high. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, discussed the new effort with Chinese officials when he visited China last week, all three Pakistani sources said. In a statement, China's Foreign Ministry said, "China supports the mediation efforts made by Pakistan and other parties."

It added that China will continue to play an active role in restoring peace and tranquility in the Middle East Persian Gulf region as soon as possible.

Beijing has consistently backed Pakistan's mediation efforts and had in March dispatched its special envoy to lead a shuttle-diplomacy trip around



A man walks past a billboard near the media center as delegations from the United States and Iran are expected to hold high-stakes talks in Islamabad, Pakistan, on April 11, 2026.

the Middle East.

The US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding in June to move toward ending the war after mediation by Pakistan and Qatar. It was intended to provide a 60-day window for negotiations on a permanent agreement.

But the US violations of the agreement led to resumption of the conflict with both sides announcing the suspension of the negotiations.

However, US President Donald Trump said on Friday that Washington and Tehran were in talks to negotiate an end to their conflict, but repeated that Tehran was not yet ready for a deal.

"We are talking to them. I think they're being serious. I think ... they are being by far the most serious that we've seen them, but that doesn't mean we get there. We'll see what happens," Trump said in remarks to reporters at the White House.

There were no reports of exchange of fire on Saturday after 13 consecutive nights of conflict between the two sides.

Iranian Health Ministry spokesperson Hossein Kermanpour posted on X, saying that "Iran had a peaceful night," without any attacks reported. The US Central Command didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. However, unlike the previous 13 nights, it did not announce new strikes.

There were also no reports of Iran's retaliatory attacks against US bases in regional countries. However, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Mohammad-Bagher Zolghadr said on Saturday that strikes against US targets will continue until the "enemy's total surrender" and in retaliation for the massacre of children in Minab and Lamerd. Zolghadr said, "Every column of smoke in the region means that a US military, security, or financial center has been targeted."

He added that the "continuous and targeted strikes" by Iranian fighters were "the lashes of the anger of the awakened Iranian nation upon the back of the system of domination," and would continue "until the enemy's total surrender and revenge is taken for the blood of the oppressed children of Minab and Lamerd, God willing."

Parliament's security panel weighs 12 bills on Hormuz, maritime zones



ISNA

National Desk

Iran's Parliament referred 12 draft bills concerning the Strait of Hormuz and amendments to the country's law on maritime zones to its National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

Spokesperson for the Parliament's Presiding Board Abbas Goudarzi said on Saturday that of the 12 draft bills, nine concern the Strait of Hormuz, while the remaining three relate to amendments to the law governing Iran's maritime zones.

Secondary committees on judiciary, civil, and economic affairs are reviewing specific elements, including maritime navigation rules, common funding pools, and legal penalties for non-compliance.

Iran shut down the chokepoint to enemies and their allies after February 28, when the US and the Israeli regime began their latest bout of wholesale unprovoked aggression against the Islamic Republic.

The Islamic Republic began exercising

far stricter controls after Donald Trump announced continuation of an illegal naval blockade of Iranian vessels and ports in spite of a ceasefire that the US president, himself, had declared on April 7.

In May, Iran officially launched a new mechanism for governing maritime traffic through the strategic strait, with the Islamic Republic warning vessels against refusing to coordinate their pending transits with Iranian authorities and using routes other than the supervisory management zone defined by Tehran.

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Saturday their forces stopped four ships attempting to transit the strategic Strait of Hormuz over the past 24 hours.

"Four vessels that had intended to transit through the southern area of the Strait of Hormuz via an illegal and unsafe route were stopped over the past 24 hours after warning shots were fired by the IRGC Navy," the IRGC said in a statement quoted by state television, adding that the ships had "altered course."

Tehran blasts EU's hypocrisy amid silence on US-Israeli war crimes

Tehran censured remarks by the European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, regarding the human rights situation in Iran while keeping quiet on US-Israeli war crimes against the country as "the purest form of hypocrisy."

"How can a professed commitment to human rights be so easily reconciled with providing logistical and technical support for lethal aggressions against the Iranian people — aggressions that deliberately target civilians and critical national infrastructure?" Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei wrote in a post on his X account on Saturday, Press TV reported.

"All while refusing to condemn even

Esmail Baqaei
IRNA

the most blatant war crimes, and offering not a single word of sympathy for Iranian children slaughtered by American-Israeli bombs and missiles enabled by the EU's own 'logistical and technical support,'" he said. Baqaei added that this is "not mere-

ly a loss of credibility," but the "banality of evil — and the purest form of hypocrisy."

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on Friday that the 27-member political and economic bloc had imposed new sanctions on five Iranian judges and a leading cyber-group figure over alleged human rights violations.

"While the world's attention is on the war in the Middle East, we can't lose sight of Iran's repression against its own people," Kallas asserted on X.

Kallas claimed that the judges had presided over cases against religious minorities, political dissidents and human rights activists.

Yemen's actions shift ...

In order to increase the sense of urgency in Washington about returning to diplomacy, they are also likely to lobby together.

Ansarullah attacked several Saudi ships and a refinery. What variables could lead the movement to completely close the Bab el-Mandab Strait?

Although the multidimensional international pressure on the United States will be primarily economic and diplomatic, it will nevertheless confront Washington with operational limitations in its war with Iran. Because of its doctrinal alignment with the Islamic Republic of Iran, its adjustment to the trajectory of tensions involving Iran, and its own domestic interests in deepening its influence

over its surrounding environment, Yemen's Ansarullah will adjust the level of tension in a way that increases the costs for the United States and Saudi Arabia and improves the regional deterrence of Iran and Yemen.

Overall, Ansarullah's coordinated actions alongside Iran's military doctrinal shift have strengthened Iran's asymmetric deterrence and made it more difficult for the United States to sustain the credibility and operational reliability of its deterrence efforts. However, a complete closure of the Bab el-Mandab Strait is a critical variable that would likely be used as a last resort and could make it possible to impose conditions on the United States in a forced or attritional negotiation.

Tehran, Yerevan agree to joint energy task force, discuss new gas trade model

Economy Desk

Iran and Armenia have agreed to establish a joint specialized energy task force to accelerate cooperation, with Tehran proposing a new framework for gas trade that could eventually allow exports through Armenia to other markets, Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said after talks with Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Davit Khudatyan in Tehran.

According to the oil ministry's SHANA news agency, the two sides reviewed cooperation in energy, including trade, the export of technical and engineering services, refinery construction and meeting Armenia's demand for petroleum products. Paknejad said Armenia was one of Iran's key neighboring countries and that the two sides had significant potential to expand bilateral cooperation, particularly in the energy sector.

"We have proposed to the Armenian minister that the joint specialized task force begin its work as soon as possible so that

the results and achievements of its follow-up efforts can be reviewed at our next meeting," he said.

Paknejad said the current model of energy cooperation between the two countries was based on a gas-for-electricity swap, but that Iran had proposed a new commercial framework for gas exports.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's clear proposal is to define a new commercial model for gas exports," he said.

"Implementing this proposal requires examining the existing infrastructure and the potential to expand gas trade, even beyond the Armenian market and through Armenia to other markets."

He said the proposal involved technical and commercial complexities and required expert studies by the joint task force before it could be implemented. Khudatyan said the two countries were determined to expand bilateral cooperation across all energy-related fields through the new task force.

"During this meeting, we re-



Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (R) and Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Davit Khudatyan pose for a photo following their meeting in Tehran, Iran, on July 25, 2026.
● SHANA

viewed the areas of cooperation between Iran and Armenia and agreed to establish a joint specialized task force," he said. "It was decided that this task force will be formed and begin its work as soon as possible so that cooperation between Iran and Armenia can be expanded in all areas related to the responsibilities of our two ministries." Khudatyan said Armenia already cooperated with Iran in petroleum products and used Iranian bitumen in road construction projects.

He added that energy cooperation between the two countries was currently based on gas and electricity exchanges.

"Armenia receives and consumes gas in return for supplying electricity to Iran, and it is interested in increasing the volume of these exchanges and expanding



bilateral cooperation," he said. Armenia has been importing Iranian natural gas since 2009 under a gas-for-electricity swap agreement that runs through 2030. Under the arrangement,

Armenia uses the gas to generate electricity and exports 3 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity to Iran for every cubic meter of natural gas it receives, while retaining the remaining output

for domestic use. According to Armenian regulatory data cited by Interfax, Iran supplied 475.8 million cubic meters (mcm) of natural gas to Armenia in 2025, up 6.6% from 446.3 mcm in 2024.

FAO ranks Iran world's top producer of saffron, roses and dates



Economy Desk

Iran ranked first in global production of saffron, Damask roses and dates in 2024, while placing second in pistachios, apricots, peaches and nectarines, according to data released by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

According to Mehr news agency, FAO data comparing 2024 production with 2023 showed Iran ranked between first and 13th worldwide in the production of 26 major horticultural products.

Despite international sanctions, Iran improved its global ranking in the production of seven horticultural products and maintained its previous position in 12 others, the report said. Iran has faced Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear activities, pressure that has weighed most heavily on its oil and energy sectors.

Iran ranked third globally in the production of quinces, cherries and figs, fourth in apples, walnuts, sour

cherries and plums, fifth in almonds and kiwifruit, and sixth in oranges. The country ranked seventh in the production of grapes, lemons and limes, other citrus fruits and edible mushrooms, according to the FAO data.

Iran also placed eighth in hazelnut production, 10th in pears and 12th in mandarins. Production of olives, sweet lemons, grapefruit and green tea leaves ranked 13th globally in 2024, the data showed.

South Pars launches first pressure-boosting hub to sustain output

Energy Desk

Iran has begun the implementation of the first hub of its South Pars gas field pressure-boosting project, aimed at maintaining production, preventing reservoir pressure decline, easing the country's natural gas supply imbalance and protecting Iran's share of the giant field, state media reported.

According to IRNA, engineering work on the South Pars pressure-boosting project began in May 2023 after contracts for basic and front-end engineering design (FEED) studies were awarded in 17 separate work packages to Iranian consulting firms working with international consultants.

As part of the project, ba-



sic and FEED studies for Hub 1 have begun under a combined onshore-offshore development scenario designed to prevent pressure decline at the shared reservoir, increase its recovery factor and help address Iran's natural gas supply imbalance.

Petropars Group Chief Executive Hamidreza Saqafi said the project was intended to maxi-

mize the use of domestic capabilities, prevent the loss of national assets and accelerate implementation of the South Pars pressure-boosting program.

"The project is designed to play an effective role in ensuring stable gas supplies and helping address the country's gas imbalance, particularly during the colder months, through the

short-term implementation of onshore pressure boosting, while the completion of offshore facilities in the longer term will help secure the reservoir's ultimate recovery," he said.

As the first executive step of the national project, Saqafi said Petropars on June 18, 2026, awarded a contract to the Iran Offshore Engineering and Construction Company (IOEC) to build the RP-1 four-leg riser platform jacket, weighing about 2,500 metric tons. The structure will be installed adjacent to the SPD12A platform and will also serve the development project for the shared Bilal gas field.

South Pars, which Iran shares with Qatar, is the world's largest natural gas field.

Iran eyes return to global top 10 steel producers by March, WSA data show

Economy Desk

Iran is expected to return to the world's top 10 steel producers by March as reconstruction of damaged production units progresses and output gradually increases, despite slipping out of the latest World Steel Association (worldsteel) rankings, according to industry reports.

The latest rankings released by worldsteel showed China remained the world's largest crude steel producer with 83.7 million metric tons in June, while Vietnam entered the top 10 with 2.6 million tons, replacing Iran.

According to June data released by worldsteel, global crude steel production reached 155.7 million tons in June 2026, up 1.7% from a year earlier. However, despite the global recovery, the Middle East experienced a sharp decline as geopolitical tensions and military

conflict disrupted production across the region.

Iran, which has long ranked among the world's leading steel producers with annual production capacity exceeding 30 million tons, dropped out of the June top-10 rankings after Vietnam increased output by 27.5% year on year to 2.6 million tons, according to Steel Radar.

Recent conflicts, risks to steel plants and infrastructure, as well as logistics and energy constraints, caused major disruptions to Iran's steel industry. Iran's two largest steelmakers, Mobarakeh Steel Company and Khuzestan Steel Company, sustained damage during the US-Israeli war that began in late February. Parliamentary officials said in June that reconstruction work at Mobarakeh was progressing much faster than initially expected.

According to IRIB, the ongoing recon-

struction of damaged production units and a gradual increase in output are expected to lift Iran back into the top 10, despite losing about 30% of its production capacity in the attacks and facing continuing energy constraints.

According to the report, Iran had previously produced about 32 million tons of crude steel annually, or roughly 3.2 million tons per month. Following attacks on steel facilities, annual output fell to around 22 million tons, allowing countries such as Vietnam to overtake Iran in the global rankings.

In addition to war damage, energy shortages have significantly reduced steel production, particularly during the summer months when electricity demand peaks and energy-intensive industries such as steelmaking face severe power supply restrictions.

Iran's installed steelmaking capacity

currently stands at about 55 million tons per year. Actual annual production had been around 32 million tons over the past two years, but with an estimated 10 million tons of capacity temporarily out of service, output is now projected to reach about 25 million tons by the end of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2027).

According to the latest information released by Mobarakeh Steel Company and Khuzestan Steel Company, damaged facilities are being rebuilt and gradually returning to operation, with some production units already back online. As more plants resume production, Iran is expected to re-enter the global top 10 by March 2027.

Meanwhile, the Middle East's crude steel output fell 13.4% year on year to 4.0 million tons in June. Military conflict in the region made supplies of raw materials and exports of finished steel in-



creasingly difficult, forcing steelmakers to reduce capacity utilization rates. Production stoppages in Iran and logistics disruptions across the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea shipping routes were reflected in the region's overall output. While higher production in China, India and Turkey pushed global crude steel output higher, the continuing conflict in the Middle East and the sharp decline in Iran's production continued to reshape regional supply dynamics.

Strait of Hormuz security 'prerequisite' for regional trade prosperity: *Businessman*



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Under such circumstances, constructive and amicable relations among neighbors, particularly Iran and Kuwait, acquire augmented significance. According to experts, the more mutual confidence and regional stability are fortified, the more commercial costs diminish, investment flourishes, and international enterprises will participate in regional markets with greater assurance. Conversely, the escalation of security risks, even absent the closure of shipping lanes, can encumber commerce with heightened costs and decelerated exchange velocity.

Arash Nikpay Salakdeh, vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the Iran and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce, in an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, while elucidating the capacities for bilateral economic cooperation, addressed the strategic function of the Strait of Hormuz in Kuwaiti commerce, opportunities for Iranian companies within that nation's market, and the imperative for expanding regional collaboration to fortify economic security and develop commercial exchanges. The complete text of this interview follows.

Arash Nikpay Salakdeh



IRAN DAILY: What is your assessment of the current status of commercial relations between Iran and Kuwait? And kindly elucidate the capacities and necessities for economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries.

NIKPAY: Iran and Kuwait, as two neighboring states in the northern Persian Gulf, possess considerable capacities for the development of economic cooperation. Geographic proximity, low maritime transportation costs, the complementarity of certain sectors of the two economies, and a history of balanced political relations furnish a suitable groundwork for the expansion of commerce. Nevertheless, the current volume of bilateral trade remains inferior to real capacity. A portion of this circumstance is attributable to banking restrictions, international sanctions, difficulties in monetary transfer, and the caution of Kuwaiti enterprises in collaborating with Iranian counterparts.

On the other hand, subsequent to the recent conflict and the rise of security tensions in the region, numerous shipping companies, insurers, and financial institutions operate with heightened sensitivity concerning commerce in the Persian Gulf region. Elevated marine insurance costs, banking constraints, and risk assessments have impacted the speed and cost of trade. Notwithstanding these restrictions, if regional political and security relations proceed along a trajectory of stability, Iran-Kuwait commerce could experience considerable growth in the medium term since both countries will derive mutual benefit from economic cooperation.

With regard to the requirements of the Kuwaiti market, what opportunities exist for the presence of Iranian companies in the technical and engineering domains, construction, food industries, and services?

The Kuwaiti economy exhibits substantial dependence on imports and procures a significant portion of its consumer goods, construction materials, and specialized services from abroad. This has created suitable opportunities for Iranian enterprises. In the field of technical and engineering services, Iranian companies can participate in construction projects, utilities, water and wastewater treatment, energy, oil and gas industries, industrial repairs, and infrastructural undertakings.

The Strait of Hormuz is not merely a maritime passage; it represents the vital artery of the economy and commerce of the Persian Gulf littoral states. The main portion of energy exports and essential commodity imports of regional countries traverses this strategic waterway, and, for this very reason, any perturbation or insecurity therein directly influences transportation expenditures, insurance premiums, commodity prices, and the flow of investment. Hence, the security of this route, beyond being purely a political matter, constitutes an economic prerequisite for all nations of the region.



Vessels sit in the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, on June 15, 2026, as plumes of smoke rise in the distance.
● REUTERS

In the construction sector as well, the export of Iranian steel, cement, tiles and ceramics, dimensional stone, glass, doors and windows, mechanical and electrical equipment, and petrochemical products possesses a competitive advantage. In the food industries, Iranian agricultural products, dried fruits, dairy goods, dates, processed foods, aquatic products, and organic items — if health standards and quality requirements are observed — possess suitable capacity for presence in the Kuwaiti market. Of course, in post-conflict condi-

tions, Kuwaiti companies, more than before, pay attention to supply chain stability, transportation continuity, and the capacity for uninterrupted provision of goods. Therefore, Iranian exporters must, in addition to quality and price, concentrate on reliable delivery capability, after-sales services, and the establishment of local offices or partnerships.

Kindly elaborate on the function of the Strait of Hormuz in the context of Kuwait's commercial connectivity and transportation. How much of Kuwaiti commerce is conducted through this strait, and what impact do amicable bilateral relations exert upon economic interests?

The Strait of Hormuz constitutes the most important mari-

time thoroughfare of the Persian Gulf, and nearly all of Kuwait's maritime trade with global markets — including the export of oil and energy products and a major share of commodity imports — transits this route. For this reason, any security tension or disruption in this waterway directly affects transportation costs, vessel insurance rates, delivery timelines, and the aggregate cost of Kuwaiti imports and exports.

The recent conflict also demonstrated that, even with shipping

People visit a truffle market in early March 2026. The good amount of rainfall in the region has resulted in large supplies, which are expected to increase even more as Iranian truffles are soon to be imported into the country, according to the vendors.
● KUWAIT TIMES



lanes remaining open, the mere elevation of security risk can engender increased insurance expenditures, diminished frequency of certain shipping lines, and increased commercial costs. Under such conditions, constructive and amicable relations among regional states, particularly Iran and Kuwait, acquire twofold significance. The greater the security and mutual confidence in the region, the more commercial costs are reduced, investment increases, and international enterprises will operate with greater assurance in the region. The security of the Strait of Hormuz is not solely a political matter but rather an economic imperative for all littoral states of the Persian Gulf.

Given that Iran-Kuwait trade is conducted predominantly via maritime routes, is there a possibility for developing combined (land-sea) corridors through neighboring countries such as Iraq? To what extent could these routes diminish transportation costs and augment the volume of commercial exchanges?

Yes, the development of combined land-sea corridors through Iraq could represent one of the most significant future opportunities for regional commerce. Should road, rail, customs, and logistical infrastructure among Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait be completed, these routes could reduce a portion of dependence on exclusively maritime transport and enhance supply chain flexibility.

Especially after the recent conflict, the diversification of transport routes has become a priority for regional economic actors. The more alternative routes available to merchants, the more resilient trade will be against security risks, maritime disruptions, or increased insurance costs.

Of course, the realization of this objective requires the development of transport infrastructure, customs coordination, transit facilitation, joint investment, and regulatory stability among the three countries.

Overall, the development of Iran-Iraq-Kuwait combined corridors could, while reducing transit time and cost for a portion of goods, increase trade volume, fortify regional supply chains, and elevate Iran's position as a transit hub in the northern Persian Gulf, provided that the necessary technical, financial, and logistical infrastructure is simultaneously developed.



The development of combined land-sea corridors through Iraq could represent one of the most significant future opportunities for regional commerce. Should road, rail, customs, and logistical infrastructure among Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait be completed, these routes could reduce a portion of dependence on exclusively maritime transport and enhance supply chain flexibility. Especially after the recent conflict, the diversification of transport routes has become a priority for regional economic actors.

Advancing Iran-Kuwait trade in post-war era

From crisis management to strategic partnership

By Arash Nikpay Salakdeh
Vice chairman of the Board, Iran-Kuwait Chamber of Commerce

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

War inevitably imposes substantial economic costs on the region. Yet history has consistently shown that periods following major crises also create unique opportunities to redefine supply chains, attract investment, and reshape economic cooperation. Across the world, post-crisis environments have often become catalysts for rebuilding stronger commercial relationships and establishing long-term strategic partnerships.

Iran and Kuwait, owing to their geographical proximity, cultural affinities, and complementary economic interests, are well positioned to become one of the region's most successful models of post-war economic cooperation. As regional tensions gradually ease and stability begins to return to the shipping lanes of the Persian Gulf, the private sectors of both countries have a valuable opportunity to play a more prominent role in expanding bilateral trade, while continuing to account for geopolitical risks in their long-term business strategies.

1. Moving beyond traditional trade toward strategic economic partnership: Trade relations between Iran and Kuwait should no longer be confined to conventional exports and imports. The future framework of cooperation should be built upon three strategic pillars:

- Joint investment
- Technology transfer
- Development of regional value chains

As Kuwait continues its efforts to diversify its economy beyond hydrocarbons, Iran offers extensive industrial, mining, agricultural, and human capital capabilities. These comparative advantages are highly complementary and provide a strong foundation for sustainable economic collaboration.

2. Iran is Kuwait's closest and most reliable regional supply partner: One of the most important lessons of recent regional conflicts has been the vulnerability of extended global supply chains. For the Kuwaiti market,



● AXEL RANGEL GARCIA/AL MAJALLA

Iran has the potential to become one of the region's most dependable sourcing partners because:

- Transportation distances are significantly shorter.
- Logistics costs are considerably lower than many competing suppliers.
- Faster delivery times are achievable.
- Supply disruption risks can be substantially reduced.

At a time when many international suppliers continue to face elevated maritime freight and insurance costs, Iran's geographical advantage represents a strategic competitive asset.

3. Five strategic sectors for bilateral cooperation: The new phase of economic cooperation should extend well beyond traditional commodity trade. The most promising sectors include:

- Steel and metal industries
- Construction materials and infrastructure equipment
- Food processing and agricultural products
- Oil, gas, and petrochemical equipment
- Engineering and technical services

Iranian companies have accumulated significant experience in executing large-scale industrial projects over the past decades and are well positioned to serve as reliable partners in Kuwait's future development initiatives.

4. Establishing a joint logistics

hub: One of the most strategic initiatives would be the establishment of a joint Iran-Kuwait logistics hub. Such a facility could provide:

- Warehousing
- Repackaging and value-added logistics
- Regional distribution
- Re-export services to other Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets

A shared logistics platform would significantly reduce trade costs, improve operational efficiency, and shorten delivery times across the region.

5. Empowering the private sector: While governments create the regulatory framework for economic cooperation, the private sector remains the principal engine of sustainable trade growth. Chambers of commerce should play a more proactive role by:

- Organizing trade missions
- Promoting investment opportunities
- Facilitating commercial dispute resolution
- Providing training on Kuwaiti market standards and regulations
- Developing verified databases of qualified manufacturers and exporters

6. Expanding financial cooperation: Banking and financial constraints remain among the most significant obstacles to bilateral

trade. Potential solutions include:

- Greater use of local currencies in trade settlements
- Barter arrangements
- Establishment of joint investment funds
- Utilization of regional intermediary banks
- Development of innovative trade finance instruments

Without modern and efficient financial infrastructure, sustainable growth in bilateral trade will remain difficult to achieve.

7. Quality and standards are the gateway to the Kuwaiti market: Kuwait is a sophisticated and highly competitive market. Iranian exporters must shift their focus from simply selling products to delivering comprehensive business solutions. Compliance with international standards, independent third-party inspections, reliable after-sales services, professional packaging, and timely delivery will increasingly determine long-term success in the Kuwaiti market.

8. Economic diplomacy is more important than ever: In the post-war environment, competition extends beyond economics — it is fundamentally a competition for trust. Countries capable of consistently demonstrating reliability in product delivery, contractual performance, and long-term cooperation will secure a greater share of regional markets. Accordingly, economic

diplomacy must evolve alongside political diplomacy, with the private sector serving as its operational driving force.

The post-war era represents far more than the end of a crisis; it marks the beginning of a new competition to shape the region's economic future.

Iran and Kuwait possess the potential to elevate their bilateral commercial relationship from traditional trade to a comprehensive strategic partnership. Achieving this objective will require mutual trust, policy stability, enhanced logistics infrastructure, more efficient financial mechanisms, and active participation from the private sector.

As vice chairman of the Iran-Kuwait Chamber of Commerce, I firmly believe that the future of economic relations between our two countries should not depend on the complete elimination of regional risks. Rather, it should be built upon the intelligent and timely utilization of post-crisis opportunities. The sooner we establish a resilient network of industrial cooperation, commercial partnerships, and joint investments, the greater our collective share of regional and international markets will become.



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An aerial view of Kuwait City and its famous Kuwait Towers
● AL MAJALLA

Iran volleyball chief shrugs off VNL struggles, throws support behind Piazza

Sports Desk

Iran Volleyball Federation president Milad Taqavi has downplayed the national team's disappointing Volleyball Nations League (VNL) campaign, insisting the competition has never been the federation's primary target while firmly rejecting speculation over the future of Italian head coach Roberto Piazza.

Piazza's side endured an underwhelming preliminary phase at the annual global showpiece, suffering nine defeats in 12 matches to finish 14th in the 18-team standings and miss out on the VNL Finals for a fourth successive year. However, speaking to Iranian state television on Friday, Taqavi said the VNL should be viewed as part of Iran's long-term development rather than a benchmark for success.

"The Volleyball Nations League has never been our ultimate goal in any year," Taqavi said. "It has always been a pathway toward achieving bigger objectives."

Responding to criticism that Iran entered the tournament with limited preparation, Taqavi defended the team's schedule, noting that many of the world's top teams also had minimal warm-up matches before the VNL. "Some people ask why the national team did not play more friendlies. We played one warm-up match against Brazil. Japan, which won all 12 of its matches, did not play any friendlies.



Iranian opposite Ali Hajipour hits a spike during a Volleyball Nations League game against France in Orléans, France, on June 24, 2026.

● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

Apart from Poland and Ukraine, almost every team, like us, only played one or two preparation matches," he said.

Taqavi nevertheless acknowledged the need to assess the team's performance and revealed that the federation would hold an expert review session next week with analysts and media representatives to examine the reasons be-

hind Iran's disappointing results.

The federation president also sought to end speculation surrounding Piazza's future after reports suggested the Italian could be replaced by a domestic coach ahead of the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship, which will kick off on September 4 in Fukuoka.

Taqavi ruled out any change to the

coaching staff before the continental tournament, stressing that Iran would compete under Piazza's guidance.

"I want to be completely clear on this matter," he said. "There are less than two months until the Asian Championship, and naturally we cannot bring in another foreign coach in such a short period. The process of negotiating and

signing a new head coach is simply not possible within this timeframe."

Taqavi said Piazza's current contract runs until the end of the 2026 season and that the federation would evaluate his performance after the Asian Championship before making a final decision on the next phase of the partnership.

"Our plan is to continue working with Piazza through 2028," he said.

He also dismissed calls to appoint an Iranian coach, arguing that changing the coaching staff so close to a major tournament would only create unnecessary instability.

"What is the point of replacing the head coach less than two months before the Asian Championship, when the team needs calm and should stay away from crisis?" Taqavi said. "I can say with certainty that Iran's national team will not compete at the event under an Iranian head coach."

As if Iran needed any extra motivation to chase a third Asian title in four editions and avenge its defeat to Japan in the 2023 final on home soil, an Olympic quota place will also be at stake in Fukuoka, with the champion securing direct qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

Asian Youth Chess Championships:

Iranians round off with eight medals

Sports Desk

Iran enjoyed a prolific campaign at the 28th Asian Youth Chess Championships, collecting eight medals across different events in Shenzhen, China.

Young prodigy Ramtin Kavand spearheaded Iran's medal haul in the 11-day tournament by claiming gold in the boys' under-14 standard event.

A gold medalist at last December's FIDE U9-U17 Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships, the FIDE Master shared the spoils with Sri Lankan Candidate Master

Vinuka Dihain Wijerathna in his final-round match to finish atop the standings with 6.5 points.

Elsewhere in the standard competition, Candidate Master Arshia Alaqehmand settled for silver in the boys' under-16 event after finishing level on seven points with Russian FIDE Master Semyon Puzyrevsky, who edged the Iranian on tie-breaks.

Asal Ebrahimi Rashti and Mahsa Alavi also contributed to Iran's haul by winning two silver medals apiece in the girls' competitions. Ebrahimi finished run-

ner-up to China's Tong Yi in the under-16 standard event after both players concluded with 7.5 points. She then collected the blitz silver with seven points, finishing behind Russia's Alisa Genrietta Yunker (7.5).

Alavi, meanwhile, claimed silver in the girls' under-18 standard event with 6.5 points before repeating the feat in the rapid competition.

Erfan Ahmadi and Bentia Garoosi added two bronze medals to Iran's tally in the boys' under-18 standard and girls' under-10 blitz events, respectively.

Ahmadi finished third in a tightly contested standard event, where the top four players all scored 6.5 points after nine rounds. Garoosi, meanwhile, posted seven points in the blitz competition to finish behind China's Du Mingcheng and Vietnam's Nguyen Vu Bao Chau, who both collected eight points after nine rounds.



Iranian players pose with their medals at the 28th Asian Youth Chess Championships in Shenzhen, China, on July 25, 2026.

● ISNA



Iran looking to retain Greco-Roman dominance at U17 Worlds

Sports Desk

Iran will chase a fifth successive Greco-Roman team title when the U17 Wrestling World Championships get underway in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Sunday.

Armin Esmaili and Ali Esmaili Leivesi will represent the country in the 45kg and 48kg weight classes, respectively, entering the competition on the back of their gold medal-winning campaigns at May's U17 Asian Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam.

Ahmad Badraddini, who missed out on a podium finish at the Asian event, will look to deliver an improved performance in the 51kg division, while Vahid Ashiri will be among the favorites in the 55kg class after also claiming gold in Da Nang.

Amirreza Tahmasbpour (60kg), Amirreza Mehri (92kg), and Ali-Akbar Akou (110kg) are the

other Asian champions in the Iranian squad, with Armin Qoli Galeh (65kg), Asian silver medalist Esmail Zaherdoust (71kg), and Alireza Rezaei (80kg) completing the 10-man roster in the

Azerbaijani capital.

Speaking to the Iran Wrestling Federation's media office ahead of the team's departure, head coach Mohsen Sourian said the squad was traveling to Azerbai-

jan with the sole objective of defending its world title, adding that both the coaching staff and wrestlers had made the most of the last four training camps despite several preparation

programs being canceled due to the wartime conditions in the country.

"We have stood on the top podium for the past four years, and this year our goal remains the same – to defend those titles," said Sourian, who is in his fifth year at the helm of the Iranian squad.

The coach, however, acknowledged the difficulties encountered during the buildup to the tournament.

"Unfortunately, this year, due to the war, we lost a couple of warm-up events, including the Victory Cup in Turkey, as well as a number of training camps," Sourian said. "Nevertheless, our results at the Asian Championships showed that the national team members are in good form."

"After the Asian Championships, we held four camps at the national team training complex.

The conditions were excellent across the board – nutrition, welfare facilities, and all other provisions were fully covered. We did everything in our power to bring the boys as close to full readiness as possible."

Sourian also cautioned that this year's World Championships would be more competitive than previous editions, citing the host nation's pedigree and the return of formidable opponents.

"This year's tournament is tougher, not only because of Azerbaijan's history of world titles but also due to the presence of Russia and Belarus, whose points will count toward the team standings," he said.

Despite the challenges, the head coach expressed unwavering confidence in his squad.

"We are the world champion team, and the best possible conditions have been provided for the boys," the Iranian said.



● IAWFIR

Shiraz’s historic area preserves living heritage of Iranian civilization

Iranica Desk

Shiraz, the city of poetry, culture, and civilization, is widely celebrated for its Persian gardens, the mausoleums of renowned poets, and magnificent historical monuments. Yet one of the city’s defining treasures is its historic urban fabric — a remarkable ensemble of centuries-old neighborhoods, traditional houses, bazaars, mosques, alleyways, and public spaces that reflect centuries of Iranian culture, architecture, and urban life.

The inclusion of Shiraz’s historic district on Iran’s National Heritage List in July last year marked a major step toward safeguarding this valuable legacy. The designation has strengthened efforts to preserve the city’s historical identity while creating new opportunities for cultural tourism and improving living conditions in its historic neighborhoods, IRNA wrote.

Covering approximately 357 hectares, the historic district of Shiraz is among the largest and most significant historic urban areas in Iran. It encompasses traditional Persian houses, bustling bazaars, mosques,



● payamema.ir

religious schools, Tekyehs (traditional religious gathering places), and numerous monuments of architectural and historical importance, making it one of the country’s finest examples of Iran’s urban heritage.

Walking through its narrow lanes offers visitors a glimpse into the sophistication of traditional Persian architecture. Entrance vestibules, central courtyards, turquoise pools, colorful Orsi stained-glass windows, elegant five-door reception rooms, and thoughtfully designed living spaces demonstrate a harmoni-

ous blend of beauty, comfort, and climate-responsive design. Together, these features have transformed the historic fabric into a living museum where daily life continues alongside centuries of history.

National registration has also created a stronger legal framework for protecting historic buildings and organizing conservation and restoration programs. In addition to preserving Shiraz’s architectural authenticity, the designation is expected to encourage investment, expand cultural activities, and



● entekhab.ir

stimulate tourism.

Heritage experts believe closer cooperation among government agencies, conservation specialists, and local communities can open a new chapter in the revitalization of Shiraz’s historic quarters. Providing financial assistance to owners of historic houses, facilitating restoration permits, improving urban infrastructure, and simplifying administrative procedures could further encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings.

In recent years, growing atten-

tion has also been given to the economic potential of the historic district. The establishment of eco-lodges, cultural houses, traditional cafés, handicrafts centers, and tourism-oriented businesses has helped preserve historic buildings while creating new opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and local economic development.

Experiences from historic cities around the world demonstrate that investment in cultural heritage is among the most sustainable paths toward long-term economic and social development.

Public participation also remains one of the most important factors in protecting the historic section. When local residents see themselves as custodians of their cultural heritage, conservation efforts become more effective and sustainable. Public awareness, education, and community engagement can help ensure that this national treasure is preserved for future generations.

With its remarkable collection of historic monuments, authentic architecture, traditional neighborhoods, local customs, and the renowned hospitality of its residents, Shiraz possesses all the qualities needed to become one of the region’s leading destinations for cultural tourism.

Today, more than ever, cooperation among the government, municipal authorities, the private sector, and local communities offers an opportunity to transform Shiraz’s historic segment into a successful model of heritage conservation, urban revitalization, and sustainable development — one in which a proud past serves as the foundation for a brighter future and the city’s rich cultural identity is passed on to generations to come.

Bakhtiari Chogha carries heritage, identity in Aligudarz



● yjc.ir

Iranica Desk

The traditional Chogha of Aligudarz, Lorestan Province, is more than a garment; it is a symbol of strength, identity and the cultural heritage of the region, according to a provincial cultural heritage official.

Speaking to ISNA, Sajjad Alikhani, deputy director for

handicrafts and traditional arts at Lorestan’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said the Chogha represents a “cultural genetic code” for the people of Aligudarz.

“The black and white stripes of this authentic handicraft symbolize the purity and resilience of the people of this land,” he said, adding that every knot

woven into a Chogha helps preserve the nation’s cultural identity in the foothills of the Oshtorankuh Mountains.

Alikhani said the department has secured funding under Note 15 of the national budget to provide financial assistance to handicraft artisans in Aligudarz following the difficult conditions of recent months.

He described the allocation as an important step toward creating sustainable employment and supporting the development of the traditional Chogha-weaving industry in the district.

The official also stressed the need to promote the craft as an international brand, saying expanded training programs and financial support would help introduce the centuries-old tradition to wider global audiences.

Alikhani noted that Lorestan’s handicrafts, from delicate artistic creations to the enduring

tradition of Bakhtiari Chogha weaving, reflect the inseparable link between art, livelihoods and the dignity of local families.

He said the craft has survived even the most challenging circumstances and continues to thrive through the determination and dedication of the province’s artisans.

A Chogha is a traditional long-sleeved, open-fronted robe worn as an outer garment. It is typically loose-fitting and extends to the knees or hips, providing warmth while also reflecting the cultural identity and traditional aesthetics of the Bakhtiari people.

Chogha is woven on a traditional loom. The garment is produced without a pre-made pattern, template or design; instead, its distinctive patterns and dimensions are created from the weaver’s memory and experience.

A medium-sized Chogha re-



● chtn.ir

quires approximately one kilogram of cotton yarn and one kilogram of raw wool.

For the Bakhtiari people, the Chogha holds great cultural and emotional significance. When someone dies, tribal men traditionally remove their Chogha as a sign of grief. They also wear Choghas at weddings and perform the traditional Bakhtiari

dance while holding handkerchiefs.

The cultural importance and authenticity of Chogha weaving are also reflected in Bakhtiari oral literature, where references to the craft highlight its longstanding place in the community’s cultural heritage and the importance attached to preserving this traditional art.

Emergency restoration begins on roof of Shahrud Bazaar

Iranica Desk

The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Shahrud, Semnan Province, has announced the signing of a contract for emergency restoration work on the roof of the city’s historic bazaar to help safeguard the valuable monument.

Seyyed Mohammad Sadeq Razavian said the current phase of the project includes repairing the brick paving on the roof, repointing mortar joints, and carrying out other essential conservation measures to prevent water penetration and minimize the risk of further damage, ISNAwrote.

He noted that the Shahrud Ba-

zaar, one of the city’s most significant Qajar-era landmarks, is registered on Iran’s National Heritage List. Preserving its authenticity and structural integrity, he said, remains a priority for the local cultural heritage office.

Razavian added that the bazaar has undergone several restoration campaigns since 2011. Major conservation work has included comprehensive roof repairs, repaving the market’s walkways with stone, upgrading and reorganizing water, electricity and gas connections for commercial units, and installing a surface water drainage system throughout the bazaar.

He said restoration efforts will

continue to strengthen the structure, improve the business environment for shopkeepers, and provide a more welcoming setting for visitors.

He added that the project will be closely supervised to ensure the long-term protection of the nationally registered monument.

The historic Shahrud Bazaar, one of the city’s most distinctive Qajar-era landmarks, stands at the heart of Shahrud. Designed to suit the region’s hot, arid climate, the covered structure features an ingenious roof system along with brick and mud-brick domes that help reduce heat and maintain a cooler interior. Much of the structure was originally built



● wikimedia.org

with sun-dried mud bricks, reflecting traditional construction techniques adapted to the desert environment.

The bazaar has five entrances and two main passageways known as the Bazaar and Anarakis corridors. Beyond its rows of shops, the complex also includes a mosque, caravanse-rai, school, water reservoir, and bathhouse, illustrating its historic role as the commercial and social heart of the city.

Covering approximately 18,000 square metres, the Shahrud Bazaar comprises two interconnected sections containing a total of around 250 shops. As one of the province’s most important historic marketplaces, it continues to serve both local merchants and visitors while preserving its architectural and cultural significance.



Akbar Abdi leaves legacy of a 'thousand faces'



By Hamideh Hosseini
Staff writer

FEATURE REPORT

For more than four decades, Akbar Abdi could walk into a scene for a laugh and leave it with tears. He was a comedian who rarely settled for being merely funny. Behind the elastic face, flawless timing, and fearless physical comedy stood an actor capable of disappearing into almost anyone, a mischievous child, a grieving son, a bewildered dreamer, a village cleric, an aging woman, or an ordinary man caught in extraordinary circumstances.

Abdi, one of Iran's most beloved actors of cinema, television, and theater, died of cardiac arrest on July 24 at the age of 66 after months of illness. While the news of his death quickly spread across the country, what followed spoke just as loudly: An outpouring of tributes that painted the portrait of an artist many believed could never truly be replaced.

For generations of Iranians, Abdi was never simply a movie star. He was "Uncle Akbar," a familiar face who slipped effortlessly into family memories through television screens and movie theaters. His performances outlived the films themselves, becoming part of the country's shared cultural vocabulary.

His journey began on television in the early 1980s, where 'I Came Late to the School Again' turned him into a household name. Cinema soon followed with 'The Great Scuffle,' but it was his collaborations with some of Iran's most celebrated filmmakers that revealed the remarkable breadth of his talent.

Whether playing Qandi in Dariush Mehrjui's classic 'The Tenants,' the unforgettable Gholamreza in Ali Hatami's masterpiece 'Mother,' or the unforgettable lead in 'Snowman,' Abdi resisted typecasting even while becoming Iran's undisputed king of comedy. He could ignite laughter with the smallest gesture before quietly steering audiences toward heartbreak.

His extraordinary command of makeup and body language made transformation seem effortless. Long before physical metamorphosis became fashionable in modern cinema, Abdi was redefining it. In 'Snowman,' his daring cross-gender performance became one of the most discussed roles in Iranian film history. Years later, he once again vanished beneath layers of makeup in Reza Attaran's 'I'm Sleepy,' portraying an elderly woman with astonishing conviction, earning his second Crystal Simorgh at the Fajr Film Festival. Yet his greatest gift was never disguise. It was humanity.

Every character, no matter how eccentric, carried recognizable hopes, fears, and vulnerabilities. Comedy, in Abdi's hands, was never an escape from reality; it was another way of revealing it. His humor grew out of ordinary Iranian life, allowing audiences to laugh at themselves without losing sight of their dignity.

Directors repeatedly turned to him not only because he could make audiences laugh but because he could shift the emotional rhythm of a film in an instant. Few actors moved so naturally between broad comedy and deeply affecting drama. That rare versatility earned him the nickname that resurfaced across social media after his passing:

"the man of a thousand faces."

A nation remembers

Within hours of his death, messages flooded social media from nearly every generation of Iranian artists. The same words appeared again and again: "genius," "irreplaceable," and "Uncle Akbar."

Actress Fatemeh Motamed-Arya remembered him as "a good friend, a noble human being, and a genius actor." Navid Mohammadzadeh called him "a phenomenon that will never be repeated," while Tahmineh Milani described him as "an actor of a thousand roles."

Several tributes carried a note of regret alongside grief.

Actor Yousef Teymouri wrote, "We were late in appreciating you," calling Abdi the greatest comedian in Iranian cinema and saying today's actors remain students of his craft. Sahar Dolatshahi echoed a similar sentiment, writing, "I wish our cinema had fully recognized your genius."

Others chose to remember the man behind the performances. Veteran actor Jamshid Hashempour mourned the loss of "a loyal friend," saying Iranian cinema had become "friendless." Mehran Ghafourian admitted he could scarcely believe the passing of "the kindest and most talented actor" he had known.

The official response reflected the breadth of Abdi's cultural stature.

President Masoud Pezeshkian described him as "one of the enduring pillars of Iran's culture and arts," saying his performances had become part of the nation's collective memory while bringing "smiles and hope" to generations of Iranians.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Abdi "brought the sweetness of genuine art into people's homes," praising the honesty and simplicity that made him a lasting presence in the country's cultural memory. Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei called his work "a valuable legacy" for Iranian cinema, saying his ability to express people's concerns through humor would endure for generations.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Abdi's performances in films such as 'Mother,' 'The Tenants,' 'Snowman,' and 'O Iran' secured him "an enduring place in the history of Iranian cinema." Abdi received two Crystal Simorgh awards during his career, for 'Mother' and 'I'm Sleepy,' but awards tell only part of his story. His greatest achievement was something less tangible: He belonged equally to art-house masterpieces and box-office hits, to children discovering him on television and adults revisiting his films decades later.

His funeral will be held on July 26 at Tehran's Vahdat Hall before his burial in the Artists' Section of Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.

The curtain has fallen on one of Iranian cinema's most extraordinary performers. But like the countless characters he brought to life, Akbar Abdi leaves behind something that refuses to fade. Somewhere between laughter and tears, his thousand faces will continue to look back at generations of audiences.



The combo image shows veteran Iranian actor Akbar Abdi portraying dozens of characters throughout his career.



Iran cinemas draw record crowds in year's biggest weekly box office hit

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's movie theaters welcomed a record 363,320 moviegoers nationwide between July 18 and July 24, marking the strongest week of the year and a 78% surge from the previous week.

The nationwide box office generated 513.58 billion rials or about \$269,600 during the seven-day period, as audiences flocked to domestic productions, setting a new annual attendance record and surpassing the previous high of 297,000 admissions recorded between May 23 and May 29.

Soroush Sehat's 'The Pool' dominated the weekly chart with 150,838 admissions, followed closely by Kazem Daneshi's 'The Death Bath,' which attracted 137,827 viewers. Bahman Goodarzi's family adventure 'James Bond Island' ranked



third with 29,049 admissions, while Ali Behrad's 'Tehran Another View' and Hadi Naeiji's 'Antique' completed the week's top five with 7,926 and 7,524 viewers, respectively. Among exhibition venues, Kourosh Cineplex in Tehran retained its position as the country's busiest cinema, drawing 27,034 patrons. It was followed by Iran Mall Cineplex with 20,560 admissions, Hedish Cineplex with 11,377, Azadi Cineplex with 10,656, and Eco Mall Cineplex in Karaj with 8,870 moviegoers.

Iran, Azerbaijan set to revive joint cultural weeks after wartime hiatus

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran will press ahead with plans to revive joint cultural weeks with the Republic of Azerbaijan after wartime disruptions delayed bilateral programs, Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi said on Saturday in Ardabil, describing the two neighbors' shared civilizational heritage as the foundation for deeper cultural engagement.

Salehi said Tehran and Baku were moving to translate recent high-level agreements into practical cultural exchanges, pointing to a newly drafted cultural exchange program and

media cooperation accords reached following the two presidents' meetings.

"Historical, civilizational and linguistic bonds between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan provide the roadmap for stronger relations between our governments and peoples," he said. "These capacities must be put to use through careful planning."

He said preparations to bring back the countries' joint cultural weeks were being pursued "seriously" after several initiatives were postponed because of the war, signaling a renewed push for cultural diplomacy between the

neighboring states.

Salehi said the recently drafted framework for cultural exchanges and bilateral media agreements had opened "significant opportunities" to expand people-to-people contacts and deepen official cooperation. Beyond the international agenda, the minister announced a three-year co-operation agreement with Ardabil Province covering cultural, artistic, media and religious affairs.

He described the accord as a practical blueprint for coordinating national cultural programs with the northwestern province, whose close linguistic and

historical links with the Republic of Azerbaijan have long made it a gateway for cross-border cultural interaction.

Salehi also welcomed the launch of Ardabil's first Provincial Cinema Council, saying greater investment in creative content and cultural infrastructure would help strengthen the province's artistic landscape.

The minister is visiting Ardabil on July 24-25 to inaugurate cultural and arts centers and take part in events marking Ardabil Week, a program showcasing the province's historical heritage and cultural identity.