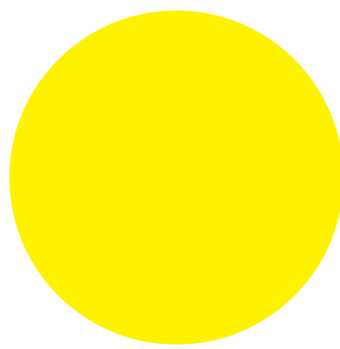


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Iran's possible military cooperation with Russia does not make it party to Ukraine war

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Ukraine recently attacked an Iranian vessel in the Caspian Sea, claiming it was carrying weapons to Russia. Kiev had earlier repeatedly accused Iran of supplying drones to Russia – allegations that have formed the basis for some European sanctions against the Islamic Republic. Ukraine has also claimed that Russia provided Iran with satellite intelligence on US bases in the region during the Iran-US war. In an interview



with Iran Daily, international affairs expert Ebrahim Pourvahedi said Ukraine has presented no conclusive evidence of Iranian military assistance to Russia. Besides, Tehran and Moscow, as strategic partners, are entitled to exchange conventional weapons under bilateral agreements and such transactions do not amount to participation in any particular war. He also said the recent developments could be seen as the US effort to use Ukraine as a tool to expand the scope of its confrontation with Iran.

How do you assess Ukraine's claim that Iran has transferred weapons to Russia? Should the new claims be seen as a continuation of the same political and media campaign to link Iran to the war in Ukraine and

justify pressure and sanctions against Tehran?

The claims made by Ukraine and some European countries regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's provision of military assistance to Russia are not new. In fact, these allegations can be analyzed as part of an effort to create an imaginary and fictitious front against Ukraine and the interests of Western countries, with the aim of deflecting attention from and covering up the failures and setbacks suffered by these countries in their confrontation with Russia.

Moreover, no conclusive evidence of cooperation between Iran and Russia, particularly in the area of military assistance, has so far been presented. Setting aside the political and unsubstantiated aspects of these claims, Russia and Iran, as strategic allies, can, like any other countries, purchase or exchange conventional weapons within the framework of bilateral understandings. This does not mean participation in a specific war.

Ukraine has also claimed that Russia provided Iran with satellite intelligence on US bases during the recent war. Can these claims be seen as serving the political purpose of linking the Iran-US conflict to the war in Ukraine?

Ukraine has in recent years become a tool for the United States and its Western allies in pursuing certain extra-regional adventures. In fact, Ukraine can be regarded as a victim and a low-cost instrument for Western governments, led by the

United States, to exert pressure on the East.

Naturally, the Americans would be interested in using this tool to expand the scope of their confrontation with Iran and, by assigning a role to Ukraine, ramp up the pressure on the Islamic Republic and countries aligned with it. The claims made by Ukraine, including the allegation that Russia helped provide satellite intelligence to Iran during the US war against Iran, can naturally be viewed within this framework and as a sign of the Americans' mounting failures in their futile war against Iran.

In fact, assigning Ukraine a role in pressuring and accusing Iran can be assessed as one of the Americans' attempts to get out of the quagmire of their war with Iran. Other examples of this had previously been seen, including Zelensky's visits to Arab countries to establish air defense systems during the Ramadan war.

Can Ukraine's attack on the Iranian vessel be seen as part of an effort by the United States and its allies to expand the scope of their confrontation with Iran and open up new fronts, including in the north?

Yes, that is the case. The United States' failure to achieve its objectives in the war with Iran, along with mounting pressure on Trump and the US administration to end the costly war with Iran, has forced them to draw on all available means, including expanding the scope of the conflict.

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مزایده صادراتی بیلت آلیاژی ریخته گری مداوم

شرکت فولاد آلیاژی ایران

شماره مرجع مزایده: IASCO-EXPT1405-05 مورخ: ۱۴۰۵/۰۵/۰۴



شرکت فولاد آلیاژی ایران (IASCO) در نظر دارد نسبت به فروش بیلت آلیاژی صادراتی در گرید منتخب و مطابق مشخصات ذیل از طریق برگزاری مزایده عمومی اقدام نماید. از علاقمندان به شرکت در مزایده مزبور دعوت به عمل می آید که از تاریخ ۱۴۰۵/۰۵/۰۴ لغایت ۱۴۰۵/۰۵/۱۲ برای دریافت اسناد مزایده و اطلاعات تکمیلی با واحد صادرات به شماره تماس های ۰۲۱-۹۸۳۵۰۳۱۲۲۶۷۵ و نشانی ایمیل Salesexp@iasco.net تماس حاصل فرمایند. مهلت ارائه پیشنهاد قیمت مزایده یادشده حداکثر ساعت ۱۴:۰۰ به وقت جمهوری اسلامی ایران، روز دوشنبه مورخ ۱۴۰۵/۰۵/۱۲ می باشد.

Iran Alloy Steel Company
Tender Announcement for Export of CC-Alloy Steel Billet
Tender Ref. No.: IASCO-EXPT1405-05 Date: 07/26/2026

Please be informed that **Iran Alloy Steel Company (IASCO)** intends to conduct a public Tender for the export of **CC-Alloy Steel Billet** under the following terms and conditions:

1. Product Specifications and Commercial terms:

Main Tender Grades & Quality	Acc. to attached specification No.
94031	C07KU9403140411A042

* Other Grades may also be considered By Customer Request with related premium price. (Please clearly specify the desired grade, analysis and etc.)

- **Size & Dimensions:** (130*130) * 12,000 mm.
- **Quantity:** 25.000 MT (±10%).
- **Delivery Time:** approximately 15 days from the date of receipt of advance payment and bank confirmation thereof.
- **Delivery Term:** FOB Bandar Abbas.

Note: Other delivery ports including BIK, Parsian and Chabahar may be considered upon buyer's request, subject to amended delivery time and mutual agreement.

2. Tender General Conditions:

- a. The offer must remain valid for at least **seven (7) working days in Iran** from the submission deadline.
- b. Vague, conditional or incomplete offers will not be considered.
- c. The buyer's company must be legally registered outside the Islamic Republic of IRAN.
- d. IASCO reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to accept, reject, negotiate, or cancel any or all offers without assigning any reason or incurring any liability.
- e. All payments shall be deemed valid only upon the Seller's receipt of official bank confirmation.
- f. Submission of offer implies full acceptance of all tender terms and conditions.

3. Offer Submission:

For instructions and further information, kindly contact the Export Department using the following details:

Tel: +9835-31222675 & +9821-88322621.

Email: Salesexp@iasco.net (For registration only, not to send any offer).

4. Closing Date:

Deadline for Offer Submission: Monday, Aug 03, 2026 - by 2:00 p.m. (Tehran Local Time)

FM spox: Progress made in Oman talks on Strait of Hormuz governance



International Desk

Iran says talks held with Oman over safe shipping through the Strait of Hormuz made good progress, but no change has been made in the status of transit through the strategic waterway. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Saturday that several

rounds of negotiations were held in Tehran on Friday and Saturday between Iranian and Omani deputy foreign ministers. "The two sides discussed shared principles and operational mechanisms for ensuring the safe transit of shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, while honoring the sovereign rights of the two coastal

nations," Baqaei said. "The discussions were productive, and advancements were achieved," he said, adding that the Omani delegation departed Tehran on Saturday afternoon, while "technical and political discussions between both parties will carry on." Baqaei also stated that currently, there



Women swim as commercial vessels are anchored in the Strait of Hormuz on July 12, 2026.

● ISNA

is no alteration in the condition of shipping via the Strait of Hormuz.

The United States has breached the Pakistan-brokered memorandum of understanding (MoU) of June 17 by trying to carry out unauthorized naval maneuvers in the Strait of Hormuz, leading the Iranian Navy to intercept the ships to uphold the agreement.

On Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that the existing instability in the Strait of Hormuz and the surrounding area is entirely due to the United States' violation of its commitments and its disruption of the fulfillment of Iran's responsibilities under Clause 5 of the MoU.

Iran has drafted a plan to charge environmental fees for vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's Department of Environment said it has drafted regulations to collect environmental service fees and compensation for environmental damage in the Strait of Hormuz and has submitted the proposal to the government for approval.

The agency said environmental damage caused by the annual passage of more than 50,000 ships and oil tankers through the strait, along with their

contribution to pollution in the Persian Gulf, should be compensated. It said the proposed regulations are consistent with the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The United States and its allies said imposing any such charges would violate the principle of freedom of navigation in international waters.

Iran, however, maintains that the Strait of Hormuz is not international waters but consists of the territorial waters of Iran and Oman, and says charging fees to transiting vessels is permitted under international law.

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.

It began exercising far stricter controls after US President 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.

Mediation efforts resume to bring Iran, US back to negotiating table

International Desk

Mediation efforts have reportedly continued to bring Iran and the United States back to the negotiating table as a recent lull in fighting has revived hopes of a return to talks after nearly two weeks of exchange of fire between the two sides.

According to AP, a regional official involved in the mediation efforts said that concerted diplomacy was underway and that a pause in US strikes and Iranian counterstrikes on neighboring countries hosting American forces was a "positive signal that helps their efforts to de-escalate."

The official said that both the US and Iran want to return to the interim ceasefire deal and that a compromise, which is being negotiated now, centers around having Iran run vessel transit through the Strait of Hormuz with fewer restrictions on ships. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Iran said on Sunday it has halted retaliatory attacks against US after Washington stopped its strikes on the country for the past two nights.



Pakistani security personnel stand guard outside the Jinnah Convention Center, where international media have gathered to cover talks between US and Iranian officials, taking place in the nearby Serena Hotel in Islamabad on April 11, 2026.

● GETTY IMAGES

"These attacks continued until two nights ago, but over the past two nights the Americans have stopped their attacks," said Army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia on Sunday.

"Since... our strategy has essentially been retaliatory, we have also halted our retaliatory operations." The Iranian declaration came after reports emerged that concerns over dwindling US munitions were restraining plans for further escalation.

But the recent lull has revived hopes of a return to negotiations after nearly two weeks of consecutive nightly US bombardments and Iran's retaliatory attacks, although US media reported the pause could also reflect pressure on stockpiles of Patriot interceptors and other defensive weapons.

Plans to escalate the campaign

have been shelved in part because of those shrinking supplies, The New York Times reported, citing two people briefed on the matter. Trump also faces the risk of a wider war, the estrangement of vulnerable Persian Gulf allies and further shocks to the global economy, the newspaper said.

Vice President JD Vance and top US general Dan Caine both raised concerns about escalation at a White House meeting on Friday, CNN reported.

Iran's Army warned on Sunday that the war would widen even further if the US chose to restart its attacks, ahead of a visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington on Tuesday. Trump said on Friday he had not decided whether to return to an all-out operation.

"We're talking to them right now. I think they're getting more and more serious," he told journalists.

Tehran vows response to Ukraine's attack on Iranian commercial ship

International Desk

Deputy Speaker of Iran's Parliament Ali Nikzad described Ukraine's military attack on an Iranian commercial vessel in the Caspian Sea as a "reckless action," saying that Kiev's move will not go unanswered.

Speaking during a parliament session on Sunday, Nikzad said that Iran will always exercise its legal right to defend its territorial integrity, warning that any location used as an origin for aggression against Iran will be a legitimate target for the country's armed forces.

The warning came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that Kiev had carried out long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea against vessels involved in transporting military cargo involving Iran, as well as a warship.

Ukraine's intelligence services (SBU), for their part, claimed that drone attacks had been carried out against "cargo vessels under international sanctions that were used to transport military cargo between Iran and Russia." Iran's Foreign Ministry on Saturday condemned Ukraine, saying that the attack on Saturday morning caused the ship "to explode, killing one sailor and injuring others." It also summoned Ukraine's chargé d'affaires in Tehran to protest the "hostile and criminal" attack.

The ministry said in a statement that the attack reflected Kiev's continued "irrational and hostile approach" towards Iran, asserting that the Islamic Republic will defend its national interests.



● IRNA

It described the attack as a violation of Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter and "an act of aggression" with potential escalatory effects.

"Any party genuinely concerned about peace and security in Eastern Europe and the surrounding regions should adopt a responsible position regarding this dangerous action by the Ukrainian regime and hold Ukraine's ruling authorities accountable for this criminal and provocative act," the statement said.

The ministry also said the Islamic Republic would act in accordance with international law to protect its interests and security.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also in a phone conversation with European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas condemned Ukraine's military attack, calling for a decisive response from the UN Security Council, the European Union, and the international community.

Araghchi urged international bodies to hold "the perpetrators and supporters of this criminal act" accountable.

IRGC cautions Israel, UK against abetting US in anti-Iran war

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) warned the Israeli regime and Britain against aiding and abetting the United States in its criminal war of aggression against Iran.

IRGC spokesman Brigadier General Hossein Mohebi made the remarks on Sunday, two days after the US appeared to pause its deadly aerial assaults on Iran following nearly two weeks of bombings that prompted Iran's firm response, Press TV reported.

He said that Israel seeks to keep the United States engaged in the region by influencing US President Donald Trump and providing misleading information, "using American power to advance its own goals."

"Israel knows what we would do to it if it returns to the war and we concentrate our efforts against it," he added. Mohebi also warned that continued UK support for US B-1 bomber operations could make British airbases legitimate targets.

"Recently, American B-1 bombers operated from British airbases. If they continue to cooperate, they will be considered our certain and legitimate targets. We have a specific scenario prepared for every situation."

For thirteen consecutive nights, the US military conducted waves of air raids on Iran, committing war crimes by targeting civilian sites and killing 55 people.

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces launched heavy reprisal attacks

against strategic American targets across West Asia.

The fresh round of US aggression began after Washington abandoned its obligation under the Islamabad memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tehran, signed on June 18, to end the war.

The United States and the Israeli regime waged their illegal war of aggression against Iran on February 28. However, forty days later, on April 8, the enemies were forced to accept a

ceasefire amid Iran's brave resistance, successful retaliatory operations, and powerful grip on the Strait of Hormuz.

On Saturday, Mohebi said the US death toll following the violation of the MoU has exceeded 200 while the number of those injured is far higher. "The casualty figures reported by the Americans are a sheer lie," he noted. "The American people should not allow their lying commanders to treat them like fools."

Pezeshkian urges int’l action against US strikes on civilian infrastructure

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Sunday called for legal action through competent international organizations and bodies over US attacks on Iran's civilian infrastructure, saying the strikes were a clear violation of international law and amounted to war crimes. According to IRNA, Pezeshkian made the remarks during a visit to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development as part of his field monitoring of government ministries and executive agencies. The condition of the country's transport infrastructure and damage to border terminals, ports, and road and rail networks from the recent war were reviewed at the meeting. The roads minister presented a detailed report on damage caused by US attacks to the country's transport infrastructure, including ports, border terminals, bridges, highways,

the rail network, logistics facilities and other strategic infrastructure. Pezeshkian ordered authorities to accelerate the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, establish alternative transport routes, strengthen the resilience of the transport network and maintain transport services. 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. Attacks on Iran's infrastructure resumed on July 11, following a ceasefire that lasted several weeks, after three vessels were targeted in the Strait of Hormuz. Referring to damage to border terminals, customs facilities and the country's land, rail, maritime and air transport infrastructure, Pezeshkian said the attacks on civilian infrastructure were a clear violation of international law and amount-

ed to war crimes, stressing the need to pursue legal action through competent international organizations and bodies. The president also described expanding regional cooperation and strengthening infrastructure links with neighboring countries as strategic priorities for his administration. Pezeshkian also stressed the need to rebuild and modernize damaged terminals and infrastructure in line with international standards. "We must use this opportunity to build infrastructure that meets the highest global standards in warehousing, logistics, cargo handling, smart management and new technologies, as



this approach will not only improve efficiency and the quality of services but also reduce operating costs and enhance the efficiency of the transportation network."

Vietnam voices readiness to invest in Mazandaran Province

Energy Desk

Vietnam is ready to invest in Iran's northern Mazandaran Province, the provincial governor said on Sunday after meeting Vietnam's ambassador, adding that both sides had reviewed opportunities to expand cooperation in economic, scientific, agricultural and tourism sectors. According to IRNA, Mazandaran's Governor-General Mehdi Younesi Rostami said Vietnamese investors had visited the northern province to examine its economic, commercial and investment potential and explore areas for joint cooperation. He said Mazandaran had strong capabilities in citrus exports, plastic products, white meat production, as well as scientific and academic fields, making it well positioned to expand cooperation with Vietnam. Younesi said both sides agreed that exchanges of trade, tourism and academic delegations could be expanded. "Drawing on Vietnam's experience in improving rice production efficiency and expanding educational and research cooperation was also among the areas agreed upon," Younesi stated. "An assessment of



Vietnamese Ambassador Luong Ngoc Ninh addresses a meeting with officials and private sector representatives in Iran's Mazandaran Province on July 26, 2026. ● IRNA

existing capacities shows the way is open for joint investment and the expansion of economic ties between Mazandaran and Vietnam." Vietnamese Ambassador Luong Ngoc Ninh described Mazandaran's landscape as similar to that of Vietnam and said opportunities existed not only to expand agricultural imports and exports but also to transfer modern agricultural technologies and improve production efficiency. "Vietnam is ready to host trade delegations from Mazandaran, organize online meetings between business communities in the two countries, and expand cooperation in education, tourism and fisheries." During a joint meeting with provincial officials and private sector representatives, the ambassador called for the preparation of a list outlining Mazandaran's commercial capabilities and trade

needs. "Mazandaran's caviar has been well received in the Vietnamese market, and there is potential to expand exports of this product." The ambassador said banking restrictions and problems arising from sanctions remained among the main obstacles to expanding bilateral trade, but added that both sides shared the determination to deepen economic cooperation and could facilitate trade by using new mechanisms. He said Vietnam was one of the world's leading agricultural producers, particularly of rice, and had invested heavily in modern technologies to increase productivity. The ambassador said Vietnam aimed to become one of the world's advanced economies by 2045 and was pursuing broad cooperation with other countries in trade, technology, investment and innovation to achieve that goal.

Vietnam has been one of Asia's fastest-growing economies in recent years, driven by strong exports and foreign investment. Vietnam's economy expanded by 7.1% in 2024, with gross domestic product reaching about \$476 billion. The envoy also called for specialized meetings between companies and business representatives from both countries. "Examining issues such as transportation, logistics, financial transactions and investment opportunities through joint meetings can help expand trade cooperation." The ambassador concluded by requesting that Mazandaran provide a list of its economic strengths, export capacities and import needs to facilitate targeted planning and closer links between businesses in the two countries. Vietnam and Iran have maintained modest trade ties in recent years, with agricultural products, petrochemicals and fisheries among the main areas of commerce.

Iran nets \$18b in oil revenue during war, ceasefire with US



Economy Desk

Iran sold \$18 billion worth of oil during a recent war with the United States and the ceasefire that followed, the Oil Ministry's media outlet Shana reported. According to Shana, Iran exported \$11.5 billion worth of crude during the war and a further \$6.5 billion during the ceasefire period. The agency said the figure covered more than 60% of the oil revenue forecast in the current fiscal year's budget, hailing the Oil Ministry as "the main pillar of securing budget resources at the most sensitive economic juncture of the country." The war broke out on February 28 with airstrikes by

the United States and Israel against Iran. Days later, Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil and LNG flows, to all vessels except its own. The move pushed up oil prices quickly from \$70 a barrel to above \$100, topping \$110 on some days. During the 39-day war, the US issued a sanctions waiver for Iranian oil trade aimed at driving down prices. Shana said Iran seized on a "golden opportunity" presented by the price rise, releasing some 100 million barrels of stored crude and condensates onto the market that it had previously been unable to sell "favorably." The price increase is estimated to have brought in an extra \$3 billion for Iran.

In mid-April, the US military imposed a naval blockade of Iranian ports for more than two months in the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean. US Central Command (CENTCOM) claimed to have intercepted and turned back dozens of Iranian vessels during that period, seized two tankers and attacked several others. Iranian Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that during that period Iran "did not export even a single barrel of oil." However, following an interim peace deal signed by Iran and the United States on 18 June, which led to the lifting of oil sanctions and the naval blockade, "tens of millions of barrels of oil and gas condensates" were loaded and exported from Iran's export terminals, according to Shana. Shana said around \$11 billion of the \$18 billion in oil revenue collected had been paid into the state treasury. The interim momo unraveled earlier this month when the US accused Iran of attacking two oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz and reinstated its naval blockade.

Iran's possible military ...

In this context, Ukraine's efforts to win US support, along with its concerns about losing Western backing and being left alone in its confrontation with Russia — concerns that Zelensky has repeatedly voiced in the past — have also played a role in Ukraine's latest adventurism and its attack on Iranian vessels.

What would be the appropriate response from Iran to Ukraine's attack on its

vessel? Certainly, no hostile action against the country should go unanswered. In this regard, any response must have sufficient deterrent power to punish the aggressor and make it regret its actions. In fact, in the new regional order that has emerged as a result of the Iranian people's resistance to the military aggression of the United States and the Zionist regime, Iran has demonstrated that it has the capacity to resist and deal punishing blows to any

aggressor, including a superpower such as the United States. Accordingly, the brazen moves of a country such as Ukraine should, within the Islamic Republic of Iran's new security discourse, be met with an appropriate response. Drawing on Russia's potential for coordinated action, alongside diplomatic efforts grounded in the rules of international relations, should also be considered as another possible dimension of the response to Ukraine's act of aggression.

Islamabad's policy to de-escalate, not to enter the fray

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The simultaneous heightening of military tensions between Iran and the United States with the Saudi-Ansarullah (Houthis) confrontation has propelled the regional

security equations into a novel phase, and, in this context, has subjected the role of mediators such as Pakistan to a difficult test. Islamabad, which during recent months has constituted one of the principal conduits for the transmission of messages and for de-escalation between Tehran and Washington, is now compelled to establish an equilibrium between its diplomatic responsibilities and the exigencies of strategic collaboration with Riyadh. Meanwhile, the recent exchange of fire between Ansarullah and Saudi Arabia has augmented speculation concerning the impact of these developments upon Pakistan's mediatory capacity, inasmuch as the expansion of the crisis could also broaden the scope of agency for actors aligned with Iran and thereby render Islamabad's mission more intricate.

Under such circumstances, the question arises whether Pakistan will remain capable of preserving its balanced role in the management of regional tensions. Iran Newspaper has conducted an interview with Mohammad Ali Hosseini, former ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, to examine this matter. He maintains that, although Islamabad-Riyadh relations are grounded upon strategic cooperation, Pakistan's invariable policy has nonetheless remained predicated upon de-escalation, abstention from direct military intervention, and the preservation of a mediatory role in regional crises.

Mohammad Ali Hosseini



IRAN: Pakistan has, in recent weeks, actively performed a mediatory function in the course of Iran-US relations, while simultaneously possessing a robust defensive security pact with Saudi Arabia. Given the current tensions between Iran and the United States and the regional conflicts, can Pakistan's mediatory role vis-à-vis Iran continue in the manner of the past?

HOSSEINI: Pakistan, with complete cognizance of the conditions to which you alluded and with consideration for the totality of regional developments, has accepted the mediatory role and has undertaken considerable efforts for the success of this process. Nevertheless, this mission ranks among the most complex and arduous of diplomatic undertakings, and its success necessitates the utmost precision, subtlety, and good faith on the part of Pakistan or any other state that aspires to assume such a role. The complexity of this mediation derives from the circumstance that Pakistan, on one side, confronts a country like Iran that has been subjected to an unjust and illegitimate aggression and, as a consequence, has lost its leadership and a great number of its commanders, scientists, and also ordinary citizens during the terrorist acts and crimes of the United States and the Zionist regime. On the other side, the opposing party is a bullying regime that has repeatedly demonstrated no adherence whatsoever to the rules of international law, humane principles, ethical norms, or political commitments, and that even speaks of the commission of murder, aggression, and other crimes with explicitness and pride.

Under such conditions, it is natural that one cannot expect this country to remain bound even to the commitments it accepts within the framework of the mediatory process. This very disregard for commitments represents the most significant obstacle before any mediatory endeavor and renders Pakistan's or any other

mediator's responsibility exponentially more difficult because it must manage a process in which one party fundamentally possesses no record of respect for commitments and accepted international norms.

How do you evaluate Pakistan's opposition to any attack by Yemeni forces against Saudi Arabia? What is the relation of this position to the ongoing war in the region?

In my view, Pakistan's opposition to the action of Yemeni forces against Saudi Arabia's encirclement bears little connection to the ongoing imposed war against Iran; rather, its origin must be sought in the history of Islamabad's relations with Saudi Arabia and its strategic considerations. Pakistan's stance in this regard derives more from that country's long-standing ties with Riyadh than from recent developments. Nevertheless, even these very political considerations did not cause Pakistan to support di-

rect entry into the Yemeni military conflict. In fact, Islamabad, despite its political opposition to the actions of Yemeni forces, refrained from dispatching military forces to the anti-Yemeni coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia — a decision that, at that juncture, occasioned considerable Riyadh dissatisfaction and demonstrated that Pakistan harbors no inclination to perform a military role in this crisis.

This approach indicates that Pakistan has consistently concentrated upon de-escalation in this domain, and that its foreign policy has perpetually striven to maintain equilibrium among its relations with various regional actors and to abstain from involvement in conflicts that could generate security and political costs for the country.

If the war persists and Saudi Arabia faces greater security threats, will Pakistan remain capable of preserving its role as an impartial mediator, or will it become unavoidable for it to privilege its security commitments to Riyadh?

Personally, I believe that, on the basis of political rationality, neither Pakistan nor Saudi Arabia desires the expansion and continuation of war. No benefit accrues to these two countries or to other regional states from

the expansion of a war initiated by the two terrorist regimes of the United States and Zionism. The United States maintains bases in Saudi Arabia that it occasionally employs against the interests of the Iranian nation, for the destruction of infrastructure, and for the destabilization of the country. Naturally, it is Saudi Arabia's responsibility to prevent these aggressive actions by the American side. In my estimation, the Saudi party possesses the capacity, through the adoption of sagacious policies, to insulate itself from the consequences of the American party's war-mongering, and the Pakistani party is sufficiently astute not to tether its own interests and advantages to the unstable developments of the region and the destabilizing policies of the rogue American regime.

Can the ongoing war halt the process of de-escalation and the Tehran-Riyadh agreement, or do the two countries still consider the maintenance of diplomatic channels as beneficial to regional security?

The Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated in practice its serious commitment to diplomacy and to the enhancement of its relations in various



Under such conditions, it is natural that one cannot expect this country to remain bound even to the commitments it accepts within the framework of the mediatory process. This very disregard for commitments represents the most significant obstacle before any mediatory endeavor and renders Pakistan's or any other mediator's responsibility exponentially more difficult because it must manage a process in which one party fundamentally possesses no record of respect for commitments and accepted international norms.



Field Marshal General Asim Munir prays after laying wreath on the Martyrs monument during a special guard of honor ceremony at General Headquarters, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, on May 21, 2025.

● AP

dimensions with neighboring countries, including Saudi Arabia and other states of the Persian Gulf region. During recent developments, too, emphasis has been placed upon preserving diplomatic channels and avoiding any misunderstanding with Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, certain countries of the Persian Gulf region have committed unforgivable injustice against the Iranian nation and have made themselves complicit in the American-Zionist crimes and offenses against the Iranian government and nation, and they continue to insist upon this malevolent policy, and they shall certainly pay the price for it.

Can the Iran-Pakistan-Saudi Arabia triangle become one of the focal points for crisis management in the region, or will divergences of interest prevent the formation of such a role?

Naturally, none of the regional countries benefits from crisis and instability in the region. In other words, insecurity and instability have confronted and continue to confront the national interests, security, and advantages of regional countries with a serious threat. It is precisely this perspective that has impelled the Islamic Republic to emphasize, repeatedly and again, collective cooperation among regional countries without foreign interference.

In response to your question, I believe that the three countries — Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia — possess diverse capacities for participation in programs that secure the collective interests of the regional states. Divergences of opinion can be resolved or attenuated, and common interests can serve as the axis of cooperation.

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



Pakistan's objectives in brokering peace between Iran, US



By Vida Yaghoobi
Researcher

OPINION

Pakistan's endeavor to assume the role of intermediary between Iran and the United States cannot be reduced to a transient or limited diplomatic initiative. This role constitutes the product of the interplay among a constellation of security considerations, foreign policy imperatives, regional competition dynamics, and protracted economic calculations; a circumstance that renders its analysis unavoidably contingent upon transcending the ostensible manifestations of diplomacy and concentrating upon strategic logic and computations.

Pakistan's geographic proximity to Iran, its historical and cultural affiliations with the Islamic world, and its variable relations with the United States have engendered conditions wherein Islamabad can introduce itself as one of the potentially effective actors in reducing communicational schisms between Tehran and Washington.

Geographic and security linkages between Iran and Pakistan have imparted a particular significance to the ups and downs in Tehran-Washington relations within Islamabad's strategic calculations. Whenever tensions between Tehran and Washington have escalated, concerns regarding the spillover effects of the crisis upon Pakistan's security environment have likewise intensified; concerns rooted in the vulnerability of certain border regions, the movements of transnational networks, and the state's constrained capacity to control all consequences deriving from regional instabilities. Within such a context, the reduction of tension between Iran and the United States acquires a direct connection with Pakistan's security requirements and transforms into a component of that country's endeavor to safeguard domestic stability and manage the hazards emanating from its peripheral environment. Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, in this regard, constitutes an illustrative example of the confluence of internal security



Security personnel stand guard at a security checkpoint along a road temporarily closed near the Serena Hotel at the Red Zone area in Islamabad, Pakistan, on April 20, 2026, ahead of anticipated US-Iran peace talks.

● AAMIR QURESHI/AFP

and regional geopolitical transformations; a locus wherein any alteration in the security equilibria surrounding Iran can produce repercussions extending beyond national frontiers. Nevertheless, restricting Pakistan's motivations to security considerations presents an incomplete depiction of this mediation's dimensions. At a more macroscopic level, Islamabad is striving to redefine its position within the evolving regional architecture. Pakistan, throughout preceding decades, has frequently attracted the attention of great powers within the framework of security issues and counterterrorism; whereas recent regional developments have furnished opportunities for the assumption of more expansive diplomatic and political roles. Assuming a role in one of the most intricate dossiers of international politics affords Pakistan the possibility to exhibit its capacities as a responsible actor possessed of the capability to engage with

conflicting parties. From this perspective, mediation constitutes not merely an instrument for influencing a particular crisis but rather an endeavor to augment diplomatic capital and enhance that country's international credibility.

In addition to the subject of national security and the management of its peripheral hazards, Pakistan's role assumption within the framework of its foreign policy's equilibrium strategy must also receive consideration. The structure of Islamabad's foreign relations has, during recent years, become more pluralized and multi-layered than at any previous time. Strategic relations with China, economic and military cooperation with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf littoral — Saudi Arabia in particular — security engagements with the United States, and the imperative of maintaining stable relations with Iran have placed Pakistan in a position wherein abstaining from overt partisanship in regional and international competitions has transformed into one of the fundamental principles of its foreign policy.

Consequently, a portion of Pakistan's concern goes back to the requirements vis-à-vis its Arab partners. Therefore, the intensification of confrontation

and the expansion of warfare to the Persian Gulf states will generate pressures from Pakistan's traditional partners, such as Saudi Arabia, within the framework of defense pacts for greater alignment. In this manner, the assumption of a mediating role furnishes the possibility for Pakistan, while preserving its relations with diverse actors, to preclude its transformation into a part of a confrontational arrangement. Under such conditions, mediation, rather than signifying Pakistan's extensive influence over the conflicting parties, constitutes an instrument for the preservation of strategic flexibility and the augmentation of its diplomatic maneuverability.

The less-considered dimensions of this subject go back to geo-economic considerations. Pakistan's geographic position and the extensive investments in transit infrastructure have converted this country into one of the significant actors in regional connectivity projects. From this



At a more macroscopic level, Islamabad is striving to redefine its position within the evolving regional architecture. Pakistan, throughout preceding decades, has frequently attracted the attention of great powers within the framework of security issues and counterterrorism; whereas recent regional developments have furnished opportunities for the assumption of more expansive diplomatic and political roles. Assuming a role in one of the most intricate dossiers of international politics affords Pakistan the possibility to exhibit its capacities as a responsible actor possessed of the capability to engage with conflicting parties.

perspective, the perpetuation of confrontation between Iran and the West not merely restricts the region's economic capacities but also diminishes the possibility for the formation of novel cooperative pathways in the domains of energy, transportation, and commerce.

Pakistan is thoroughly cognizant that any reduction of tension between Tehran and Washington can prepare the groundwork for the rearrangement of a portion of the region's economic relations. Therefore, support for tension-reduction processes possesses a direct connection with that country's long-term economic prospects; prospects wherein the geographic connectivity of South Asia to West Asia and Central Asia possesses increasing importance.

Notwithstanding these considerations, a realistic assessment of Pakistan's capacities necessitates abstention from hyperbole concerning that country's degree of influence over the strategic decisions of Tehran and Washington. The reality is that the determinative factors in Iran-United States relations are situated predominantly at a level beyond the capacity of mediating actors to influence and are contingent upon the macro security, political, and ideological calculations of both parties. Consequently, Pakistan's value inheres less in its ability to alter the fundamental orientations of the two countries than in its provision of communicational platforms, transmission of messages, and reduction of the political costs of indirect interactions. This very characteristic has enabled Islamabad, at various junctures, to assume the facilitating role without necessarily transforming into a determinative actor in the final outcomes of negotiations.

Pakistan's mediation between Iran and the United States must be analyzed in conjunction with a constellation of security, political, and economic objectives. This role playing constitutes not merely an endeavor to reduce tension between two significant actors of the international system but rather a component of Islamabad's broader strategy for managing the surrounding security environment, elevating its international standing, maintaining equilibrium in foreign relations, and exploiting opportunities deriving from the region's geopolitical transformations. Hence, any analysis that restricts this mediation exclusively to the level of formal diplomacy or political goodwill will remain deficient in comprehending the more profound logic that shapes Pakistan's behavior; a logic wherein mediation constitutes not an autonomous objective but rather an instrument for securing long-term national interests within a complex and evolving environment.

The article was first published in Persian by the Center for Middle East Strategic Studies.



Pakistan's PM Shehbaz Sharif (c) shakes hands with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi as Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir (R) looks on prior to a quadrilateral meeting between the United States, Iran, Pakistan, and Qatar in Switzerland on June 21, 2026.

● FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP

Iran coach Abdi wary of 'difficult' group at Asian Games

Sports Desk

Iran U23 head coach Hossein Abdi has described his side's group at the 2026 Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games as "very difficult" but insisted his players are ready to embrace the challenge as they pursue both a place in the knockout stage and their long-term goal of qualifying for the 2028 Olympic Games.

The draw for the football competition at the multi-sport event, which will kick off on September 19, took place on Friday, with Iran drawn alongside China, the United Arab Emirates, and North Korea in Group B. "We have been drawn into a very difficult group," Abdi said. "At this age level, every team that comes to the Asian Games is aiming for

success, so there are no easy matches."

Abdi replaced Omid Ravankhah after Iran's disappointing AFC U23 Asian Cup campaign in January, where the team finished bottom of its group with two points. The appointment marks Abdi's third role with one of Iran's age-group national teams.

He led Iran to a semifinal finish at the 2023 AFC U17 Asian Cup in Thailand, securing qualification for the FIFA U-17 World Cup later that year in Indonesia.

Iran began its World Cup campaign with a memorable 3-2 comeback victory over Brazil and went on to finish third in the group before advancing to the round of 16, where it lost to Morocco in a penalty shootout.

The Iranian coach highlighted China, runner-up at the most recent AFC U23 Asian Cup, as one of the strongest teams in the group, while also pointing to the UAE's recent investment in youth football and North Korea's reputation for producing disciplined and resilient youth sides.

Abdi noted that Iran's placement in Pot 3 reflected the national team's results in recent years, meaning the coaching staff had anticipated the possibility of facing several strong opponents.

"We knew before the draw that, given our seeding, there was a good chance we would end up alongside some of Asia's strongest teams," he said. "Now we must focus fully on achieving our objectives."

The 59-year-old identi-

fied progressing from the group stage as Iran's primary target. Iran last won the Asian Games football gold medal at the 2002 Busan Games.

"Our immediate goal is to finish among the top two teams in the group and advance to the knockout stage," Abdi said. "From there, the competition will naturally become even more difficult."

The Group B runner-up could face overwhelming favorite Japan, the host nation and the likely Group A winner, in the first knockout round.

"We have a difficult road ahead, but we hope to move forward step by step and use a successful campaign in Nagoya as an important milestone toward our bigger objective

of qualifying for the 2028 Olympics," Abdi added.

The head coach also outlined his team's preparation plans, saying a recent training camp in Turkey and a series of friendly matches formed part of the build-up to the Asian Games.

Abdi stressed that success would require the support of all stakeholders in Iranian football, including clubs, youth coaches, the media, and the national team's technical, medical, administrative, and support staff.

"Everyone must work together toward a common goal. With the support of the entire football community, we hope to strengthen our qualities, address our weaknesses, and build a team worthy of the Iranian people," said the former

Persepolis midfielder.

"We are here because we want to achieve great things," he said. "If the path were easy, our presence would have no meaning. Football is always full of challenges, and success belongs to teams that are prepared to overcome them."

"I hope that, through the efforts of the players, coaching staff, everyone working with the team, and the support and prayers of our people, we can navigate this difficult journey with pride and achieve something that brings honor to our country."



IRNA



hockeyfed.ir

Asian Youth Hockey5s Championship: Historic bronze sends unbeaten Iran into U18 Hockey5s World Cup

Sports Desk

Iran's men's under-18 team made history by winning the country's first-ever field hockey medal at the Asian Youth Hockey5s Championship in Muscat, Oman, securing a bronze medal and a maiden qualification for the 2026 FIH Hockey5s U18 World Cup.

Iran defeated Bangladesh 4-2 in the third-place playoff on Sunday, capping an unbeaten campaign with a landmark victory. Ashkan Zolfaqarkhaniyan starred for Iran, scoring a hat-trick and earning the Player of the Match award, while Alireza

Taqitash added the fourth goal. The result marked a watershed moment for Iranian hockey, with the bronze medal becoming the nation's first podium finish in the 54-year history of the Iran Hockey Federation.

The victory also secured Iran's first-ever berth at a Hockey5s World Cup, underlining the rapid progress of the country's youth program.

Iran completed the tournament without suffering a single defeat, beating Iraq and Saudi Arabia twice each in the Men's Challenger event before overcoming Oman in a shootout in the Men's

Qualifier earlier on Saturday.

The historic achievement is expected to boost the profile of field hockey in Iran as the team prepares to make its debut on the world stage.

India defeated archrival Pakistan 3-1 in the final to claim the men's title.

Meanwhile, Iran's U18 women's team finished fourth in the Women's Elite event after suffering back-to-back 9-0 defeats to China in the semifinals and Kazakhstan in the bronze-medal match. China claimed the silver medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

FFIRI undecided over head coach Qalenoei's future

Sports Desk

The Iranian Football Federation (FFIRI) will decide the future of national team head coach Amir Qalenoei at a board meeting next week, according to executive board member Farideh Shojaei.

Speaking after a federation board meeting on Saturday, Shojaei said no final decision had been made regarding Qalenoei's position despite discussions over the national team's coaching situation. "The national team was discussed, but it was decided that a decision on Mr. Qalenoei will be made next week or in the near future," Shojaei said.

Asked whether she supported Qalenoei remaining in charge, Shojaei backed the 62-year-old, describing him as her preferred choice among Iranian candidates. "Among the Iranian options, my choice is Qalenoei," she said. "The team performed well at the World Cup, and he has shown he can manage the squad both techni-

cally and psychologically. I support him staying."

Iran drew all three of its Group G matches – 2-2 against New Zealand, goalless against Belgium, and 1-1 with Egypt – to finish third in the standings and miss out on a place in the knockout stage of the expanded 48-team World Cup.

FFIRI president Mehdi Taj said last week that Qalenoei would remain Iran coach through the 2027 AFC Asian

Cup, which begins on January 7 in Saudi Arabia, though there is believed to be disagreement among board members over his suitability for the role.

A semifinalist at the previous two editions, Iran will begin its bid for a fourth Asian Cup title – and its first since 1976 – against China in Group C, which also features Kyrgyzstan and Syria, at Riyadh's Kingdom Arena on January 9.

Debate continues among Ira-

nian fans and pundits over Team Melli's World Cup campaign in the United States.

Iran produced some spirited performances and completed the group stage unbeaten for the first time in its World Cup history, an achievement many considered noteworthy given the politically charged and disrupted buildup Qalenoei's side endured amid the country's conflict with one of the tournament's co-hosts.

His critics, however, argue that he failed to deliver on the team's stated objective of reaching the knockout rounds for the first time in seven World Cup appearances, despite what many observers viewed as a favorable group-stage draw.

The upcoming Asian Cup would be a fourth major tournament for Qalenoei – whose contract, signed in March 2023, expired on Thursday – as Iran head coach. During his first spell in charge, Iran was knocked out by South Korea in the quarterfinals of the 2007 Asian Cup, while his second tenure produced a semifinal finish at the 2024 edition, where Team Melli lost to host Qatar.



FFIRI

CAFA U20 Women's Championship: Iran beats Kyrgyzstan, finishes runner-up



FFIRI

Sports Desk

Iran defeated Kyrgyzstan 2-1 in its final game of the CAFA U20 Women's Championship in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on Saturday.

Sara Rahnama and Tara Qorbani gave Iran a two-goal lead before Kyrgyzstan pulled one back in the closing stages.

A second victory in

three games saw Iran conclude the four-team round-robin tournament on seven points, finishing runner-up to Uzbekistan on goal difference.

Iran began the competition with a 3-2 victory over Tajikistan.

Mehrsa Barari, Yasna Ja'farnia, and Maryam Khalilifar, who went on to earn the Player of the Match award, were on

target as Maryam Jahannejati's side staged a remarkable second-half comeback after trailing by two goals at halftime. Rahnama then scored Iran's only goal in a 1-1 draw against Uzbekistan on Thursday. Uzbekistan thrashed host Tajikistan 7-0 later on Saturday to retain the title in the second edition of the tournament.

Zanjan prepares to host national Aash Festival, crafts fair

Iranica Desk

The cauldrons will soon be lit in Zanjan as the province prepares to host two of Iran's major cultural events simultaneously. The 19th National Iranian Aash Festival and the 20th National Crafts and Souvenirs Fair will be held from August 24 to 28. Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Zanjan Province Seyyed Mikaeil Mousavi said extensive preparations are underway for what is considered the province's most important annual tourism event, Mehr News Agency wrote. He said two venues — the Zanjan International Exhibition Center and the Gavazang Recreation Complex — are being evaluated to host the

events, with coordination already carried out with the International Exhibitions Company and Zanjan Municipality. The department's priority, he added, is to hold the festival in an open-air setting. "An outdoor venue offers a more attractive atmosphere for tourists, visitors and local residents," Mousavi said. "Families can enjoy the green spaces and picnic areas while visiting different sections of the festival." He noted that the Gavazang Complex will host the festival if the necessary infrastructure is completed; otherwise, other venues will be considered. Nevertheless, organizers remain committed to staging the event in a public, open-air environment. Mousavi stressed that the National Aash Festival is



● MEHR

far more than a culinary event, describing it as a celebration deeply rooted in Iranian culture, religious traditions, social customs

and even traditional medicine. He said Aash, the traditional thick Iranian soup, holds a special place in

Iranian culture, from religious votive offerings to medicinal recipes prepared for various illnesses, giving the festival cultural,

religious and social significance. According to Mousavi, organizers had originally planned to hold the festival in spring, when fresh mountain herbs are naturally available for preparing traditional Aash. However, the event was postponed because of the military attacks by Israel and the US to Iran. Despite the delay, he said, the festival could not be cancelled because of its status as a nationally registered event. Organizers therefore decided to schedule it during the final month of the summer holidays to attract a larger number of visitors. He added that efforts will be made to return the festival to its original spring schedule in future years to restore its original concept.

This year's program will extend well beyond cooking competitions. Provinces from across Iran will participate by preparing their regional varieties of Aash while also showcasing nomadic black tents, traditional foods, indigenous customs and cultural performances. Live presentations of regional traditions, exhibitions of local cuisine, displays of provincial souvenirs, introductions to Iran's World Crafts Cities, and showcases by handicraft artists from across the country will also be featured. Mousavi said the festival aims not only to introduce Zanjan's tourism potential but also to encourage longer visitor stays, boost the local tourism economy and support Iran's handicraft artists.

Iran offers diverse destinations for off-road adventures

Iranica Desk

With its remarkable geographical and climatic diversity, Iran offers a wide range of destinations for off-road enthusiasts. From vast desert plains to the lush mountains of the north, each region has its own distinctive character and attractions. Off-road driving is not only an exciting experience but also an opportunity to become familiar with local cultures and the lives of people living in these areas. In recent years, as off-road driving has grown in popularity, facilities and infrastructure related to the activity have also expanded. Off-road tours and dedicated camps have been established in various parts of the country, allowing enthusiasts to embark on adventures safely under the supervision of experienced guides. Off-road competitions held in some areas have also added to the sport's appeal, providing opportunities for healthy competition and showcasing driving skills. In this way, off-road driving has evolved beyond a recreational activity into a culture and lifestyle that is steadily gaining popularity.

Qasr-e Bahrām to Marānjab

The route from Qasr-e Bahrām to the Marānjab Desert is one of Iran's most famous and scenic off-road destinations, offering a unique experience for nature and adventure enthusiasts. With its vast sand dunes and spectacular desert landscapes, the route takes visitors into a world of natural beauty and history. Along the way, visitors can explore historical attractions such as the Qasr-e Bahrām Caravanserai, which reflects Iran's rich cultural heritage and history. Once a resting place for caravans, the caravanserai is now regarded as an important historical landmark for tourists. The journey takes about six hours, and visitors need to obtain a permit from the Department of



● IRNA

Environment to enter Kavir National Park. The area also offers opportunities to observe native wildlife and distinctive desert vegetation, making it appealing to photographers and nature lovers. The desert's star-filled nights provide another excellent opportunity for stargazing and astrophotography. Ultimately, a trip to this region is not only an exciting off-road adventure but also an opportunity to relax and reconnect with nature.

Kashan to Zolamat Canyon

The route from Kashan to Zolamat Canyon is one of Iran's most scenic and fascinating off-road routes. Beginning north of Kashan and ending at Zolamat Canyon in Kavir National Park, the one-day journey involves about four hours of driving and passes through spectacular natural landscapes. Along the way, visitors encounter sand dunes, vast plains and striking rock formations, each with its own distinctive beauty. The area is protected and requires a permit for entry. As a result, many visitors prefer to explore it through organized tours, allowing them to enjoy a safer and more comfortable experience. With its towering rock walls and remarkable natural scenery, Zolamat Canyon is an ideal place for photography and exploring the landscape. In addition to off-road driving, the area provides oppor-



● IRNA

tunities for hiking and observing native wildlife. Visitors can also complement their trip by exploring historical and cultural attractions around Kashan, including Fin Garden and the city's historic houses. The route is therefore not only an exciting adventure but also an opportunity to discover aspects of Iran's history and culture.

Marivan to Baneh

The route from Marivan to Baneh in Kurdistan Province is among Iran's most scenic off-road destinations, passing through lush oak forests. The journey offers more than an opportunity for off-road driving, taking visitors into a world of natural beauty and cultural heritage. Road 46, which leads to Lake Zarivar, is surrounded by spectacular landscapes and traditional villages, each with its own stories and traditions. Along the route,



● IRNA

visitors can enjoy the beauty of the oak forests while becoming acquainted with local culture. Off-road driving in the region is not only exciting but also provides an opportunity to explore pristine landscapes and observe native wildlife. Lake Zarivar, with its clear waters and surrounding scenery, is an excellent place to stop and rest. A visit to the traditional villages of Kurdistan and an opportunity to learn about the lives of local residents can also make the journey a memorable experience. The trip is not simply an adventure but also an opportunity to connect with nature and experience Iran's rich cultural heritage.

Chalus to Kelardasht

The route from Chalus to Kelardasht is one of the best off-road destinations in northern Iran. With spectacular natural scenery and winding roads, it offers

an unforgettable experience for adventure enthusiasts. The region's forests, rivers and lush plains create an ideal setting for off-road driving. Visitors can enjoy beautiful mountain landscapes along the way and stop at various points to take photographs. The area's geographical setting gives it a distinctive appeal throughout the year. In summer, visitors are drawn to the pleasant weather and lush forests, while autumn brings warm foliage colors and striking scenery. In winter, snow-covered mountains create a dreamlike landscape that is particularly attractive to off-road enthusiasts. The route is therefore not only an exciting adventure but also an opportunity to relax and enjoy the natural beauty of northern Iran.

Stars Valley

Stars Valley on Qeshm Island is one of Iran's unique off-road destinations. Its rocky terrain and unusual landscapes offer a different experience for off-road enthusiasts. The area is renowned for its extraordinary geological formations, allowing visitors to admire striking rock formations and natural shapes. Qeshm Island also has numerous other natural attractions worth visiting. The Khorbas Caves, with their fascinating history, and the Qeshm mangrove forests, known for their rich biodiversity, offer excellent opportunities for exploring nature.

The island's local culture and delicious cuisine can further enrich the experience. A trip to Stars Valley is therefore not only an exciting adventure but also an opportunity to become familiar with the rich history and culture of Qeshm Island.

Chalus Road to Karaj

The Chalus Road to Karaj route is one of Iran's most famous and scenic off-road destinations. With spectacular natural landscapes and winding roads, it offers a unique experience for nature and adventure enthusiasts. The road passes through dense forests and lush mountains, while small lakes, waterfalls and flower-filled plains provide spectacular views along the way. Stopping at various points allows visitors to photograph the scenery and spend time amid nature. The region has a distinctive appeal in every season. Summer brings pleasant, cool weather, while autumn transforms the landscape with warm foliage colors. In winter, snow-covered mountains create a dreamlike setting that is particularly attractive to off-road enthusiasts.

Marānjab Desert

The Marānjab Desert is one of Iran's unique off-road destinations. Its vast sand dunes, spectacular desert landscapes and star-filled skies offer an unforgettable experience for adventure enthusiasts. The area is known for attractions such as the historic Marānjab Caravanserai, which has a rich history. Off-road driving in the desert allows visitors to enjoy its natural beauty and distinctive tranquility. During a trip to Marānjab, visitors can watch the sunset and sunrise over the sand dunes and enjoy moments of peace and relaxation. The desert's starry nights also provide excellent opportunities for astrophotography. Visitors may additionally encounter native wildlife and distinctive desert vegetation, making the area appealing to nature lovers.



UNESCO lists Alamut Castle as Iran's 30th World Heritage Site

Global recognition indicative of country's diverse history: **President**

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran secured UNESCO World Heritage status for the 1,100-year-old Alamut Castle and its associated medieval fortifications on Sunday during the 48th session of the World Heritage Committee in Busan, South Korea, making the fortress complex the country's 30th cultural property on the prestigious list.

President Masoud Pezeshkian welcomed the inscription in a post on X, describing it as recognition of "part of Iran's diverse and shared history." He said cultural heritage has the power to unite society despite its differences, writing, "Cultural heritage can bring us together despite our differences and remind us that Iran belongs to all Iranians."

The inscription of "Alamut Castle and Its Associated Fortifications" crowns years of conservation and documentation efforts and is expected to raise Iran's international cultural profile while strengthening heritage tourism. The serial property comprises seven interconnected medieval fortresses across the Alamut Valley and the southern slopes of the Alborz Mountains, showcasing sophisticated military engineering, water management and architectural innovation developed between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Culture Minister Reza Salehi Amiri, who headed Iran's delegation in Busan, described the inscription as "the affirmation of Iran's intellectual legacy, historical memory and cultural capac-

ity within the global heritage system." Calling the designation "a symbol of the continuity of Iran's civilizational identity," Salehi Amiri said cultural heritage is inseparable from peace, security and dialogue among nations. "The protection of world heritage is possible only through peace, mutual respect and constructive cooperation among states and peoples," he said.

The minister said Iran is home to more than one million historical sites, 43,000 nationally registered monuments and now 30 UNESCO World Heritage properties.

Referring to Alamut's significance, he said the fortress complex "is a cornerstone in the evolution of Iranian architecture, engineering and defensive systems," adding that the inscription marks "the beginning of an even greater responsibility for conservation, research, education, knowledge exchange and international cooperation."

Alireza Izadi, director general for the registration, preservation and restoration of Iran's cultural and natural heritage, said UNESCO's evaluators endorsed the nomination, paving the way for its approval by committee members.

Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey said the inscription "once again reminds the world of the grandeur of Iranian civilization" and opens a new chapter for cultural tourism in Qazvin Province.

He described Alamut as "a symbol of resilience, architectural ingenuity and Iran's historical identity" that con-



tinues to attract scholars and visitors from around the world.

Qazvin provincial heritage chief Maryam Mahdavi said the successful nomination resulted from close cooperation among heritage experts, local communities and civil society. "This was not the achievement of a single institution but the result of a collective

effort to introduce one of Iran's historical masterpieces to the world," she said, adding that the designation also places greater responsibility on authorities to protect and promote the site.

The National Commission for UNESCO in Iran also welcomed the decision. Secretary-General Hassan Fartousi said the nomination was approved by

consensus without opposition, demonstrating "the scientific and technical strength of the dossier" and the site's outstanding universal value.

He said the recognition should serve as a springboard for expanding cultural tourism, safeguarding the monument and presenting Iran's rich civilization to a wider international audience.

Kashmir readers turn to Iranian revolutionary memoir at Srinagar book fair



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian prison memoir 'Cell No. 14,' recounting the imprisonment of Iran's martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei under the Pahlavi regime, emerged as one of the bestselling titles at the third Chinar

Book Festival in Srinagar, India, held from July 18 to 26, drawing strong interest from readers seeking a deeper understanding of Iran's Islamic Revolution.

The nine-day festival, hosted at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC), brought together more than 200 publishers and booksellers from across India, IRNA reported Sunday, citing The Hindu.

The Motahari Center's pavilion attracted heavy foot traffic, with daily attendance reaching about 20,000 visitors. Local Shia clerics also shared videos of their purchases on social media, further amplifying interest in the

collection.

Alongside works by Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, the architect of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, 'Cell No. 14' stood out as the pavilion's flagship title. "The memoir has generated tremendous interest. We sell dozens of copies every day," one bookseller said, adding that a visitor from the Chenab Valley purchased 60 copies in a single order.

Rashid Ahmad, a student at the University of Kashmir, said the memoir offers "a glimpse of what Iran's revolutionaries endured under the Shah's regime" and helps readers understand the country's political evolution

and resilience.

The appeal extended beyond the region's Shia community. Sunni visitors also browsed the Iranian collection, reflecting broader curiosity about Iranian intellectual and revolutionary literature. Another bookseller said local politicians and senior bureaucrats were among those purchasing books by Iranian leaders.

The 2026 Chinar Book Festival marked the first time that several Shia publishers collectively mounted multiple pavilions at the annual event, where books in English, Urdu, Kashmiri, Hindi, and other Indian languages were showcased.

Shared heritage frames Iran-Azerbaijan dialogue in Ardabil

Arts & Culture Desk

The head of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences said that culture, science, and tourism will drive deeper ties between Tehran and Baku during talks with Ardabil Governor Masoud Emami Yeganeh. Habibbeyli described science, culture, and shared civilization as enduring foundations linking the two neighboring nations, saying Azerbaijan is keen to broaden academic and cultural engagement with Iran, IRNA reported.

"Tourism is one of the strongest bridges between our peoples," he said, adding that greater two-way travel would not only bring citizens closer together but also facilitate economic exchanges and broaden commercial interaction.

He said Azerbaijan had already benefited from expanding economic cooperation with Iran and noted that increased visits by Iranian travelers could further reinforce those gains. Habibbeyli also under-

scored the importance of sustained dialogue between officials from both countries, saying recent meetings between the presidents of Iran and Azerbaijan, along with signed agreements, had opened "a new atmosphere" for wider bilateral cooperation.

"Focusing on our shared historical, cultural, and scientific heritage will further strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between the two neighboring countries," he said.

The remarks came during a visit to Ardabil by a senior Azerbaijani delegation attending Ardabil Week, an annual celebration honoring Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili.

The delegation included the president of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, the deputy culture minister, a lawmaker, and Azerbaijan's consul general in Iran. The festival showcases the province's cultural and literary heritage while encouraging cultural exchanges between the neighboring countries.

Oscar-qualifying TISFF draws 8,755 entries from around globe

Arts & Culture Desk

The 43rd Tehran International Short Film Festival (TISFF) has attracted 8,755 submissions from filmmakers worldwide for its international section, organizers said, showing the event's growing global reach ahead of its October 17-22 edition in Tehran.

An Academy Awards-qualifying festival and one of Asia's leading short film events, TISFF offers its Grand Prize winner eligibility for Oscar consideration in the short film categories under the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' rules, ILNA reported.

The entries span six competition categories, including 4,372 fiction films, 1,157 AI-generat-



ed works, 1,079 documentaries, 804 animated films, 715 experimental productions, and 628 submissions for the Emerging Horizons Award, highlighting the festival's widening embrace of both established and emerging cinematic forms.

China topped the list with 3,263 submissions, followed by Spain with 846, the US with 391, India with 374, Brazil with 342, France with 302, Italy with 209, South Korea with 206, the UK with 202, and Turkey with 155, reflecting broad participation from major filmmaking hubs across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The selection process is now underway, with the official competition lineup scheduled to be unveiled in the second half of September 2026. Directed by acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Behrouz Shoaibi, the 43rd TISFF will run October 17-22, 2026, bringing together filmmakers from across the globe as Tehran once again opens its screens to new voices in short-form cinema.