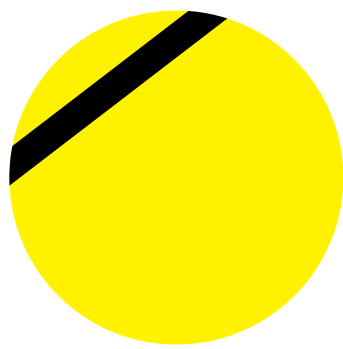


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America's plan to drag Arab countries into regional war

By Amir Dabiri Mehr
Political science researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Following the 12-day and 40-day wars waged by the United States and Israel against Iran, and the failure to achieve the primary objectives of this military aggression, a growing wave of global criticism has emerged regarding the initiation and continuation of the conflict. Critics rightly point out that the war not only failed to topple the Islamic Republic, destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, or eliminate the Islamic resistance forces supporting Iran, but also resulted in the Strait of Hormuz coming under the control of Iran's armed forces and an unprecedented rise in oil prices.

Consequently, with the reduction in oil supply and the sharp increase in the price of this strategic commodity, it is the global economy that is now paying the price for the fantasies and adventurism of Trump and Netanyahu. On the other hand, the United States and Israel, unwilling to retreat from their flawed positions and policies against Iran or to admit their political and military defeat in the recent warmongering, have in the past week set in motion a dangerous plan: the direct involvement of Arab countries in the war. The first step of this plan was taken with the joint Saudi-American attack on Iraq and the headquarters of the Hashd al-Shaabi forces (Popular Mobilization Forces). A suspicious explosion in Egypt was also carried out with the same objective, ensuring that Cairo would not remain outside the American theater of war. Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan have likewise suffered from this American scheme in recent weeks.

It is worth recalling that from the very first day of the joint US-Israeli war on February 28, 2026—approximately five months ago—American military bases in Arab countries, from which attacks on Iran were launched, were targeted by Iranian missiles and drones. Tehran repeatedly stated that these operations were carried out reluctantly and out of necessity and should not be interpreted as a violation of the sovereignty of Arab countries. Indeed, even before the war, the Islamic Republic had warned that if Iran were attacked from any base or territory anywhere in the world, its armed forces would consider striking that base their legitimate right.

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Pilgrims walk toward Karbala to participate in the Arba'een pilgrimage after crossing through the Iraq-Iran border at Zurbatiyah, south of Baghdad on July 29, 2026.

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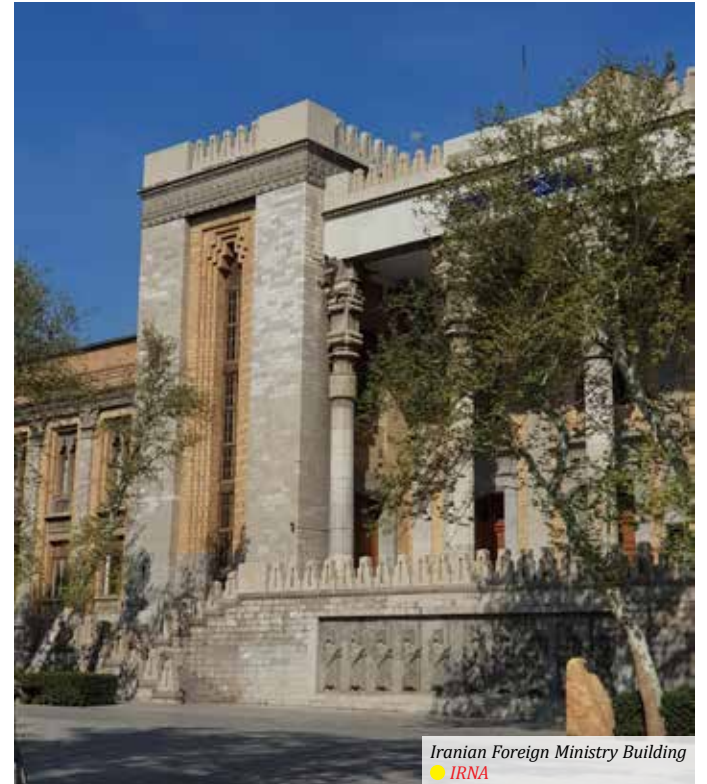
Iran vows to use all means to defend rights, national security amid US aggression

The Iranian Foreign Ministry vowed that Iran will use all means at its disposal to exercise its inherent right of self-defense in the face of the United States' ongoing violations against the country. In a statement issued on Saturday, the ministry said Iran's Armed Forces would continue their defensive operations "with full force," while reaffirming the Islamic Republic's determination to resist ongoing US aggression against the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Press TV reported. The ministry expressed its "profound admiration for and appreciation" of the sacrifices and efforts made by the Armed Forces and paid tribute to those martyred in the defense of the nation's independence and territorial integrity. The United States has perpetrated numerous violations against Iranian territory since April 7, when US President Donald Trump announced a unilateral ceasefire

in the latest bout of unprovoked American-Israeli aggression targeting the Islamic Republic. The violations continued even after Washington and Tehran signed a Pakistan-mediated memorandum of understanding in June, whose first clause clearly mandated cessation of aggression on all fronts. The US has also been trying to help vessels evade the maritime route designated by the Islamic Republic for safe and legal passage through the Strait of Hormuz by seeking to escort trespassing vessels through an illegal passageway. Iran's Armed Forces have staged uncompromising retaliation in the face of each instance of violation, including those taking place in support of illegal vessel movement in the Strait of Hormuz. The Foreign Ministry likewise noted how the US had failed to honor its commitments under the memorandum.

It cited those breaches as well as Washington's maintaining a naval blockade against Iranian ports and commercial shipping, intensifying economic pressure, and issuing unlawful threats against the nation as other instances of American hostility towards the Islamic Republic. The acts of aggression had featured attacks on civilian targets, civilian infrastructure, and Iranian citizens inside and outside Iran, the statement reminded, describing such atrocities as a violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter. The blockade, it added, constitutes an act of aggression under the United Nations Definition of Aggression, the statement read, citing UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 of December 14, 1974. The ministry pointed to statements by the US president concerning the termination of the MoU, the cancellation of authorization for Iranian oil sales, and the restoration of the naval blockade.

According to the statement, these developments constituted "clear and incontrovertible indications" that the US administration had already planned to violate the understanding, challenge Iran's sovereign rights in the Strait of Hormuz, and escalate tensions. The statement placed the latest confrontation within a much longer history of US hostility towards Iran. According to the Foreign Ministry, Washington has pursued expansionist and colonial ambitions in the region and has used its so-called goal of preventing Iran from obtaining a "nuclear weapon," an allegation the Islamic Republic has invariably rejected, countering an "imminent Iranian threat," and "preemptive action in defense of Israel" as justifications for military aggression targeting the Iranian soil. The ministry rejected those explanations, arguing instead that the underlying cause of such ag-



Iranian Foreign Ministry Building
● IRNA

gression was Iran's insistence on independence and national sovereignty and its resistance to the US's demands and pressure. The Foreign Ministry argued that these circumstances required the UN Security Council to intervene to halt the aggression and hold those

responsible accountable. However, it criticized the council for failing to take effective action against the aggressors, comparing the situation with its conduct during the Western-backed 1980-88 war waged by Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein against Iran.

Iranian pilgrims flood Iraq for Arba'een pilgrimage

International Desk

Under a blazing sun, clad in black and clutching portraits of their martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Iranian pilgrims streamed across the border into Iraq to observe the Arba'een. Arba'een, which means forty in Arabic, marks the 40th day of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the third Shia imam and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Amir, a 55-year-old pick-up driver, has been attending the Arba'een ceremonies in Iraq for years, but said that this time is different. "The difference is that we are at war. Now, the United States is attacking us... yet this crowd that you see has left everything behind" to attend, the father-of-three added, at Iraq's Al-Zubatiyah border crossing. It is one of the world's



Pilgrims walk toward Karbala to participate in the Arba'een pilgrimage after crossing through the Iraq-Iran border at Zubatiyah, south of Baghdad on July 29, 2026.
● AFP

largest religious gatherings, with millions flocking each year to Iraq to visit the city of Karbala, where Imam Hussein is buried. This year's pilgrimage comes amid an aggression launched by the US and Israel against Iran on February 28, which has not left Iraq unscathed. Pilgrim Fatemeh Moradi, 52, has been to the Arba'een at least five times before, but said that this year is for "our martyred Leader, on his behalf and on the behalf of all the

martyrs". Ayatollah Khamenei was assassinated by the US and Israel on the first day of their aggression against Iran on February 28. Moradi lost many relatives during the war, but for her "martyrdom is a sense of pride". At the Zubatiyah crossing, large fans sprayed mist to cool the heat as pilgrims passed portraits of Khamenei, his son and successor Mojtaba, and other slain commanders from "axis of resistance."

Iraqis greeted them with gifts of drinks and food, continuing the tradition of offering refreshments to pilgrims. Iraqi authorities said Friday that so far around 3.5 million foreign pilgrims have entered Iraq to attend the Arba'een. Each year, pilgrims from different countries travel on foot to get to Imam Hussein's holy shrine, in the Iraqi city of Karbala, to commemorate the event, which falls on Tuesday this year. The third Shia Imam and his 72 companions were martyred in the Battle of Karbala in southern Iraq in 680 AD while resisting the much larger army of the despot Umayyad ruler of the time, Yazid.

Iran warns of firm response to any hostile action by US, Israel



International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned of Iran's firm response to any hostile action by the United States or Israel, or any support for such measures by regional countries amid US military threats against the Islamic Republic. The top diplomat made the remarks during a phone conversation with his Saudi counterpart. Araghchi emphasized that any aggression or hostile action by the United States or the Israeli regime, or any participation in or support for such measures by regional countries "would be met with a firm and proportionate response from Iran's capable Armed Forces." "The Islamic Republic is fully prepared to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national security," Araghchi added. "The perpetrators of any such adventurism would bear full responsibility for all consequences arising from it," Araghchi told Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan. Also on Saturday, the Iranian foreign minister held separate phone calls with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan and Pakistani Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir. During the calls, Araghchi likewise warned against any adventurist action by the US military and stressed the Islamic Republic's full

readiness to safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to respond decisively to any act of aggression. Many regional countries would lend their territories to aggressors targeting the Iranian soil throughout the latest bout of wholesale unprovoked aggression that the United States and the Israeli regime waged against the Islamic Republic from February 28 until April 7. The United States continued to launch attacks on Iranian targets following the aggression in violation of a unilateral ceasefire and later in breach of a Pakistan-mediated memorandum of understanding signed between Tehran and Washington. The violations would similarly benefit from regional states' assistance. Iran's Armed Forces have been responding uncompromisingly by targeting hostile objects across those states. The phone calls came as Washington continues to insist on its intention to keep up its violations, besides attempting to expand the scope of war in cooperation with regional actors. However, US President Donald Trump said he canceled declared attacks on Iran after regional countries sought a pause amid efforts to reach a possible agreement, and following warnings from Tehran that any new US or Israeli aggression would face strong retaliation.

Claims of Iran agreeing to reopen Strait of Hormuz are 'false'

Media reports claiming that Iran has agreed to a plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz are false, and no change has been made to the country's policy regarding the strategic waterway, according to a report. Foreign media outlets, citing Israeli journalist Barak Ravid, have claimed earlier that Iran had accepted a proposal under which ships would enter the Persian Gulf through Iranian territorial waters and leave through Omani territorial waters. Fars News Agency, citing a source close to Iran's negotiating team, rejected those claims, with the source saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has reached no agreement on reopening the Strait of Hormuz, and the reports published in this regard are false." According to Fars, a military source also dismissed the claims, saying they were en-

tirely unfounded. "As long as the hostile actions and acts of malice by the United States continue, the Strait of Hormuz will remain closed," the military source was quoted as saying. "Passage will only be possible through the designated route, in coordination with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy and after obtaining permission to transit the Strait of Hormuz. Otherwise, other routes are unsafe, and vessels attempting to use them will certainly encounter incidents." The source further emphasized that reports claiming that Iran had agreed to any plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz were "baseless" and that no decision or policy change had been made regarding the strategic waterway. It came after US President Donald Trump said he had canceled declared attacks on

Iran, following warnings from Tehran that any new US or Israeli aggression would face strong retaliation. The latest round of war against Iran began on February 28, when US and Israeli forces launched large-scale strikes on Iranian territory. Iran responded with daily waves of missiles and drones targeting US and Israeli assets across the region, while closing the Strait of Hormuz. Iran and the US later signed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on June 17 in an effort to end the war across all fronts. However, renewed US military aggression against Iran in recent weeks has prompted Tehran to resume missile and drone strikes against US assets in the region and close the Strait of Hormuz once again.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Tavanir: Small-scale power capacity tops annual target despite war damage

Economy Desk

Iran's small-scale power generation capacity has increased to more than 1,692 megawatts this year from 1,430 MW at last year's peak demand, despite damage to parts of the country's electricity infrastructure during the US-Israeli war; a senior official at state power company Tavanir said on Sunday.

According to IRNA, Abolfazl Asadi, deputy for planning and economic affairs at Tavanir, said the Seventh National Development Plan had targeted the expansion of small-scale thermal power generation by 200 MW, a goal that has now been achieved despite various challenges.

The plan had set a target of reaching 1,635 MW of small-scale generation capacity this year, but the figure surpassed that level through the efforts of regional electricity companies and power distribution firms nationwide, he said.

Asadi said parts of the country's power plants with more than 100 MW of operating capacity were damaged during the war, with around 130 MW of installed generation capacity affected overall.

"Alongside efforts to restore these units, available capacity at gas-fired generation facilities and small-scale power plants was brought into service. Numerous

meetings were also held with industrial operators and investors to mobilize available capacity and help offset power generation shortfalls," he said.

He said the main advantages of expanding small-scale power plants included greater private sector participation, faster and more cost-effective project implementation, helping reduce the electricity supply-demand imbalance, making the power system less vulnerable to attacks and disruptions, reducing grid losses, and improving the resilience of the power sector.

"Effective measures have been taken over the past two years to support investors in small-scale power plants, enabling them to expand their investments and play an important role in increasing the country's electricity generation capacity through active participation in the power market," he said.

A US-Israeli coalition launched attacks on the country on February 28, which also involved strikes on civilians and infrastructure.

Iran was already experiencing energy shortages prior to the attacks, a situation that has been exacerbated by the conflict and the peak of the summer heat season. After a pause of several weeks following the signing of an MoU, the US resumed strikes on Iran's infrastructure on July 11.

Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said last month that four 400-kilovolt and two 230-kilovolt transmission lines damaged during recent US strikes had been fully repaired, returning the regional network to normal operating conditions.

Strategy targets power imbalance

Asadi said the Seventh National Development Plan includes a comprehensive strategy to address the country's electricity imbalance by simultaneously increasing power generation and managing demand.

He said the plan focuses on expanding large and small-scale thermal power plants and renewable energy facilities, including solar and wind power plants.

"Each of these sectors has been given specific targets for increasing electricity generation capacity," he said.

The government has set a target of installing 30,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity within the next two years to help reduce daily power shortages and improve the long-term stability of electricity supplies. So far, installed renewable power generation capacity has exceeded 5,400 megawatts, according to the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA).

Asadi said demand-side manage-



ment to improve electricity consumption efficiency is the second pillar of Tavanir's strategy to address the power imbalance.

"To attract investment in the electricity sector, three trading platforms have been designed and launched: the Green Market for private investment in renewable energy, the Free Exchange Market for small- and large-scale thermal power plants, and the Energy Saving Market for investment in

energy efficiency projects," he said.

Renewable energy investors can generate electricity year-round without concerns over fuel supply constraints and sell their output through the Green Board, according to Asadi.

The Free Exchange Board is intended for investors planning to expand existing power plants or build new thermal power stations, including gas-fired, com-

bined-cycle and steam plants; in the field of energy efficiency, investors can participate in industrial and residential projects by replacing electric motors in evaporative coolers or substituting air-conditioning systems, he explained.

"Over the past year and a half, the number of contracts in the energy efficiency sector has increased from two to 55," Asadi said.

Six border cities planned as Iran expands coastal development



Economy Desk

Iran plans to build six new cities along its northern and southern borders with capacity for around 1 million residents, as part of a strategy focused on developing coastal and border regions, the deputy roads and urban development minister said.

Shahram Maleki said the cities would be built in the provinces of Golestan, Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchestan on more than 38,000 hectares of land, according to IRNA.

Maleki, who serves as head of New

Towns Development Company, said the aim of developing new cities was to create additional residential capacity in line with national priorities, adding that the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development was seeking to expand housing capacity through these towns in cooperation with the private sector.

"Out of the six new cities planned to be built along Iran's northern and southern borders, some are in the design stage while others have entered the construction phase," Maleki said.

The new city of Alagol, located in the

Inchah Borun border area in north-eastern Golestan Province, will home a population capacity of 100,000 people and cover 1,400 hectares, he said.

Ownership documents for the new city have also been issued in the name of the New Towns Development Company, according to Maleki.

"Five new cities are set to be developed on the southern coasts, including Tis, Makran, Central Makran, Koushk and Persian Gulf in the provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan and Hormozgan," Maleki said.

He put the population capacity of the

five coastal cities at 900,000 people, covering a total area of around 37,000 hectares.

Maleki said construction of the new city of Tis is underway, while the proposed new cities of Makran, Central Makran and Koushk have secured site selection and feasibility study approvals from the Supreme Council of Urban Planning and Architecture and are now preparing their master plans.

He added that the Persian Gulf new city has also completed the site selection and feasibility study stages at the provincial level.

Mango festival aims to deepen trade, cultural ties with Tehran: Pakistani envoy

Economy Desk

Pakistan's ambassador to Tehran said a mango festival hosted by the country's embassy was intended to strengthen friendship, expand economic ties and create new opportunities for cooperation between Pakistan and Iran.

Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui said at the event on Saturday that the celebration was about much more than enjoying an extraordinary fruit and organized to build bridges of friendship, strengthen economic ties and create new opportunities for cooperation between Pakistan and Iran, ISNA reported.

The Pakistan Mango Festival, hosted by the embassy in Tehran on Saturday, brought together government officials, diplomats and business representatives to showcase different varieties of Pakistani mangoes, promote cultural ties and expand trade



Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran Imran Ahmed Siddiqui (R-2nd) cuts a ceremony cake with officials, diplomats and business representatives during the Pakistan Mango Festival in Tehran, on August 1, 2026.

"As we continue to improve quality standards, cold-chain logistics and modern packaging, we are also seeking new export destinations. Every mango presented at this event has been carefully handled and transported to meet the highest international export standards," he said.

Agricultural products are among the items traded between the two neighbors. Pakistan's chief export to Iran is Mango while Iran has been a supplier dates to Pakistan. In 2024, Pakistan imported about \$15.5 million worth of dates from Iran, according to trade data.

cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

"For many people around the world, the mango is simply a delicious fruit. But for the people of Pakistan, it is a cherished part of our national heritage," Siddiqui said.

Pakistan is among the world's leading mango producers with around 1.8 million metric tons of annual production, according to Siddiqui,

He said the country ranks sixth globally in mango production and fourth in fresh mango exports, with more than 250 varieties known for their distinct flavors and characteristics.

Siddiqui said Pakistan had steadily expanded its mango exports over the years to markets across the Middle East, Central Asia, Europe and other regions.

Iran calls for greater role for developing countries in technology governance

Economy Desk

Iran called for greater participation by developing countries in shaping standards for emerging technologies, artificial intelligence and the digital economy at the World Internet Conference in China, said Hassan Meysami, an official with Iran's Information and Communications Technology Ministry who attended the conference in late July.

At the conference, participants emphasized the need to strengthen international cooperation in cyberspace, develop the digital economy and increase nations' role in shaping the future of the online environment, Meysami was quoted as saying by ISNA. The Iranian delegation for its part, he added, took part in specialized panels and bilateral meetings at the conference and presented proposals to strengthen international cooperation.

Meysami said Iran also proposed expanding cooperation in e-commerce and cloud services, enhancing cybersecurity, improving the resilience of digital infrastructure and ensuring the continuity of communi-



cations services during crises.

He described Iran's participation in the conference as an opportunity to advance technology diplomacy, exchange experiences and strengthen international cooperation in emerging technologies.

The event was held to expand international cooperation under the framework of the Digital Silk Road and strengthen interaction among countries in areas including the digital economy, artificial intelligence and smart infrastructure.

It brought together senior government officials, ministers, technology company executives, academics and representatives of international organizations.



By Saman Sofalgar
Political researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Benjamin Netanyahu's latest visit to Washington came at a moment of profound uncertainty in the Middle East. Taking place after a period of intense confrontation involving Iran, the Zionist Regime, and the United States, the meeting between the Israeli prime minister and US President Donald Trump was closely watched for signs of a possible shift in regional policy.

Yet the significance of the visit was not limited to any single issue. Netanyahu arrived in Washington carrying a broad strategic agenda shaped by security concerns, regional competitions, and domestic political pressures. His objective was not merely to coordinate positions with the White House, but to influence the direction of American policy at a time when the regional balance of power is undergoing significant changes.

The visit highlighted a central reality of current US-Israel relations: while the alliance remains deeply rooted, Israel's ability to determine Washington's priorities is facing new constraints. Netanyahu's mission was therefore both ambitious and defensive — an effort to preserve Israel's influence while preventing regional developments that could reduce its strategic leverage. In this context, six key elements appear to be particularly significant.

1. Keeping Iran at the center of US security calculations: The issue of Iran remained Netanyahu's primary concern. For years, Israel has attempted to persuade Washington that Iran represents the most serious strategic challenge in the Middle East and that sustained pressure against Tehran is essential. From Netanyahu's perspective, any reduction in tensions between Washington and Tehran could weaken Israel's position. A diplomatic opening between Iran and the United States would limit Israel's ability to define regional security priorities and could reduce the likelihood of future American involvement in military pressure campaigns. During his visit, Netanyahu sought to reinforce the argument that Iran should remain a central focus of US policy. However, the



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrives at the White House in Washington, DC, on July 28, 2026, to meet with US President Donald Trump.

● ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

Netanyahu's Washington bid to shape America's Mideast policy

Six objectives behind Israel's push



political environment in Washington appears to have changed. Trump's public statement that he did not need Netanyahu's intelligence on Iran indicated that the White House does not intend to rely exclusively on Israeli assessments. The message was clear: Washington values Israeli input, but it wants to maintain independent control over its own strategic decisions.

2. Influencing the future of US-Saudi relations: A second major objective of Netanyahu's visit was shaping the emerging relationship between Washington and Riyadh. The possibility of expanded US-Saudi cooperation, including discussions on nuclear technology and broader strategic ties, has attracted significant attention in Israel. Netanyahu's cabinet views such developments through the lens of regional competitions and diplomatic influence.

The concern in Tel Aviv is that Saudi Arabia could gain major strategic benefits from the United States without providing meaningful concessions toward

normalization with Israel. For Netanyahu, any future American agreement with Riyadh must serve Israeli interests as well. His goal has been to ensure that Washington's engagement with Saudi Arabia remains connected to the broader process of Arab-Israeli normalization. This reflects a wider Israeli calculation: Tel Aviv wants to avoid a regional arrangement in which Saudi Arabia strengthens its position while Israel loses diplomatic leverage.

3. Protecting Israel's military freedom in Lebanon and Syria: The security situation in Lebanon and Syria was another important element of Netanyahu's agenda. Israel considers its ability to conduct military operations beyond its borders a key component of its deterrence strategy. However, Washington has increasingly shown interest in reducing regional tensions and preventing further escalation. Any American effort to encourage de-escalation or reduce Israel's military footprint in neighboring countries would conflict with Ne-



The illustration shows Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (R) and US President Donald Trump (L).

● AIDA AMER/AXIOS

tanyahu's security approach. For example, prior to Netanyahu's recent visit to the United States, Israel's Kan television channel reported that he had told cabinet ministers during a meeting that Washington had demanded a significant withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon. However, he is highly unlikely to accept such a request.

During his discussions in Washington, the Israeli prime minister sought to justify continued Israeli freedom of action in Lebanon and Syria, arguing that such measures are necessary to counter regional threats. However, this issue also reveals a growing difference between the two allies. Israel prioritizes maximum operational flexibility, while the United States is increasingly focused on avoiding another prolonged regional conflict.



Beyond regional issues, Netanyahu's visit had a clear domestic dimension. The Israeli prime minister continues to face political challenges at home. For Israeli leaders, meetings with American presidents have always carried symbolic importance. A successful visit to Washington can be presented domestically as evidence of international legitimacy and continued American support. Netanyahu has frequently used his relationship with Washington as a political asset, and this visit was no exception.

4. Turning international diplomacy into domestic political capital: Beyond regional issues, Netanyahu's visit had a clear domestic dimension. The Israeli prime minister continues to face political challenges at home, including criticism over the handling of the Gaza war, internal divisions within his coalition, and questions regarding his political future. For Israeli leaders, meetings with American presidents have always carried symbolic importance. A successful visit to Washington can be presented domestically as evidence of international legitimacy and continued American support.

Netanyahu has frequently used his relationship with Washington as a political asset, and this visit was no exception. The image of close coordination with the US president was itself an important message for his domestic audience. In this sense, the trip was not only about foreign policy; it was also about political survival.

5. Securing US support over Gaza and managing international pressures: The Gaza war remained one of the most sensitive issues surrounding Netanyahu's visit. Israel continues to face international criticism over the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, while questions remain regarding the future governance and security structure of Gaza. Netanyahu's priority has been to maintain American political and military backing while resisting international pressures that could restrict Israel's strategic options.

However, the relationship between Washington and Tel Aviv has become more complicated. Although the United States remains Israel's strongest international supporter, Washington is also increasingly concerned about the regional and diplomatic costs of a prolonged conflict. This has created a delicate balance: the two sides remain strategic partners, but their priorities are not always identical.

6. Redefining Israel's place in America's Middle East strategy: Perhaps the most important outcome of Netanyahu's visit was the confirmation that the US-Israel relationship is entering a more complex phase. The alliance remains strong, but Washington appears increasingly determined to pursue its own regional calculations. Unlike previous periods, Israel can no longer assume that its security priorities will automatically become American policy.

Trump continues to maintain close relations with Israel, but his administration also seeks to avoid costly military commitments and pursue agreements that advance broader US interests. For Netanyahu, this represents a significant challenge. Maintaining Israeli influence in Washington now requires greater diplomatic effort and persuasion.

In sum, Netanyahu's visit to Washington was ultimately an attempt to manage a changing strategic environment. His objectives were clear: keep Iran under pressure, influence the future of US-Saudi relations, preserve Israel's military freedom of action, secure continued support over Gaza, and strengthen his political position at home.

However, the broader message of the visit was that the US-Israel alliance, while enduring, is evolving. Washington remains committed to Israel, but it is increasingly unwilling to allow a single partner to define the full scope of American policy in the Middle East.



Netanyahu's meeting with Trump not nearly as successful as he claims

By Mitchell Plitnick
President of ReThinking Foreign Policy

OPINION

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Washington last Tuesday to attend the funeral of devoted Israel loyalist hawk, Lindsey Graham, and to meet once again with US President Donald Trump. Before Graham's funeral, Netanyahu met with Trump for about 90 minutes. Both leaders had their entourages with them, so it was a formal meeting but also one that was less likely to have as profound an impact on decisions as others the two men have had, which have often been one-on-one discussions. Vice President JD Vance, the most Israel-skeptical of Trump's senior advisers, was present, among others, so any plans Netanyahu had of pushing new propaganda on Trump were not going to materialize. Neither Trump nor Netanyahu held a press briefing, and the White House offered little about the meeting, simply calling it "productive". Netanyahu later gushed in broad terms about the meeting, calling it "one of the best conversations I've ever had with our good friend, President Donald Trump". But the only specific point he cited was that they agreed that Iran should not obtain a nuclear weapon, a talking point that has become almost as banal and meaningless as a "peace process". The meeting was notable more for what was not said than what was. According to what little information did leak out of the meeting, the two sides did not discuss a potential attack on Iran's Pickaxe Mountain. Nor did the subject of any Israeli withdrawals from areas they currently occupy outside their internationally recognized borders (borders Israel has never formally declared or acknowledged) come up.

Targeting Iranian nuclear facilities

Israel has been peddling intelligence claiming that Iran has begun work on developing a nuclear weapon in the highly fortified mountain. Trump was informed of it and started threatening to attack the site. As usual, Trump was inconsistent about the attack, sometimes doubling down on it, other times backing off from it. But any ideas Netanyahu had about pressing him on it were shot down mere hours before he arrived in Washington. Speaking to Fox News, Trump said, "I don't need Bibi to tell me that," in reference to Pickaxe Mountain, indicating he was not pleased with the Israeli PM talking about the idea publicly before discussing it with Trump. It was thus a subject better avoided for Netanyahu. The fact that Trump has gone back to constantly repeating the mantra about not allowing Iran to have a nuclear weapon is telling, as is the fact that this was the only substantive point that Netanyahu repeated. Both speak



to an ongoing dearth of strategic thinking about the war. This war has not been about Iranian nuclear capacity for quite some time, if it ever really was. It has become focused on the Strait of Hormuz, a point of conflict where the greatest possible upside for the US and even Israel is a return to the status quo ante before the war started. It is impossible for conditions around the Strait to be any better than they were at the beginning of the war, and now, even restoring those conditions has become practically impossible. Both leaders, especially Trump, therefore, want to shift the focus back to the Iranian nuclear program. But even that is less advantageous than it once was. The US and Israel, much to the joy of the unlamented Senator Graham, bombed Iran rather than agreeing to a deal which would have seen Iran submit to unprecedentedly intrusive inspections and commit to enriching only as much uranium as needed for specific, civilian purposes. In addition to all the death, destruction, and econom-

↑
Palestinians run for cover as smoke and fire rise following an Israeli strike on the Al-Muttaqin Mosque in Gaza City near refugee camps on July 28, 2026.
● OMAR AL-QATTAA/AFP



↑
Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (front-2nd L), CIA Director John Ratcliffe (front-2nd R) and Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh (front-R) arrive for the funeral of Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., at the Washington National Cathedral on July 28, 2026.
● ALEX BRANDON/AP

ic and political problems that caused, it also changed Iran's calculus. Now, Iran has far more incentive to pursue a nuclear weapon. Further, even if, as I have suggested, they still perceive control of the Strait as a greater and safer deterrent than a nuclear weapon, they are far less likely to agree to any compromise on inspections with the United States, which has proven over and over that it will not keep its word. So, it would make sense for Iran to move significant nuclear equipment to the much less vulnerable Pickaxe Mountain. That doesn't necessarily mean that they are pursuing a nuclear weapon now, but it is certainly possible. But we have no way of knowing whether Iran is really ramping up its nuclear program to weapons-grade. Under the JCPOA, we would have, and we had the opportunity right before the war to get that insight back. We decided to slaughter people instead.



Netanyahu later gushed in broad terms about the meeting, calling it "one of the best conversations I've ever had with our good friend, President Donald Trump". But the only specific point he cited was that they agreed that Iran should not obtain a nuclear weapon, a talking point that has become almost as banal and meaningless as a "peace process". The meeting was notable more for what was not said than what was.

Iran's response

Trump has been threatening to launch a massive attack on Iran, but this seems like an escalatory step he is not likely to take. He halted the nightly bombing of Iran because his military advisors convinced him that it would lead nowhere and, given the United States' depleted resources in the Persian Gulf, it would lead to more American casualties. While Trump can often discard the advice of his own staff, this is an instance where he's likely to heed their counsel for now. As time goes on and Iran maintains its closure of the Strait of Hormuz while Ansarullah in Yemen continues to block Saudi ships in the Bab al-Mandab, Trump may turn again to the bombing that seems to be the only option he is willing to consider. This is another area where Netanyahu got less than he hoped from this "best conversation he ever had". Israel is content to see the US hit Iran and for Iran to lash out against its Persian Gulf neighbors, especially while it continues to occupy Lebanon and Syria and maintain a free hand in the West Bank and Gaza. But right now, the US is not really hitting Iran. Even after Iran and Ansarullah attacked Saudi Arabia and American positions in Jordan, the response from the American military, targeting Iranian allies in Iraq, was not escalatory but more of a calculated response. That is a long-range concern for Netanyahu, who is having a tough time selling the current standoff in the Strait and the surrounding region to the Israeli public as a success. And that is reflected in polls that consistently show Netanyahu has little hope of forming a governing coalition after the October election, while his opposition is much closer. No Israeli withdrawal Netanyahu has maintained both a lower level of killing in Lebanon and the charade of talks with the Lebanese government in Washington. In return, Trump has allowed him to run rampant in the West Bank and push Palestinians farther into an ever-shrinking slice of Gaza while allowing Israeli troops to continue killing Palestinian civilians there on a near-daily basis. The report that the two of them did not discuss an Israeli withdrawal reinforces the American scheme to separate the issue of Israel's invasion of Lebanon from the Iran war. They're pursuing that goal, with the indispensable help of Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, through the mechanism of Israeli-Lebanese direct talks, brokered by Washington. Although there is no hope that these talks can possibly reach a durable, or even implementable, agreement, they have the effect of turning the Lebanese government against part of itself, in Hezbollah, and have effectively made it much harder for Iran to force an Israeli withdrawal. Tehran has had to settle instead for getting the US to rein in Israel from the massive bombard-

ment of the country and forced evacuations of the southern part of Lebanon. Even further off the agenda is Israel's ongoing campaigns in Gaza and the West Bank. Iran has not, since the beginning of the war, felt it had the leverage to bring the question of Palestine into its list of demands in anything but the most indirect way. That position may not last, however. The current Iranian stance reflects the belief that the United States is not only untrustworthy but also incapable of sticking to a deal. That is a sensible conclusion from the many times an agreement seems to be close or even reached, only to fall apart because of an American action or sudden change of position. Iran also did not miss the fact that the MoU that Trump agreed to and so quickly abandoned was assailed by politicians and pundits from both the Democratic and Republican camps. This has led Iran from searching for a party that could deliver Trump and keep him on track to concluding that, regardless of who is in the White House, there is little hope of a sustainable, diplomatic agreement with Washington. This is why, among other reasons, it remains imperative that anyone who opposes the war support the MoU, not as a penalty for the US having started the war, but as the only sensible way forward, as I have argued. In the meantime, however, if Iran does not feel a diplomatic resolution is realistic, they are in a position to bring Israel's actions in the West Bank and, especially, in Gaza into the discourse. Right now, there is untapped potential in combining the two causes. Most advocates for Palestinian freedom are also protesting the war. Often, they talk about both together, but the issues are not completely wedded together in the broader political discourse. In part, this is due to Israel having stayed out of the latest round of fighting with Iran, but the biggest reason has been that Iran has not wanted to further complicate its own diplomacy with an effort that stands little chance of near-term success. But if Tehran no longer pursues a deal with the US, it will be much freer to incorporate the question of Palestine into the public statements about the war. This would breathe even more energy into an already healthy global anti-war movement, and, over time, could bring more countries into more active advocacy for ending the war and connecting Palestine to that ending. The downside is that Iran would experience even more extreme hardship with no end in sight. But the potential is not only a popular movement that fully merges Palestinian rights with opposition to this war but holds hope of forcing the international community to come together to act before calamity strikes.

The full article first appeared on Mondoweiss.

U17 Wrestling World Championships:

Ferasati wins gold as Iran gains early momentum in FS title race

Sports Desk

Iran's bid for a first freestyle team title in three years at the U17 Wrestling World Championships got off to a strong start in Baku as the country collected four medals, including one gold, across five weight classes on Saturday. The medal haul gave Iran an early lead in the team standings with 75 points, four ahead of Russia and five clear of Uzbekistan, at the end of the penultimate day of competition in the Azerbaijani capital. Amirali Ferasati headlined Iran's medal haul in the evening session by claiming gold in the 80kg class. The U17 Asian champion from May capped a dominant campaign, in which he outscored his opponents

33-2 across four bouts, with a 10-0 superiority victory over Hungary's Zeteny Tugyi in the final. Amirhossein Esmali was the other Iranian finalist of the day, settling for silver after a 7-4 defeat to Russia's Magomed Omarov in a thrilling 110kg final, adding to the superheavyweight silver medal he won at the U17 Asian Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam. Elsewhere, Arman Elahi (55kg) and Sam Arshad (65kg) claimed bronze medals in their respective divisions through the repechage. Elahi, who also entered the competition as the reigning Asian champion, suffered a 5-1 quarterfinal defeat to Jakhongir Tulkunov but was handed a second chance at a podium finish after the Uzbekistani

advanced to the final. The Iranian outclassed Hungary's Kyryl Shumeiko 7-0 in his first repechage bout before defeating Armenia's Davit Baleyan 5-2 in the bronze-medal match to finish joint third alongside India's Prathmesh Suryakant Patil. Colombia's Jovanni Fernando Tovar emerged as the surprise gold medalist in the 55kg class after a commanding 11-0 victory over Tulkunov in the final. Arshad, meanwhile, powered into the semifinals with three successive superiority wins but fell 5-4 to Uzbekistan's Shokhiddin Aliev. The Iranian bounced back with a 9-0 victory over Kazakhstan's Zamir Daniyar in the bronze-medal bout. Puerto Rico's Jovani Isa-

ias Solis claimed the other bronze medal, while Russia's Magomed Ibragimov defeated Aliev 12-6 to secure his country's second gold medal of the day. Amirali Ragheb was the other Iranian wrestler in action across the opening five weight classes, finishing empty-handed in the 48kg division after back-to-back defeats to India's Aaryan (10-0) and Azerbaijan's Huseyn Rzazade. The freestyle competition follows a disappointing Greco-Roman campaign for Iran in Baku last week, with the traditional powerhouse missing out on the team title for the first time in five editions. Amirreza Tahmasbpour and Alireza Rezaei won gold in the 60kg and 80kg

classes, respectively, while Amirreza Mehri (92kg) and Ali-Akbar Akou (110kg) added bronze medals as Iran finished third in the team standings with 96 points. Russia, eligible for team points for the first time since the 2021 edition, claimed the title with 127 points, while host Azerbaijan finished runner-up with 107 despite failing to win a single gold medal across the 10 weight classes.



Amirali Ferasati celebrates with the Iranian flag after claiming the freestyle 80kg gold medal at the U17 Wrestling World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan, on August 1, 2026.
● IAWFIR

Asian Youth & Junior Weightlifting Championships:

Iran names 26-member squad for Tashkent event

Sports Desk

Iran will be represented by 12 male and 14 female lifters across the two age groups at the upcoming Asian Youth & Junior Weightlifting Championships, which will kick off on Friday in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the Iranian Weightlifting Federation has confirmed. Iran will return to the competition after missing last year's event in Astana due to wartime circumstances in the country. In the women's competition, Yalda Sharifi and Hajar Moeini will compete in the youth 61kg event, while Maryam Keshtkar is set to contest the junior category



of the weight class. Mehraneh Mokhtari and Mehrra Savavardi have

been selected for the youth 69kg division, while Hanieh Sharifi and Hasti Sedighi

will compete in the junior event. Dina Taqizadeh (junior),

Nasim Qassemi (youth) and Anahita Zarei will compete in the 77kg division, with Zarei entered in both age categories. Mahsa Beheshti will lift in the junior 86kg and youth +77kg categories, looking to build on her impressive international breakthrough at the Islamic Solidarity Games, where she won a clean & jerk gold and two bronze medals. Ava Farhadi will also compete in the youth +77kg event. Hosna Amiri and Roya Nourinejad complete Iran's women's lineup in the junior +86kg class. The men's competition, meanwhile, will see Reza Zamani (youth) and Mehrab Davasari (junior) represent

Iran in the 70kg category. Kian Valipour (youth) and Mohammadamin Dadvand (youth and junior) have been selected for the 85kg division, while Mohammadjavad Beiranvand will compete in both the youth and junior 75kg events. Amirmohammad Rahmati, Hamidreza Zarei, who won two medals at the IWF World Junior Championships in Cairo in May, and Mahdi Asgari will contest the 95kg class, with Rahmati and Zarei entered in the junior competition and Asgari in the youth event. In the heavyweight divisions, Pouria Abbaspourian will compete in the youth +95kg category, while Taha

Nojavan is entered in both the youth +95kg and junior +110kg events. Farhad Qolizadeh, winner of three silver medals in Cairo, will lift in the junior 110kg class, while Taha Nemati Moqaddam – also a three-time silver medalist in the Egyptian capital – will represent Iran in the junior +110kg division. Iran will be aiming for another strong showing at the continental championships after producing a string of medal-winning performances in recent Asian age-group competitions, having won the men's junior team title in its previous appearance at the event in 2024.

Iran saber coach unfazed by poor World Ch'ships run, eyes Asian Games glory

Sports Desk

Iran's men's saber head coach, Mohammad Rahbari, downplayed his team's disappointing campaign at the World Fencing Championships in Hong Kong, insisting his ultimate goal is to deliver a strong performance at September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games. Ali Pakdaman's last-16 finish in the men's individual saber competition stood as Iran's best result in Hong Kong, as Mohammad Fotouhi, Nima Zahedi, and Taha Kargarpour failed to advance beyond the round of 64. Zahedi was beaten 15-13 by Uzbekistan's Sardor Abdurkarimbekov in his second knockout bout, while Kargarpour defeated Ukraine's Oleksiy Statsenko 15-13 before losing 15-11 to Russia's Kamil Ibragimov. Fotouhi suffered a 15-10 de-

feat to Saudi Arabia's Adel Almutairi in the opening knockout round. A 45-35 defeat to Japan for the Iranian quartet of Pakdaman, Fotouhi, Zahedi, and Kargarpour in the opening round of the team event on Thursday summed up the country's dismal campaign in Hong Kong. Pakdaman scored 24 of Iran's 35 points in the contest, while his three teammates combined for the remaining 11. "The results were not good at all and they need to be reviewed," Rahbari told ISNA after the championships. "We will give the fencers a few days of rest and then hold a video conference with our foreign coach, the technical committee, and the coaching staff to make decisions regarding the Asian Games." Rahbari said it was too early to determine whether chang-

es would involve personnel, training methods, or both, adding that a final decision would be made after discussions within the federation's technical committee. Asked about the team's biggest challenge, the former Olympian said Iran was going through a transitional period as it sought to balance the use of experienced athletes with the development of younger talent. "Unfortunately, we are going through a difficult period in saber fencing," he said. "We are in the middle of a generational transition, but at the same time we need experienced fencers for the Asian Games. "Our main target is the Asian Games, and we want to improve our level so that we can win a medal in Nagoya. After the Games, the transition process will be completed and we will rely more on

younger athletes." Rahbari noted that similar rebuilding phases had affected many leading nations, citing Romania as an example. "Romania won Olympic silver in 2012 and then went through a long transition period without major results before claiming a bronze medal at this year's World Championships," he said. "A transition takes time, but with the efforts of our athletes we hope to shorten that process and build a strong team for the Olympics while introducing more talented fencers to senior international competitions." Rahbari won the men's individual saber bronze medal at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games and was also part of the Iranian quartet, alongside Pakdaman and Fotouhi, that claimed bronze in the team event.



Chabahar moves toward becoming Iran’s year-round tourism hub



Martian Mountains
● snaptrip.com



Gulf of Oman coastline
● snaptrip.com



Lipar Lagoon
● snaptrip.com

Iranica Desk

At Iran’s southeastern edge, where the Mars-like mountains meet the endless blue waters of the sea and monsoon winds bring relief from the summer heat, the coastal city of Chabahar is emerging as a unique tourism destination shaped by nature, culture and climate. Located in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Chabahar is more than a travel destination. It is a meeting point of the sea, mountains, wetlands, palm groves and the traditions of a community known for its hospitality. From the rocky shores of Beris to the pink waters of Lipar Lagoon, and from the dramatic landscapes of Makoran to the calm waters of the Gulf of Oman, the region offers visitors a diverse range of natural attractions, according to chn.ir. With new investments in accommodation facilities, marine recreation, tourism projects and the promotion of its monsoon climate, Chabahar is entering a new

phase of development aimed at transforming the ocean port into a year-round destination for domestic and international visitors. Roozbeh Hassanpour, who is active in the tourism sector, said Chabahar represents more than a tourism location, describing it as a city where visitors can experience the combination of the sea, natural beauty and the distinctive culture of local communities. “When I first visited Chabahar, what impressed me most was the diversity of its natural attractions and landscapes,” Hassanpour said. He added that the Gulf of Oman coastline, Martian Mountains, Lipar Lagoon, Beris rocky coast and surrounding natural areas each offer unique experiences that make every visit different. Hassanpour highlighted Chabahar’s climate as one of its major advantages, saying that despite common perceptions about southern Iran’s heat, the city enjoys pleasant conditions during summer, particularly when monsoon winds arrive.

“The hospitality of the people of Chabahar is also an important part of the travel experience,” he said, adding that the warm and friendly attitude of local residents helps visitors feel welcome. He said Chabahar has the potential to become one of Iran’s leading tourism destinations, but emphasized that better promotion of attractions, expansion of accommodation facilities, development of marine activities and improved tourism infrastructure are needed to attract more domestic and foreign visitors. Meanwhile, Omar Baloch, deputy head of cultural affairs and tourism at the Chabahar Free Zone Organization, said the Makoran coastline has emerged in recent years as one of the country’s most important development areas, with significant potential in both economic and tourism sectors. He said the Chabahar Free Zone, while playing a key role in economic, logistics and transit activities, has also adopted a targeted approach toward

tourism development. “We believe balanced development can only be achieved when culture, society and social responsibilities receive attention alongside economic growth,” Baloch said. He added that social and cultural initiatives implemented by the organization have helped strengthen public trust and increase participation in tourism and cultural programs. Referring to the region’s natural attractions, Baloch said the Makoran coast benefits from exceptional geographical features. He described the Martian Mountains, with their distinctive geological formations and landscapes, as one of the rare natural phenomena in Iran and beyond. He also pointed to Lipar Lagoon, known as the “Pink Lake,” as another unique attraction, along with the scenic Beris coastline, coastal cliffs and the vast landscapes of Makoran. “These natural resources are valuable assets that must be properly introduced and managed,” he said.

Regarding accommodation capacity, Baloch said more than 1,400 accommodation beds are currently operating in Chabahar, but the growing number of visitors means additional capacity will be needed in the future. He said around 3,000 new accommodation units, including hotels, guesthouses and eco-lodges, are currently under construction. Some of these projects are expected to become operational by the end of 2025, with the remainder scheduled for completion in 2026. According to Baloch, expanding accommodation capacity will not only improve tourism services but also contribute to employment and economic growth in the region. He also highlighted Chabahar’s potential for marine tourism, saying the city’s direct access to the sea provides significant opportunities for water-based recreational activities. The Chabahar Free Zone Organization has supported investors seeking to enter the sector, he said, adding that a modern marine rec-

reation complex near Lipar coast is under construction and is expected to open by the end of 2025. Baloch also said international studies are underway for investment opportunities in the sixth zone of the Free Zone’s tourism area, with the goal of attracting projects that meet global standards. He further pointed to the planned 103-hectare lake project as one of Chabahar’s major tourism initiatives. The project, he said, could provide families with a safe environment for water-based activities, particularly for visitors who may be hesitant to use open sea facilities. The artificial lake is expected to diversify tourism services in the region and enhance visitors’ experiences, he added. With its unique combination of coastal landscapes, cultural heritage and expanding infrastructure, Chabahar is seeking to establish itself as a major tourism hub along the Makoran coast and a destination capable of attracting visitors throughout the year.

How modern museums began in Iran

Iranica Desk

When the question of Iran’s “first museum” is raised, many people immediately think of the National Museum of Iran — formerly known as the Museum of Ancient Iran. Yet the history of museum development in the country is more nuanced. The answer depends largely on how the term “museum” is defined. If the criterion is the first space dedicated to displaying historical objects, the story begins during the reign of Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah at Golestan Palace. If the focus is on the first official museum institution, Dar ul-Funun holds that distinction. And if the benchmark is the first purpose-built museum building, then the Museum of Ancient Iran — today’s National Museum of Iran — is unquestionably the answer according to ISNA. The first serious step toward modern museology in Iran came during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah. Inspired by the great museums he visited during his travels to Europe, he ordered the demolition of



Dar ul-Funun School
● wikipedia.org



Mirror Hall
● hamshahronline.ir



National Museum of Iran
● irannationalmuseum.ir

part of the northern section of Golestan Palace to make way for a new complex that would house historical artifacts, a library, a grand hall, and a traditional pool chamber. The project resulted in the construction of the famed Mirror Hall, where precious objects, gifts from foreign monarchs and governments, historical artifacts, and the royal jewels were displayed. Many historians regard it as Iran’s first museum space in the modern sense. In fact, Naser al-Din Shah had already become familiar with the concept of a museum before his journeys to Europe and had designated a hall as the “Museum Room.” However, his travels abroad strengthened his deter-

mination to establish a proper museum. The construction of the Mirror Hall — also referred to as the “New Museum Room” — turned that ambition into reality. Historical accounts suggest that the Qajar ruler considered the project so important that he personally supervised the arrangement of the exhibits with meticulous attention. Several decades later, museum culture in Iran expanded beyond the royal court and assumed a broader public and educational role. In 1916, the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, under the initiative of Morteza-Qoli Khan Momtaz al-Molk, allocated one of the halls of Dar ul-Funun School to serve as a museum. A collection of historical and archaeolog-

ical objects was opened to the public, an event many scholars identify as the beginning of Iran’s first official museum. The collection was later transferred to the Masoudieh Mansion. A few years afterward, in 1923, a specialized museum dedicated to the study of weapons and military history was established at Tehran’s Military Academy. This period represents the transition from the royal museums of the Qajar era to the specialized museums that emerged under the Pahlavi dynasty. On May 11, 1929, construction began on the Museum of Ancient Iran, the first building in the country designed from the outset specifically as a museum.

The museum was designed by the French architect and archaeologist André Godard and built by two Iranian master builders, Abbas-Ali Memar and Ostad Morad Tabrizi. The structure occupies a site of approximately 5,500 square meters, with nearly 2,744 square meters of built-up area. The museum officially opened its doors to the public in 1937, marking a milestone in Iran’s cultural heritage. For the first time, the country had a purpose-built, modern museum that brought together a comprehensive collection of its archaeological treasures under one roof. Today, the National Museum of Iran consists of two main sections: the Museum of Ancient Iran, which

houses artifacts spanning from prehistory to the end of the Sassanid Empire, and the Museum of the Islamic Era, inaugurated in 1996, which displays works from Iran’s Islamic period. With a collection of more than three million historical objects, the National Museum of Iran remains one of the Middle East’s foremost institutions for archaeology and cultural heritage. Beyond preserving artifacts, the National Museum of Iran has played a central role in archaeological research, conservation, and public education. Its collections continue to provide valuable insight into the cultural, artistic, and technological achievements of successive Iranian civilizations, making

the museum not only a repository of the past but also a bridge connecting Iran’s rich heritage with future generations. The evolution from the royal collections of the Qajar court to a modern national museum also reflects broader social and cultural changes in Iran. What began as a display intended for the monarchy gradually developed into a public institution dedicated to scholarship, education, and the preservation of the nation’s historical identity. Today, the museum remains one of the country’s most important cultural landmarks, attracting researchers and visitors from around the world who seek to better understand the history of the Iranian Plateau.



Population tops 87m as Iran gears up for first digital census

Social Desk

Iran's population has exceeded 87 million, moving to within 128,000 people of the official year-end forecast, while the country is preparing to hold its first nationwide register-based digital census later this year, the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) said on Sunday.

The SCI said Iran's population had reached 87.006 million, up from its previous estimate of 86.562 million. The agency had forecast the population would go beyond 87.13 million by the end of the current Iranian year in March 2027, meaning 99.8% of that projection has already been achieved.

If the current pace of natural population growth continues, Iran is expected not only to hit that target but also edge past it. The SCI estimates that of the projected 87.13 million people

by the end of the year, about 67.13 million, or 77%, live in urban areas, while 20 million, or 23%, reside in rural areas, reflecting the continued shift toward cities.

The average household size has fallen to 3.2 people, the lowest level since the 1950s, according to the SCI. The trend reflects changing lifestyles, later marriages, lower fertility and a growing number of one- and two-person households.

Official data for last year showed 892,000 births and 460,000 deaths, resulting in a crude birth rate of 10.3 per 1,000 people, a crude death rate of 5.3 per 1,000 and natural population growth of 432,000 people, equivalent to an annual growth rate of about 0.5%.

Nearly two births were registered for every death, indicating a relatively young population despite a declining birth trend.



Births peaked during the summer, while deaths were highest in the spring.

Assuming natural population growth continues at an average of about 36,000 people a month, Iran's population could reach around 87.186 million by year-end, exceeding the SCI's forecast by about 52,000 people.

Record-based national census

Meanwhile, SCI chief Gholamreza Goudarzi said Iran's nationwide population and housing census, scheduled for November, would mark a "turning point" for the country's statistical system by relying on administrative and digital records instead of tradi-



People walk in the Grand Bazaar in Tehran, Iran on July 20, 2026.

● REUTERS

tional door-to-door surveys.

Goudarzi said the success of the census would depend on the quality of administrative and registry data supplied by government agencies, according to IRNA.

Instead of large-scale field operations, the SCI will compile, match and analyze information from government databases, including civil registration, education and property records.

Goudarzi said the new methodology would cut down on costs while improving the speed and accuracy of official statistics.

He also called for public awareness campaigns to begin immediately because of the different approach being adopted and expressed hope the exercise would

become a "modern, scientific and low-cost experience".

Pilot projects and the required technical infrastructure have already been tested in Isfahan, Khuzestan and Hamadan provinces.

Officials say the project is a key step toward integrating population data and expanding electronic government services.

Iran last conducted a national population and housing census in 2016, when the SCI recorded a population of nearly 80 million, including 59.1 million urban residents and 20.7 million living in rural areas. The annual population growth rate compared with the 2011 census was 1.24%.

Iran, which covers 1.64 million square kilometers and is divided into 31 provinces, is the world's 17th-largest country by land area and the 17th-most populous.



Vocalist Hadi Feizabadi joins Tehran Symphony Orchestra for 'Khosouf' performance

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian vocalist Hadi Feizabadi will join the Tehran Symphony Orchestra for upcoming performances of 'Khosouf,' one of the country's leading contemporary symphonic works inspired by the tragedy of Karbala, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Feizabadi will perform the vocal sections of 'Khosouf,' composed by Mohammad Saeed Sharifian, alongside the Tehran Symphony Orchestra under guest conductor Arash Amini and the orchestra's choir led by Behrang Shegarfkar.

The performances are scheduled for August 6 and 7 at 9:30 p.m. at Tehran's Vahdat Hall.

'Khosouf' is regarded as one of the landmark works of contemporary Iranian symphonic music. Inspired by the epic of Ashura and the tragedy of Karbala, it combines a symphony orchestra, choir and solo voice to present a musical interpretation of sacrifice, freedom, faith and the search for truth.

The addition of Feizabadi is expected to round out the work's vocal dimension and complete its musical narrative.

Feizabadi is a well-known Iranian vocalist who has performed with a number of orchestras and appeared in numerous musical productions. His participation in 'Khosouf' will be his lat-

est collaboration with the Tehran Symphony Orchestra.

'Khosouf,' which literally means an eclipse of the moon in Persian, is considered one of the most significant works in Iran's symphonic repertoire related to Karbala, where Imam Hussein (PBUH), the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the third Imam of Shia Muslims, was martyred more than 14 centuries ago in an unequal battle against the forces of Yazid, the tyrannical ruler at the time.

The work brings together the expressive power of a symphony orchestra, choir and solo voice to explore themes of mourning, sacrifice, freedom, faith and the pursuit of truth.

Rather than relying on direct narration, it invites audiences to reflect on the human dimensions of the Karbala tragedy through music, offering a distinctive blend of symphonic performance with religious and cultural themes.

The two-night performance will give audiences an opportunity to take in a symphonic interpretation of one of the defining events in Shia history.

Writers from 38 countries submit over 16,000 entries for Minab story prize

Arts & Culture Desk

A total of 3,354 writers from 38 countries have submitted 16,158 entries for the inaugural international six-word story prize, "Minab School: 168 Unfinished Short Stories," IRNA reported on Sunday, as the competition commemorates schoolchildren killed in a US missile strike on a school in southern Iran.

Organizers said the strong international response marked broad participation in the literary initiative and announced the names of writers whose submissions met the competition's criteria and made it through to the judging stage.

The entries came from Iran, Argentina, Germany, the United States, Indonesia, Armenia, Uruguay, Australia, Spain, Afghanistan, Algeria, Italy, Brunei, Belgium, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Portugal, Tunisia, China, Russia, Romania, Japan, Chile, Serbia, Iraq, France, the Philippines, Cameroon, South Korea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Egypt, Nicaragua, India and Yemen.

Because of the large number of submissions, the need for care-



The photo shows what is left of a primary school in Minab, southern Iran, after a US strike that killed 168 people, mostly schoolchildren on February 28, 2026.

● IRNA

ful evaluation and conditions in Iran due to an ongoing war, organizers said the closing ceremony would likely be held by the end of September, with the exact date and details to be announced later.

The competition is organized by the Office of Persian Literature and Language and focuses on the themes of children's rights, peace, patriotism and hope.

Its defining feature is a strict minimalist format, requiring participants to tell a story in only six words while leaving room for interpretation and continuation in the reader's mind.

Each writer was allowed to submit up to six entries.

Submissions are being evaluated by a panel of Iranian and international judges. Winners will receive a trophy, a commemorative certificate and cash prizes, with organizers saying the award aims to open a new chapter in ultra-short fiction.

The competition follows the US missile strike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh School in Minab on February 28, 2026, which killed at least 168 people, including 150 schoolboys and schoolgirls aged between seven and 12.

The attack has been remembered in Iran and beyond as a despicable crime.

America's plan to ...

Nevertheless, media outlets affiliated with the United States and Israel

Page 1 > launched a psychological campaign from the outset of the war aimed at damaging Iran's relations with Arab countries—a propaganda line that continues to this day.

After this introduction, an important question must be addressed: What is America's objective in this ominous plan? The answer is that the United

States has a long history of engineering regional wars in the Middle East. For instance, in the 1970s, during the Republican presidency of Ronald Reagan, Washington provoked Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime into attacking Iran, drawing two major and powerful countries of the region into an eight-year war of attrition that weakened both. Today, under domestic and international pressure, America seeks to gradually extricate itself from direct confronta-

tion with Iran and transfer the front of conflict and tension to Arab countries as its proxy forces. By implementing this policy, the financial costs and human casualties of the war will be shifted from the American government onto Arab nations and governments. At the same time, through the sale of weapons and related equipment, the United States will plunder Arab countries, diverting capital that should be spent on their development into the military domain.

Israel strongly welcomes this plan, as Tel Aviv's explicit strategic policy is to weaken all Middle Eastern countries other than the Zionist regime.

It is expected that statesmen and political elites in Arab countries—particularly those on the shores of the Persian Gulf, many of whom, especially the younger generation, are educated and familiar with the rules of the international environment—will, taking into account their own national interests and security, cor-

rectly assess the battlefield of Hormuz, distinguish between true friends and enemies, and refrain from entering this dangerous American and Zionist game.

Instead of playing on America's field and incurring enormous costs from the pockets of Arab nations, they should contemplate improving strategic relations with Iran as their historical and permanent neighbor, and believe that genuine peace and security depend on historical, geographical, cultural, and religious ties.