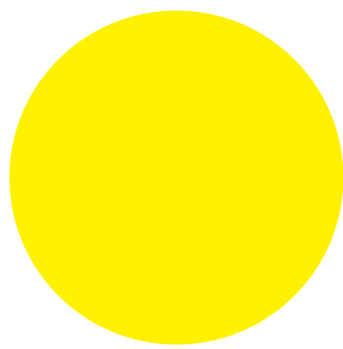


Iran Daily staff would like to wish a very happy National Reporter Day to all the journalists, those who continue to do their job with courage and integrity, no matter what, even in the middle of a war. Your commitment to telling the truth and covering the news fairly is something we truly admire.



Diplomacy continues in wartime, with language suited to new realities: *Deputy FM*

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Tehran Symphony Orchestra stages 'Khosouf' inspired by Karbala tragedy

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Members of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra perform at the iconic Vahdat Hall in Tehran, Iran, on August 6, 2026. **DIDHONAR**

Pakistan envoy: Lasting security requires regional solutions

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

As tensions between Iran and the United States escalated in early 2026, Pakistan emerged as an unexpected yet increasingly credible mediator after traditional intermediaries such as Oman were unable to advance the process. With direct channels of communication to both Tehran and Washington, and its own strategic interest in regional stability, Islamabad quietly positioned itself as a bridge, facilitating dialogue, helping de-escalate tensions, and providing a back channel for communication when official diplomatic avenues remained closed. But mediation is only one aspect of the broader relationship between Tehran and Islamabad.



Imran Ahmed Siddiqui

Iran and Pakistan also cooperate on energy, trade, border security and counter-terrorism. In an interview with Iran Daily, Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, discussed Islamabad's mediation efforts, the future of bilateral ties, and Pakistan's vision for a region often defined by conflict rather than cooperation. He stressed that security is a shared concern among all regional countries, which have deep religious, cultural and historical ties, adding that only regional initiatives can provide a lasting solution to the region's security challenges.

IRAN DAILY: Have Iran-Pakistan relations entered a new phase following the war launched by the United States and Israel?

SIDDIQUI: Pakistan and Iran have enjoyed very close and cordial relations since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, and both countries have always sought to strengthen and fortify those ties. Efforts are continuing in line with the vision of the leadership of both countries. Trade, commercial exchanges, cultural cooperation and people-to-people contacts are all very important in this regard. These efforts are ongoing. A number of delegations from Iran have visited Pakistan, and several delegations from Pakistan are due to visit Iran to discuss these issues, remove existing impediments, and promote closer and more fruitful commercial relations as well as greater cultural cooperation.

What is Pakistan's top priority in its relations with Iran: border security, trade, energy or regional cooperation?

All these areas are integral parts of the bilateral relationship. Both sides have agreed to increase bilateral trade to \$10 billion, and we are working towards that goal. At present, a trade delegation is visiting Pakistan to discuss the existing impediments and how they can be removed in order to further strengthen the commercial dimension of our relationship. We are focusing on that. At the same time, there is also great potential to expand cultural exchanges and strengthen political cooperation at multiple levels.

Given its close ties with China, the Arab states and Iran, Pakistan is in a unique position to play a mediating role. Has Islamabad made full use of this capacity, and how has it approached this role?

We enjoy good relations with all our brothers, and this naturally facilitates closer engagement and gives us credibility with all countries. We are pleased to be in a position where we can engage on issues that need to be resolved and help promote reconciliation, friendship and good neighborly relations.

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Iran urges deeper EAEU ties, offers trade and energy capacity

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Diplomacy continues in wartime, with language suited to new realities: *Deputy FM*



Kazem Gharibabadi
● IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said diplomacy does not come to a halt even during war, but stressed that the foreign ministry's messages, positions and language must be tailored to war-time conditions. Responding to criticism over the foreign ministry's handling of diplomacy during the latest conflict, Gharibabadi said diplomatic efforts continue during war, although the tone adopted by diplomats cannot mirror that used in peacetime. Gharibabadi made the remarks

during an interview with IRNA. A new round of negotiations between Iran and the United States resulted in the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, after which the United States resumed its aggression against Iran. The developments drew criticism of Iran's diplomatic apparatus, while others accused the Foreign Ministry of failing to throw its weight behind diplomacy as a tool to bring the conflict to an end. Addressing critics who argue that the diplomatic front should not employ the same rhetoric as the military front,

Gharibabadi said keeping diplomatic channels open during wartime was a valid position because most wars have ultimately been settled through diplomacy and negotiations. At the same time, he rejected suggestions that Iranian diplomats should speak in the same manner during war as they do in peacetime. "How can some people expect our language in wartime to be the same as in peacetime? That is simply not possible," he said. Gharibabadi argued that adopting a softer tone toward a "treacherous enemy" that is

killing innocent Iranians, targeting the country's infrastructure and striking civilian sites would be counterproductive. He said it would not be appropriate for Iranian diplomats to respond to such actions by calmly saying, "We are ready for dialogue and negotiations," adding that such an approach would only encourage the adversary to expand its attacks. Repeating his argument that wartime rhetoric cannot resemble peacetime language, Gharibabadi said speaking in a softer tone would lead the enemy to conclude that Iran had become vulnerable or weak.

Speaker raps failed US strategy of 'bullying, broken promises'

International Desk

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf dismissed Washington's recent maneuvers as empty "theatre diplomacy," declaring that the United States' strategy of threats, broken promises and fabricated narratives has failed and that Tehran will not engage in further theatrics.

In a post on X on Thursday evening, Qalibaf pointed to the rapid shift from threats of a "massive attack" to sudden calls for negotiation, describing it as a recurring pattern of insincere diplomacy. "Massive attack coming... wait, never mind, they want to negotiate. That's theater diplomacy on loop," he wrote. Qalibaf stressed that reliance on bullying, unfulfilled commitments and fake news as tools



Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf
● ICANA

of pressure constitutes a failed approach. He called on the other side to acknowledge established facts and honor previous ceasefire commitments rather than continue the cycle of empty threats and sudden reversals. "Using bullying + broken promises + fake news as leverage is a failed strategy. Acknowledge the facts and fulfill your commitments. We don't need more theater," the

speaker stated.

The remarks come as Iranian officials continue to underline the Islamic Republic's principled stance in the face of external pressure, insisting that genuine diplomacy requires honesty and adherence to prior agreements rather than staged displays of force followed by abrupt retreats. The US and the Israeli regime jointly launched an unprovoked aggres-

sion against Iran on February 28 by targeting Iran's top officials and also an elementary school in Minab, south of the country, killing 168 children, teachers, and parents.

In response, Iranian armed forces launched powerful reprisal attacks against US and Israeli assets in the region, dealing heavy blows to the invading coalition. The war came to a halt after 40 days with a ceasefire, which was then formalized in mid-June by signing the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding by the presidents of Iran and the US. However, just weeks following signing the document, the US started violating the terms of the understanding, igniting another round of war during which the US targeted civilian infrastructure across southern Iranian provinces.

Iran says US nuclear policies threaten humanity

Iran warned of the catastrophic consequences of the United States' continued expansion and modernization of its nuclear arsenal, saying Washington's nuclear policies threaten all humanity decades after it became the only country to use atomic weapons in warfare. Iran's permanent mission in Vienna issued a statement to mark the anniversary of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, describing the attacks as a lasting reminder of the devastating human consequences of nuclear weapons, Press TV reported. "Preventing future tragedies such as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki requires genuine commitment to nuclear disarmament and the establishment of a world free from weapons of mass destruction," the mission said.

It emphasized that the mass deaths, widespread destruction and deadly radiation caused by the US bombings, whose effects were felt even by generations born afterward, underscore the urgent need to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

"As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Iran supports the total elimination of all nuclear weapons, reaffirms its unwavering commitment to a world free of them, and at the same time, defends its legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear science and energy." The Iranian mission noted that the United States remains the only country to have used nuclear weapons in warfare, while continuing to expand and modernize its nuclear arsenal. The statement came as Hiroshima on Thursday marked the 81st anniversary of the US atomic bombing of the Japa-

nese city.

Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui denounced major powers for justifying nuclear weapons through the concept of so-called deterrence, warning that such policies could fuel cycles of violence.

"Downplaying the inhumanity of nuclear weapons and accepting the use of force to pursue one's own prosperity risk cycles of violent retaliation that could ultimately result in another Hiroshima or Nagasaki," Matsui stated. Matsui stressed that the continued belief in nuclear deterrence "simply pushes a world without nuclear weapons further into the distance." United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also called for renewed efforts to eliminate nuclear threats, describing Hiroshima as "an inspiring example of resilience, renewal and hope." "The horror of nuclear weapons is just one lesson of Hiroshima. Another is the need to build a world in which the threat or use of these weapons becomes unthinkable," Guterres said in a written statement.

The anniversary came amid growing debate in Japan over its longstanding non-nuclear policy, as Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's government considers changes to the country's security and defense framework later this year. Takaichi's government is considering a review of Japan's three non-nuclear principles, which prohibit possessing nuclear weapons, producing them and allowing their introduction into Japanese territory.

Takaichi has specifically advocated reviewing the third principle, which potentially allows the US to deploy nuclear weapons across Japan.

Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan sign 'defense deal'

International Desk

Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan signed a joint defense agreement on Friday amid tensions in the region caused by the US-Israeli aggression against Iran in February.

In a joint statement published by the official Saudi press agency and Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, the three countries announced the signing of the "Mecca Joint Defense Agreement".

They declared a "shared commitment to further strengthening their collective security and to promoting peace, security and stability in the region and beyond".

The Pakistani Foreign Ministry said the pact meant an attack on any member would be regarded as an attack on all, adding it was "intended to strengthen collective deterrence". Since the onset of the regional war, Saudi Arabia has grown closer to Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan, which have been pushing for mediation and a resolution to the conflict.

A source close to the Saudi military and government told AFP before the signing that although the agreement



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan (L), Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (C), and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pose after signing a joint defense agreement in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on August 7, 2026.
● SAUDI PRESS AGENCY

had been under discussion for a long time, "the latest developments in the region expedite it". Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif signed the agreement in Mecca. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan had already announced a mutual defense

pact in 2025, a move that drew attention because Pakistan is the Muslim world's only nuclear-armed state. Pakistan has also sought to mediate efforts to end the US-Iran war, while Turkey has played a diplomatic role in negotiations aimed at ending the war in Gaza.

The deal also comes as a truce between Riyadh and Yemen has broken down, with Yemeni Armed Forces launching attacks on Saudi soil and declaring a maritime blockade against Saudi Arabia in response to Saudis' siege on their neighboring country.

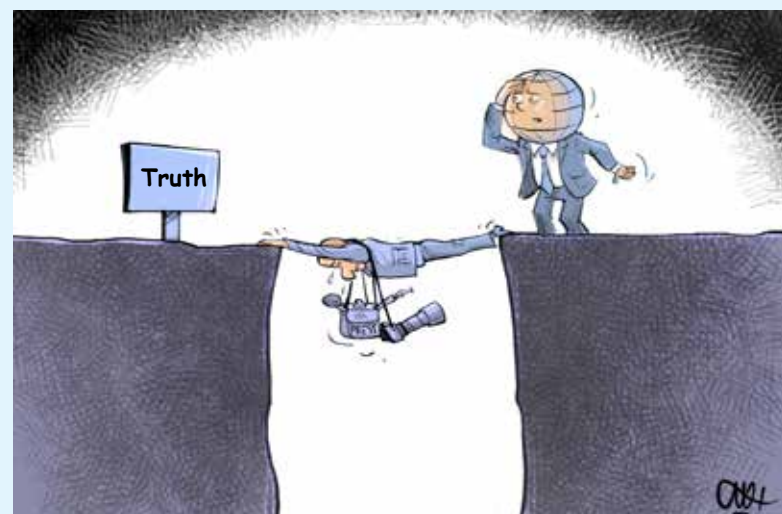
Hizam al-Assad, a member of the political bureau of Yemen's Ansarullah movement, reacted to the pact in a post on X, saying that, "There is no security for the invading Saudi forces, nor for their mercenaries, nor for their camps on our land".

"Our armed forces are compelled to reclaim our rights, lift the siege on our country, and confront every individual who obstructs our people's path towards attaining their rights, freedom, and independence, regardless of their nationality," he said in a separate post.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iranica Desk

Qaemshahr is one of the major cities in Mazandaran Province, located in the central part of the province amid lush plains and the ancient Hyrcanian forests. Thanks to its favorable geographical location, easy accessibility, and remarkable variety of natural attractions, the city has become one of the popular tourism destinations in northern Iran.

From dense forests and protected areas to wetlands, natural lakes, dams, and forest parks, every corner of Qaemshahr offers a different glimpse of Mazandaran's natural beauty. In addition to its natural attractions, the city's historical and religious sites add to its appeal, making it an ideal destination for nature lovers, photographers, hikers, and family travelers. Its mild climate, diverse vegetation, and pristine landscapes, especially during spring and autumn, provide visitors with an opportunity to experience tranquility in the heart of nature, according to kojaro.com. Here are some of the most notable attractions of Qaemshahr, each representing a part of the city's natural and tourism potential.

Khiboos and Anjilsi Protected Area

Khiboos and Anjilsi Protected Area, one of Qaemshahr's natural attractions, stretches from the southern forests near Qadikola in Qaemshahr to the Bagh-e Kuh and Berenjestanak areas of Shirgah. It is one of Iran's four types of protected areas under the supervision of Iran's Department of Environment. Covering an area of 3,471 hectares, the protected forest lies at elevations ranging from 250 to 930 meters above sea level and enjoys a humid and temperate climate.

The area is home to parts of the Hyrcanian forests and untouched boxwood vegetation. Its rich biodiversity, pristine landscapes, and relatively undisturbed forests have made it an attractive destination for many visitors.

Important tree species found in the region include hornbeam, oak, beech, maple, linden, elm, ironwood, and alder. The wildlife of the protected forest includes valuable species such as red deer, roe deer, leopard, brown bear, jackal, wild boar, red fox, badger, porcupine, squirrel, wood pigeon, black-throated thrush, songbirds, and water snakes.



● climbers.ir



● neshan.org

Zamzam Dam

Zamzam Dam, also known as Berenjestanak Dam, is among the popular attractions of Qaemshahr. It is located eight kilometers along the Qaemshahr-Tehran road, near Berenjestanak village, within the boundaries of the Khiboos protected area. The dam is 242 meters long, 10 meters wide, and 32 meters high from the foundation, with a water storage capacity of approximately nine million cubic meters.

The dam was built to store water and provide irrigation for nearby agricultural lands and rice paddies during periods of water shortage. Today, however, the surrounding forest landscape has turned it into an attractive destination for nature enthusiasts.

Visitors can enjoy the peaceful scenery, take photographs of the forest and water views, and experience boating in the area. Those who arrive early in the morning can also enjoy the beautiful sunrise over the tranquil landscape.

Kutna Forest

Located southeast of Qaemshahr, the beautiful village of Kutna is home to one of the region's most scenic forest areas. The name Kutna literally means "lonely mountain," and the area has attracted many visitors due to its distinctive geographical features and natural beauty.

The road leading to Kutna Forest passes through vast plains and picturesque rice fields, creating a breathtaking landscape, especially in spring and summer. The meeting point of open fields and dense forests offers visitors a unique experience of northern Iran's natural environment.

One of the most remarkable features of Kutna Forest is the river that flows through its green landscape. The presence of flowing water alongside dense vegetation creates a cool and pleasant retreat for nature lovers. Kutna Forest is beautiful throughout the year, but it becomes particularly attractive in autumn, when colorful foliage provides an excellent setting for photography and nature walks.



● kojaro.com

Seyyed Abu Saleh Tomb

The Tomb of Seyyed Abu Saleh, an 11th-century Persian ascetic and scholar, is one of Qaemshahr's historical and religious attractions and is located in Seyyed Abu Saleh village. The tomb is a square brick structure decorated on the exterior with geometric designs and abstract cypress motifs made of plaster.

The entrance door of the tomb features wood carvings and inscriptions, including a hadith along with the names of the founder and carpenter. Inside the structure, there is a wooden cenotaph and shrine dating back to 1324 AH. Its inscription, written in Naskh script, includes Qur'anic verses, poetry, hadiths, and the name of the person who commissioned the wooden structure. The tomb represents an example of the region's traditional craftsmanship and religious architecture.



● kojaro.com

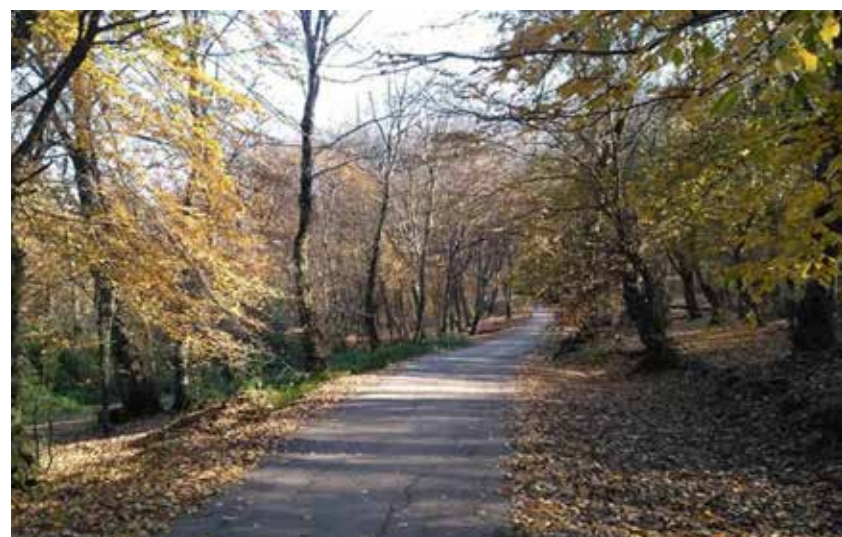
Golpol Lake

Golpol Lake is located southeast of Qaemshahr, beyond Berenjestanak village and Zamzam Dam, surrounded by a beautiful forest landscape. The freshwater lake consists of two separate ponds and serves as a habitat for various fish and bird species.

Although swimming is not recommended in the lake, its exceptional forest scenery makes it one of the most attractive recreational sites in Qaemshahr. The peaceful environment, natural surroundings, and beautiful views make it a suitable place for photography, relaxation, and enjoying the region's untouched landscapes.



● kojaro.com



● kojaro.com

Telar Forest Park

Telar Forest Park is located at the end of Nezam Road, at the western entrance of Qaemshahr. With its vast area, old trees, scenic beauty, and peaceful atmosphere, the park welcomes many visitors and travelers throughout the year.

In addition to its natural attractions, Telar Forest Park offers various facilities that make it suitable for spending a full day in nature. The park includes shops, restrooms, designated walking paths, and numerous pavilions. Some of these facilities require separate fees for use.

Visitors who wish to spend the night in the forest can also stay in the luxury cabins built within the park. The combination of natural surroundings and recreational facilities has made Telar one of the most popular leisure destinations in Qaemshahr.

Valiasr Park

Located in the center of Qaemshahr, Valiasr Park has become a popular gathering place for families and visitors due to its pleasant environment and suitable facilities. The park is designed to provide a safe and enjoyable space where parents can allow their children to play and spend leisure time. Dedicated children's play areas, walking paths, and seating spaces have made the park a suitable destination for families throughout the day and evening.



● kojara.com



● kojara.com

Gerd Kuh

The Gerd Kuh Hill is an archeological site located in the Jamanan district of Qaemshahr. Jamanan was historically a center of local governance and today serves as the main entrance route to the villages of Bozorg Qadikola and Ahangar Kola. Gerd Kuh consists of three large ancient mounds, the highest of which rises 26 meters above the surrounding area. The antiquity of these mounds is estimated to date back to the Iron Age. Archaeological excavations in the area have uncovered a cemetery dating back to approximately 2,500 BCE, along with artifacts such as pottery vessels from the Sassanid and Parthian periods. Archaeological evidence suggests that the hills were used for military purposes during the Sassanid era and after the Arab conquest of Iran. The tallest mound, standing 26 meters high, is believed to have functioned as a military fortress. Located southeast of Qaemshahr, the Gerd Kuh was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 2003 as one of the country's historical monuments.

Karchang Wetland

Karchang Wetland, with an area of about 12 hectares, is one of Qaemshahr's lesser-known natural attractions. In recent years, the wetland has experienced a decline in water levels due to reduced rainfall; however, it remains a worthwhile destination for nature lovers. Because relatively few tourists are aware of this wetland, it has maintained a peaceful and pristine atmosphere. Visitors can enjoy the surrounding nature in a quiet environment away from crowded tourist areas. Karchang Wetland is also known as Karchang Pond. With its diverse natural landscapes, forests, wetlands, and cultural heritage sites, Qaemshahr offers visitors a unique opportunity to experience the beauty of Mazandaran and discover one of northern Iran's attractive yet less-explored destinations.



● kojara.com

Waking in traditional Iranian village home

Deep unscientific analysis of sleeping on floor in Iran

➤ Ali Torkzadeh & Saeideh Ajilchi
Travel bloggers

PERSPECTIVE

On our fifth day of unplanned, mostly aimless escape from Tehran, we woke up on the floor of a village home 30 minutes outside Sari, the capital of the coastal province of Mazandaran. There are no beds or dining tables in Iranian traditional homes. Everything — sleeping, eating, receiving of guests — happens on Persian rugs covering most of the floors wall to wall. In the evening, the bedding is rolled out on the floor.

floor futons — rolled out on Persian rugs. Many Iranians believe sleeping on the floor is healthier because the body receives energy from the earth when it is in direct contact with the ground. Saeideh isn't totally convinced about this theory, "but then when I'm totally exhausted and my back hurts, I recover faster when I sleep on the ground." Some Iranians, like Saeideh's grandmother, eschew apartment living because it's "without spirit" because of the lack of direct contact with the earth. City dwellers in Iran tend to associate sleeping on the floor with backward-



➤ A traditional home in the village of Seyyed Mahaleh, near Sari, Mazandaran Province, Iran
● escapefromtehran.com

In the morning, the bedding is rolled back up and stored in a corner. This automatically takes care of making your own bed. The kitchen is basic, at best. Sometimes there's not even a stove inside in favor of something primitive outside to do away with the problem of the cooking fumes.

Health of sleeping on the floor in an Iranian village home

Like most Iranians, both Saeideh and I prefer to sleep on the floor, on the traditional bedroll — similar to Japanese

ness. Other Iranians, like me, associate sleeping on the floor with humility. I think my belief is from my childhood, 50 years ago, when Iranians were, let's say, more earthy.

Iranians yearning for all things Western

Cultural amnesia is exactly the ailment of many modern Iranians, particularly the ones living in Tehran. This yearning for the West is so prominent that there's even a word for it: "Gharbzadegi". I know because I had to actually read a book by that title in graduate school. City slickers shun the old world and the old way of doing things in favor of the Western lifestyles depicted on satellite TV.

“

When I wake on the floor of a village home, I don't mind the lack of comforts. Something in me is at peace. Probably has to do with my childhood memories of staying at the traditional homes of my grandparents in Mashhad and Tehran. Or maybe the peace just comes from the room being devoid of furniture! I deplore being chained to so many things at my own home.

Western tourists treated like rock stars by Iranians

They yearn for all things European and American, which is why Western tourists are treated like rock stars on the streets of Iran, leading to the bizarre episodes of Iranians asking to do selfies with total strangers because the strangers happen to be Western tourists walking down the street. It really is a little embarrassing to watch. Please note: Iranians are also stereotyped in the West as being anti-Western! Nothing could be further from the truth. They hate you? They'd lick you if they could.

At peace in an Iranian traditional home

When I wake on the floor of a village home, I don't mind the lack of comforts. Something in me is at peace. Probably has to do with my childhood memories of staying at the traditional homes of my grandparents in Mashhad and Tehran. Or maybe the peace just comes from the room being devoid of furniture! I deplore being chained to so many things at my own home. "Things always end up owning you, not the other way around," Saeideh often reminds me.

➤ The yard of a simple traditional home in the village of Seyyed Mahaleh, near Sari, Mazandaran Province, Iran
● escapefromtehran.com

Sounds of waking up in an Iranian village

Rising in an Iranian village home comes with a cacophony of sounds I wrote about on my first day of this escape from Tehran: the predawn morning azaan (call to prayer), the call of the rooster and the bells of goats leading sheep to the pastures. We had two of three this morning: the rooster and the azaan. Actually, this village is filled with mosques, the source of the azaan. We drove by at least three last night. It's 10 am and Saeideh is begging me to stop writing and get going. We have a busy schedule today. First stop is Badab Soort springs. I step outside. The sun is shining, and the tank and our shoes are waiting outside. But I leave with a heavy heart because of my love for this home. The interesting trip for me — and I know this would sound insane to family and friends in Tehran who prize the north for its shopping malls and beaches — would be to stay right here for a week and explore just this village and surrounding villages and maybe get lucky and get invited into some homes — although shomalis (northerners) are not famous for their hospitality. We headed to Sari, where a couple of shockers awaited us.

The full article first appeared on Escape from Tehran.



U20 Wrestling World Championships: Iranians to extend GR supremacy, make up for Baku setback

Sports Desk

Iran will chase a fifth successive Greco-Roman team title, and a seventh in nine editions, when the U20 Wrestling World Championships get underway in Bratislava, Slovakia, on August 16.

The Iranian squad, however, will face a daunting task in retaining its dominance, as wrestling powerhouse Russia – the only nation other than Iran to have won the under-20 Greco-Roman team title over the past decade – will be eligible for team points for the first time since the 2021 edition. Russia marked its return to the global stage in style last week by completing a clean sweep of the team trophies at the U17 World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan, snapping Iran's four-year title-winning

Amirsam Mohammadi (R), pictured after his final victory at July's U17 Asian Championships, will represent Iran in the Greco-Roman 97kg category at the U20 Wrestling World Championships. ● IAWFIR

streak in the Greco-Roman competition in the process. Iran will enter the tournament on the back of a commanding Greco-Roman campaign at the U20 Asian Championships in Pattaya, Thailand, last month, where the country claimed the team title thanks to five gold medals, one silver, and three bronzes across 10 weight classes. A U17 world champion in 2024, Armin Shamsipour will compete in the 55kg division fresh off a gold medal-winning run in Pattaya, aiming to follow in the footsteps of his compatriot Payam Ahmadi, who won



gold in the category last year in Samokov, Bulgaria, before going on to claim an impressive silver medal on his senior World Champi-

onships debut. Amirali Heidari will represent Iran in the 60kg event, looking to improve on his bronze medal in Pattaya,

while Ali Gharibi will compete in the 63kg division on the back of an emphatic international debut in the Thai city, where he secured

three successive superiority victories on his way to the title. The 67kg draw will see Il-ya Alikhani feature after

replacing Mohammadreza Gholami, the bronze medalist at the continental championships, in the Iranian squad.

Ahmadreza Mohammadian will compete in the 72kg division, hoping to bounce back from a disappointing campaign at the 2025 World Championships, where he crashed out in the opening round.

Amir Saeidi Nava will represent the country in the 77kg division, while Alireza Mohammad-Hosseini will compete in the 82kg division as the reigning Asian champion. Amirhossein Nematzadeh, the bronze medalist in Pattaya, will take part in the 87kg competition.

A U17 world champion at 92kg last year, Amirsam Mohammadi, who suffered a quarterfinal exit in the 87kg class at the 2025 World Championships, will be among the favorites in the 97kg category after proving to be in a league of his own at the Asian event, outscoring his opponents 28-0 across four bouts.

Amirhossein Abdevali will also look to build on his Asian gold medal when he begins his campaign in the 130kg division.

Iran to bid for hosting revived Asian Futsal Club Ch'ship

Sports Desk

Iran will submit an official bid to host the revived AFC Futsal Club Championship on Kish Island, Ehsan Kamyani, the head of the Iranian Football Federation's Futsal Committee, has confirmed.



● AFC

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced on Thursday that the continental showpiece will resume after an eight-year hiatus, with clubs from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam set to feature in the tournament, which will kick off on December 6, 2027. Kamyani credited Iranian Football Federation president Mehdi Taj, who also serves as chairman of the AFC Futsal and Beach Soccer Committee, for playing a key role in bringing the competition back. "We should first extend our special thanks to Mr. Taj. He made sig-

nificant efforts to ensure the AFC Futsal Club Championship was reinstated," Kamyani told the official website of the national football governing body. He added that all qualified member associations are eligible to apply to host the event and confirmed that

Iran will officially enter the bidding process.

"Our proposal is to stage the tournament on Kish Island," he said. Kamyani also revealed that the federation will seek permission from the AFC to enter two Iranian clubs in the competition instead of one. "According to the federation's regulations, we will follow the approved procedures, but we will consult with Mr. Taj to see if it is possible for Iran to have two representatives – the champions of the previous and the upcoming Persian Gulf Futsal Premier League seasons," he said. The futsal official expressed confi-

dence that the tournament would quickly establish itself as one of Asia's premier club competitions. "The launch of this competition is a very important step. Many participating clubs have high-quality foreign players, and the technical standard will be high. I am confident we will witness exciting matches from the very first edition," Kamyani said.

He added that the competition is expected to expand in both scale and commercial value over time.

"As the tournament continues, both the number of participating teams and its technical and economic value will grow. The interest shown by different countries in hosting the event demonstrates its strong potential for development," he said. Kamyani also stressed that, should Iran win the hosting rights, the federation would ensure the tournament is staged to the highest standard while adjusting the domestic futsal league schedule to give the country's representative(s) sufficient preparation time.

Nagoya Oceans of Japan defeated Iran's Mes Sungun 2-0 in the final when the tournament was last held in Bangkok in 2019, claiming a record-extending fourth title in the competition's 10th edition. Mes remains the most recent of four Iranian clubs – alongside Giti Pasand, Foolad Mahan, and Ta'sisat Daryaei – to have won the title, lifting the trophy in 2018.

FIVB U17 Boys' World Championship: 14-man roster named ahead of final training camp

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Arash Sadeghian has named a 14-man squad for a training camp, which begins today in Tehran, ahead of the upcoming FIVB U17 Boys' World Championship.

The second edition of the global showpiece, featuring 24 teams, will kick off on August 19 in Doha, Qatar, with Iran facing a daunting group-stage campaign against Brazil, Japan, and Bulgaria in Pool E.

The camp will serve as the final stage of preparation for the Iranian team, which secured qualification for the tournament after finishing runner-up at the Asian U16 Championship in July. Pakistan, which rallied from two sets down to stun Iran in a thrilling five-set final in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, last month, will make its debut at the world event, with Japan, India, Chinese Taipei, and host Qatar completing the Asian contingent in Doha.

Iran finished fifth at the inaugural U17 World Cham-



● MOHAMMAD-JAVAD AMINI/volleyball.ir

pionship in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 2024 after defeating Belgium 3-2 in its final classification match.

Italy came from two sets down to beat Argentina in the final in the Bulgarian capital, while Chinese Taipei defeated Spain 3-2 to claim the bronze medal.

Setter Aydin Poozesh and outside hitter Azhvan Namazi, who were named to the tournament's Dream Team at the Asian Championship, headline the Iranian roster, which also includes

Sina Hazrati, Akam Ebrahimnejad, Seyyed Amirreza Mirhosseini, Arash Ashrafi, Hamzeh Aghcheli, Amirreza Faramarzi, Monib Sheikh, Mohammadreza Zibaei, Sina Ahmadi, Parsa Maghsoudi, Radan Salehi, and Yasin Asadzadeh.

Mostafa Rezaei will serve as team manager, while Sadeqiani will be assisted by technical advisor Hossein Vaziri and coaches Vahid Sadeqi, Hesameddin Nayiji, Asghar Najafi, Javad Rezaei-Nasr, and Hamid Ahmadi.

Iran likely to feature in four-team tournament in Basra

Sports Desk

Iran is expected to take part in a four-nation international tournament in the Iraqi city of Basra during the November FIFA international window, according to Iraqi media reports. Hosts Iraq and Uzbekistan have reportedly confirmed their participation, while the Iranian Football Fed-

eration (FFIRI) has given its initial approval to join the tournament.

Should Iran's participation be finalized, the event will serve as part of Team Melli's preparations for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, which kicks off on January 7 in Saudi Arabia.

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.

The Basra tournament could also set up another meeting between Iran and Uzbekistan, a fixture that has developed into one of Asian football's most com-

pelling rivalries in recent years.

The future of Iran's bench, however, remains unclear. Head coach Amir Qalenoee's contract, signed in March 2023, expired last week, and the FFIRI has yet to officially confirm an extension ahead of the continental showpiece.

Qalenoee, who guided Iran to the quarterfinals of the

2007 Asian Cup during his first spell in charge and to the semifinals of the 2023 edition, also oversaw Team Melli's campaign at the recently concluded FIFA World Cup in North America. Iran drew with New Zealand (2-2), Belgium (0-0), and Egypt (1-1) to finish third in its group and miss out on a place in the knockout stage.



Siraf moves closer to UNESCO world status

Bushehr advances heritage projects

Iranica Desk

Iran's bid to have the ancient port of Siraf inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List has cleared its initial review after the site was submitted as the country's final nomination for the 2026 cycle, Bushehr's director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said. Nasrollah Ebrahimi said the nomination was made a provincial priority after 19 years of calls by local residents, civil society organizations and cultural heritage activists. A dossier that would normally take about two years to prepare was completed and submitted in just four months following intensive work by experts, extensive research, the compilation of documentation and field studies, according to IRNA.

The Siraf dossier was reviewed by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage's World Heritage Registration Policy Council, alongside strong competing nominations, including one from Khorasan Razavi Province. It secured the council's approval after officials highlighted the ancient port's historical, cultural and civilizational importance, Ebrahimi said. According to correspondence between UNESCO and Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, UNESCO evaluators are expected to visit Siraf later this summer to assess the site's conservation, management and social conditions. Preparatory work at the historic port has already begun, Ebrahimi said. Meetings have been held with relevant government agencies and technical teams have been deployed to complete conservation, restoration, technical and community-related measures ahead of the UNESCO assessment.

"Siraf's inscription on the World



● bgrows.ir

Heritage List cannot be achieved without public participation," Ebrahimi said, expressing hope that support from the Bushehr provincial governor, the governor of Kangan, government agencies and the local community would help bring the nomination to a successful conclusion. He also congratulated officials involved in the recent inscription of Alamut Castle in Qazvin Province on the World Heritage List and expressed hope that Siraf would become Iran's next World Heritage site, either by the end of this year or in 2027.

Ebrahimi also announced plans to open four new museums in the province by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2027), saying museum development is among the priorities of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage under the Seventh Development Plan.

The Shahid Rais Ali Delvari Museum, which required extensive redevelopment after 17 years, including improvements to its exhibits and structural reinforcement, has been renovated and equipped with modern technology and up-



● wikipedia.org

dated content. It is scheduled to open during Government Week.

Ebrahimi announced that the Jam Museum would open during Government Week or Tourism Week, saying it was established with the participation of Jam Municipality and that the Cultural Heritage Department was currently developing its content. Ebrahimi said archaeological remains dating back more than 12,000 years to the Paleolithic

period had been discovered in Jam. The museum will provide an opportunity to introduce part of the region's ancient history to residents and tourists. Meanwhile, as Siraf is being prepared for the UNESCO assessment, its museum is also undergoing reorganization, including the rearrangement of artifacts and display cases, ahead of reopening. The Alavi Printing Museum in Bushehr's historic district is scheduled to open by Febru-

ary, following restoration work and changes to its exhibits. The Bushehr Anthropology Museum, meanwhile, is 80 percent through its restoration and is expected to be ready for visitors by the same time.

Restoration is continuing at the historic Khormoj Bathhouse, located within the Mohammad Khan Dashti Castle complex, with the participation of Khormoj Municipality.

Plans are also being pursued to establish a sports museum in Bushehr in cooperation with the provincial Department of Sports and Youth Affairs and sports-sector activists. The province has a particularly strong sporting heritage, especially in football.

Ebrahimi also said efforts were continuing to develop the Dashtestan Museum at the Moshir Caravanserai in Borazjan. The site contains valuable historical remains dating from the Achaemenid period through the Islamic era and was also used during the Pahlavi era as a place of exile for several prominent national figures. It therefore has the potential to become a museum of

resistance, he said.

Other major restoration projects include the Moshir Bridge in Borazjan, Kalat Ahram Castle and the bathhouse at Mohammad Khan Dashti Castle.

Ebrahimi said the regeneration of Bushehr's historic district, supported by private-sector investment and the conversion of historic houses into traditional guesthouses and boutique hotels, had helped transform the area into a hub for sustainable tourism.

Cultural events, including Sharveh-Khani, Ta'zieh performances and ethnic festivals, have also helped demonstrate the vitality of the historic district, he said.

Ebrahimi also addressed the state of tourism in the province in recent months, saying that from December 2025, when Bushehr's peak tourism season began, through August 2026, the province's tourism sector suffered serious setbacks.

He added that tourism facilities bore the brunt of the impact in terms of visitor numbers, revenue and employment, with losses in some cases exceeding those suffered by industrial and petrochemical companies.

"Bushehr currently has 27 hotels and hotel-apartments, 11 guesthouses, 41 eco-lodges, 53 travel agencies, 13 private guesthouses, six coastal and marine tourism centers, eight traditional accommodation facilities, 14 traditional restaurants and eight roadside restaurants."

The province has 8,993 accommodation beds, with occupancy reaching 94 percent during peak tourism periods. Ebrahimi said 715 handicraft licenses had so far been issued in the province, while 34 national seals of quality had been awarded to Bushehr artisans.

Visit Katalah Khor Cave for wonders of underground world

Iranica Desk

Hidden beneath the limestone mountains of northwestern Iran, Katalah Khor Cave stands as one of the country's most remarkable geological formations, offering visitors a rare glimpse into millions of years of natural history while serving as one of Zanjan Province's leading tourist attractions. Located near the town of Garmab in Khodabandeh, the cave is renowned for its vast chambers, intricate limestone formations, mysterious underground passages and consistently cool temperature. Beyond its scenic appeal, the site is valued for its geological, scientific and environmental significance, attracting tourists, researchers and nature enthusiasts alike.

The journey to the cave takes visitors through the mountainous landscapes of the region, adding to its appeal as a destination for nature tourism, according to chn.ir. The name "Katalah Khor" has several interpretations in the local dialect, with one common meaning translated as "Mountain of the Sun."

Although local residents had long been familiar with the cave's entrance, it was officially identified in 1952 by a group of mountaineers. Since then, geological surveys and speleological studies



have continued to highlight the cave's scientific importance and tourism potential.

Katalah Khor Cave was formed through the gradual dissolution of limestone over extended geological periods. Groundwater seeped into fractures in the rock, slowly carving out an extensive network of underground passages, chambers and cavities over millions of years.

Mineral-rich water has continued to shape the cave's interior through the deposition of limestone, creating an array of spectacular formations. These include stalactites, stalagmites, columns, flowstones, draperies and cauliflower-like calcite formations, each formed drop by drop over countless centuries.

Geologists believe the cave's primary structure dates back to ancient geological eras, although the growth of its limestone for-

mations remains an ongoing process. Every drop of mineral-rich water that falls from the cave's ceiling deposits a microscopic layer of calcite, gradually creating new formations over time. One of Katalah Khor's defining characteristics is its complex, multi-level structure. Studies indicate that the cave consists of several interconnected underground levels, commonly described as a seven-level cave system.

These levels developed as underground waterways expanded through different layers of limestone. Some passages run horizontally while others descend vertically, creating an intricate network of tunnels and chambers.

Much of the cave remains unexplored. Many corridors and lower levels are still inaccessible because of difficult terrain, technical challenges and conservation



● arasbaran.org

requirements. Access to these areas is generally limited to professional caving teams equipped with specialized gear.

The sections open to visitors feature spacious halls, narrow corridors, deep fissures and winding passageways. The varying dimensions and elevations of these spaces create a striking underground landscape.

Among the cave's most distinctive features are its stalactites, which grow downward from the ceiling, and stalagmites, which rise upward from the floor. When these formations eventually meet, they form towering limestone columns.

The color and appearance of the cave's formations depend on the mineral composition of the water and surrounding rock. Iron oxides and copper compounds, for example, produce shades ranging from white and cream to yellow,

orange and red.

Carefully designed lighting along the visitor route enhances the cave's natural beauty while remaining compatible with environmental and conservation standards.

Several chambers have acquired names inspired by the appearance of their natural formations. Among the best known are the Hall of Columns, distinguished by its massive limestone pillars; the Bridal Hall, noted for its delicate, light-colored formations; the Lion and Sun Square, where rock formations resemble the historic Lion and Sun emblem; and corridors lined with limestone draperies and flowstone formations. These names are descriptive rather than scientific, reflecting visitors' interpretations of the cave's natural features.

Katalah Khor is considered one of Iran's premier geotourism desti-

nations. Developed visitor routes, walkways, lighting systems and other facilities enable the public to safely explore parts of the cave while minimizing impacts on its fragile environment.

The cave maintains a relatively stable and cool temperature throughout most of the year, making it an attractive destination in every season. Its silence, humidity, dramatic rock formations and distinctive underground atmosphere provide an experience unlike conventional sightseeing attractions.

The cave appeals to a wide range of visitors, including families, students, geology enthusiasts, nature lovers, photographers, researchers and experienced cavers. However, authorities emphasize that the site remains a fragile natural environment, and visitors are expected to follow conservation regulations designed to protect its geological heritage.

Often described as a "natural museum," Katalah Khor preserves a geological record created not by human hands but through millions of years of natural processes. Every wall, ceiling and floor of the cave provides scientists with valuable evidence about the Earth's geological history, the movement of groundwater and long-term environmental and climatic changes.

