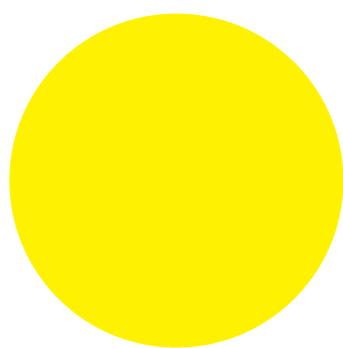


Armed Forces
vow no retreat
until 'complete
defeat' of US,
Israel

2 >



Iran Daily

Vol. 8189 • Monday, August 17, 2026 • Mordad 26, 1405 • Rabi' al-Awwal 04, 1448 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



> irandaily.ir

newspaper.irandaily.ir

IranDailyWeb

Qalibaf: Islamabad MoU document for consolidating Iran's victory in diplomatic front

2 >

Historic Si-o-se-pol bridge appears on global irrigation heritage list

8 >



MEHR



Iran offers technical help to Tajikistan's power grid, promotes Chabahar port

Tehran seeks faster rail, road, air links with Dushanbe

3 >



Five decades of Israeli covert strategy to push US, Iran into confrontation

4 >



FIVB U17 Boys' World Championship:
Iran out for revenge against Pakistan in pool phase

6 >

US maximum pressure unable to turn economic costs into political change

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Following a ceasefire that brought an end to the 40-day US-Israeli war against Iran, hostilities flared up again with a US attack on positions in southern Iran and Iranian retaliatory strikes. The US, however, later halted its attacks and has for some time been discussing unprecedented economic pressure and the economic isolation of Iran as an alternative to military operations. This comes as Iran has already been under some of the toughest US sanctions for years, while the maritime blockade that had ended with the ceasefire is now being enforced again. Iran Daily spoke to international affairs expert Abed Akbari to analyze the policy. He said sanctions can impose costs, but the main



Abed Akbari

problem with the US maximum pressure policy is that Washington often assumes that raising the costs will directly lead to changes in political behavior, while historical experience has shown that prolonged sanctions do not necessarily produce the political outcomes sought by the country imposing them.

IRAN DAILY: How much further can the US ramp up economic pressure on Iran? Are there any new tools left at Washington's disposal that could significantly increase the pressure?

AKBARI: The United States still has considerable capacity to increase economic pressure on Iran, but that capacity is not unlimited. Washington has deployed a significant portion of its sanctions tools over the past four decades, particularly since withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal, ranging from oil and banking sanctions to pressure on third-party companies and restrictions on Iran's access to the international financial system. However, the tools that remain are focused more on increasing

costs, tightening oversight of trade networks and putting pressure on Iran's economic partners than on bringing about a fundamental transformation in Iran's economic situation. Experience has shown that after a certain point, broad sanctions face diminishing returns, as the targeted economy gradually develops alternative channels, informal mechanisms and new networks of cooperation.

In fact, the main problem with the US maximum pressure policy is that Washington often assumes a direct link between "increasing costs" and "changing political behavior," whereas historical experience has shown that prolonged sanctions do not necessarily produce the political outcomes sought by the sanctioning country.

What tools does Iran have to push back against growing US economic pressure and limit its impact on the economy?

Iran has a range of domestic and external capacities at its disposal to cope with external economic pressure. Domestically, the most important factors include re-

forming economic structures, reducing the budget's dependence on oil revenues, strengthening domestic production, developing a knowledge-based economy and managing foreign-exchange resources more effectively. Externally, Iran also has tools such as diversifying its trading partners, using bilateral currency agreements, conducting trade in national currencies, developing regional corridors and tapping into the economic potential of neighboring countries. It should be noted, however, that successfully pushing back against sanctions is not simply a matter of "circumventing the pressure." It also requires improving economic productivity, reducing structural vulnerabilities and building confidence in the domestic economic environment.

To what extent can countries such as China, Russia and Iran's neighbors help maintain their trade and economic ties with Iran amid heightened US pressure?

China, Russia and neighboring countries can play an important role in reducing the impact of US

pressure, but the extent of their support depends on their own interests.

China, as one of the world's largest economies, has significant capacity to continue energy, trade and investment ties with Iran, although Beijing's policy has always been based on maintaining a balance between its relations with Iran and its broader ties with the global economy. Russia is also an important partner for Iran in energy, transportation, food security and regional cooperation. However, the Russian economy itself is under pressure from Western sanctions and has a limited capacity to fully replace Western markets. Neighboring countries, due to geographical ties, mutual economic needs and the realities of regional markets, represent a major obstacle to efforts to completely isolate Iran. However, to make sustainable use of these capacities, Iran needs to move beyond political exchanges and build up its economic relations into institutional and long-term cooperation.

How well has Iran's economy

adapted to sanctions and external pressure, and can it maintain this resilience in the face of a new wave of US pressure?

Iran's economy has shown considerable capacity to adapt to external pressure over the past several years. The emergence of alternative trade networks, the development of economic ties with Asia, experience in managing the economy under foreign-exchange constraints and the preservation of some production capacities point to a degree of "sanctions resilience." However, this adaptation should not be mistaken for complete immunity. Sanctions have imposed real costs, from reduced foreign investment and difficulties in technology transfers to higher trade costs and pressure on economic growth.

Therefore, continued success in withstanding new pressure will depend on Iran moving past "crisis management" and moving toward deep economic reforms. A sanctions-resilient economy is one that can both withstand pressure and take advantage of global opportunities.

Page 2 >

Qalibaf: Islamabad MoU document for consolidating Iran's victory in diplomatic front

International Desk

Iran's Parliament Speaker described a memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States as a "document of honor and victory" aimed at consolidating Iran's success on the diplomatic front, saying Washington and Israel failed to achieve any of their objectives in the war.

"In one of my interviews during the war, I said that I did not mean that we had destroyed the US army and the Zionist regime. Rather, I meant that the United States and Israel attacked us with nine specific goals that were officially announced and documented, but they did not achieve any of their objectives at any level. This was the greatest defeat for the United States and the Zionist regime and a great victory for us," Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said.

Speaking at a meeting with a group of journalists on Satur-

day, Qalibaf said Iran is now engaged in an "unjust war" led by the United States and Israel. Iran's top parliamentarian said Iran "truly" won the war "militarily and politically".

Referring to the Pakistan-mediated Memorandum of Understanding reached between Tehran and Washington to end the US-Israeli aggression against Iran, Qalibaf said the agreement represented a "document of honor and victory" in line with consolidating the country's success in diplomacy.

He said the achievements on the military and diplomatic fronts had been made possible by the Iranian people, who had taken to the streets from the first day of the war to support the Islamic Republic of Iran and defend the country's territory and revolution.

Iran and the US signed the 14-point memorandum of understanding in June to end the cycle arising from the latest



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf speaks at a meeting with a group of journalists in Tehran on August 15, 2026.

● ICANA

bout of unprovoked American-Israeli aggression against Iran, which had begun on February 28.

They set a 60-day period to discuss further issues including sanctions imposed on Iran as well as the country's nuclear program in order to reach a comprehensive agreement between the two countries. However, the United States' violation of the agreement from its very first days has effectively rendered the deal invalid.

The two sides have stopped negotiations with the Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi saying on Saturday that Tehran is still undecided about resuming talks with the US amid disagreements about ceasefire



violations and the future of the Strait of Hormuz.

Araghchi said on August 10 that Iran will not engage in new ne-

gotiations with the US as long as it keeps violating the MoU.

Armed Forces vow no retreat until 'complete defeat' of US, Israel



International Desk

The General Staff of Iran's Armed Forces vowed not to back down until securing the country's legitimate rights and delivering a complete defeat to the aggressors — the United States and the Israeli regime — in the region.

It made the remarks in a statement on Sunday, marking the anniversary of the return of Iranian prison-

ers of war (POWs), who were held captive during the 1980s imposed war waged against the country by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, Press TV reported.

"Appreciating the iron will, as well as the firm and steadfast determination of the resilient and patient people of Iran, the General Staff of the Armed Forces assures them that it will not back down from the legitimate demands of the

nation and the beloved Leader of the Islamic Republic in confronting the aggressive United States, until completely defeating the American-Zionist adversaries in the region, upholding the rights of the heroic Iranian nation, and forcing the enemy to surrender," it said.

The United States and Israel launched their illegal war of aggression against Iran on February 28 by assassinating the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, along with senior military commanders.

Forty days later, on April 8, the enemies were forced to accept a ceasefire amid Iran's resistance, decisive retaliatory operations, and powerful grip on the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran and Washington signed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on June 17, but the US effectively violated the deal, prompting Iran to conduct devastating attacks against strategic American targets across West Asia. For more than 160 days since the beginning of the war, Iranians have held street rallies in support of the country's Armed Forces.

Iran urges Qatar to allow fact-finding team to launch probe into missing pilots

International Desk

Iran urged Qatar to allow a fact-finding team to enter the Persian Gulf country to launch an investigation into the whereabouts of the three Iranian pilots missing after an operation against a US base in the Arab country in March.

"The Qatari government should allow and facilitate the entry of the Iran Air Force fact-finding team rather than deny the detention of Iranian pilots," Commander of the Missing-in-Action Search Committee of Iran's Armed Forces General Staff, Brigadier General Seyyed Mohammad Bagherzadeh, said on Sunday. He added that a team of elite experts from the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) has been waiting for months to obtain permission to enter Qatar and conduct a field investigation.

The senior Iranian military commander further advised the Qatari government to allow the IRIAF fact-finding team to depart for Doha, rather than deny the matter and block the revelation of the truth. He once again called upon the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to follow up on the cases of the Iranian fighter pilots.

On Saturday, Bagherzadeh said Qatari forces captured three Iranian pilots alive during an operation in response to the recent US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran.

He made the remarks in a letter ad-



dressed to the President of the ICRC, Mirjana Spoljarić.

According to Bagherzadeh, following the start of the US and Israeli strikes against Iran in late February, some of which were launched from US bases in the region, two Iranian Army Sukhoi Su-24 fighter jets flew to Qatar on March 2 to conduct a military mission.

The fighter jets were hit by the "enemy's air defense" on the way back, and the pilots ejected, he said.

While one of the four Iranian pilots in the jets died, the rest were captured alive by Qatari forces.

The body of the fallen Iranian pilot, Majid Kazemi, was returned to Iran and buried in the southern city of Shiraz in late July.

Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari later denied the assertions, stating that Doha is surprised by the statements and reaffirmed that Qatari forces are not holding any surviving aircrew.

US maximum pressure ...

Can intensified US economic pressure accelerate the development of mechanisms independent of the Western financial system and deepen cooperation with non-Western partners?

Intensified US economic pressure could unintentionally accelerate Iran's move toward more independent financial and economic mechanisms. When a country has limited access to financial structures dominated by the West, it has greater reason to develop alternative tools such as regional cooperation, the use of national currencies, new trade agreements and independent financial networks.

From a critical perspective, the US policy of extensively using financial sanctions has gradually pushed more countries to seek ways to reduce their dependence on the financial system

under Washington's influence. However, creating an economic system completely independent of global structures is a complex and time-consuming process and will require multilateral cooperation, strong financial infrastructure and trust among partners.

The US speaks of the "economic isolation" of Iran. Can Washington really cut Iran off from the regional economy and international markets, or will Iran's economic interdependence with regional countries and Asian partners stand in the way of such a goal?

The US's stated goal of "economic isolation of Iran" faces serious limitations. Given its geopolitical position, energy resources, population, domestic market and role in regional transportation networks, Iran is not a country that can be completely re-

moved from the regional and international economy.

Today's global economy is built on interdependence, and even countries aligned with US policies have direct economic interests in engaging with Iran in many areas.

Efforts to completely cut Iran off from the global economy face not only geographical and economic obstacles but could also strengthen the trend toward the emergence of non-Western economic blocs.

From this perspective, the US policy of economic isolation faces a strategic contradiction: the more pressure is brought to bear to remove a country from existing structures, the greater the incentive for that country and its partners to create alternative routes. Therefore, sanctions can impose costs, but achieving the long-term goal of completely isolating Iran economically faces serious obstacles.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran offers technical help to Tajikistan's power grid, promotes Chabahar port

Tehran seeks faster rail, road, air links with Dushanbe

Economy Desk

Iran offered technical assistance to help improve Tajikistan's power grid, while also promoting the use of the Chabahar port for Tajik access to open waters on Sunday, as the two countries moved to accelerate cooperation in electricity, water and transport, Iranian officials said.

During a meeting in Tehran Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi and Tajik Energy and Water Resources Minister Daler Juma on Sunday reviewed ways to expand economic and cultural ties between the two countries, including cooperation in water and electricity.

"At this meeting, we discussed the development and future of cooperation in line with common goals in the fields of culture, tourism, scientific and technical activities, and water and electricity," Aliabadi said, according to IRNA.

Referring to challenges facing Tajikistan's power grid, Aliabadi said, "Iran is ready for any technical cooperation to improve and develop the electricity sector in Tajikistan."

Juma said the meeting covered economic, commercial, technical

and cultural cooperation, with an emphasis on increasing trade relations.

The condition of joint dams, energy and logistics issues, cultural and information matters, and the development of human resources at power plants were also discussed, he said.

Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq, meanwhile, met Tajik officials including Daler Juma and Transport Minister Aziz Ibrahim and called for faster implementation of transport projects in rail, road, air, port and logistics sectors.

Sadeq referred to an increase in rail freight between the two countries in 2025 compared with the previous year, adding the growth shows the depth of relations and the government's emphasis on transport diplomacy.

Chabahar to boost Tajik access to open waters

Sadeq said rail-laying on the route between Iran's southeastern port city of Chabahar and Zahedan had been completed and the link would become operational within three months.

"Chabahar can strengthen Tajikistan's access to open waters



Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq (1st R) meets Tajik Energy and Water Resources Minister Daler Juma (2nd L) and Transport Minister Aziz Ibrahim (3rd L) in Tehran, on August 16, 2026.

● IRNA

and boost its logistics position," she said.

Sadeq also said Iran welcomed Tajik investment in Chabahar port.

She described Tehran's Aprin dry port as an important capacity for cooperation and proposed that Tajik officials visit the facility. She also welcomed joint Tajik investment in Aprin and other Iranian ports.

Road transport, new corridors

Sadeq called for the immediate resolution of road transport problems between the two countries and said Iran welcomed multilateral talks on a proposed Iran-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-China corridor.

She also said the Farah Road in Afghanistan was expected to open in about a month, which could provide an opportunity



for cooperation among the three countries.

Sadeq called for more flights, reciprocal discounts and greater tourism cooperation, and asked Iran's Civil Aviation Organization to follow up on the issues.

The minister also called for the formation of an executive committee under the countries' joint commission to accelerate follow-up on the issues.

Separately, Iran's Civil Aviation Organization chief Abuzar Shiroodi met Abdulkosim Valiev, CEO at Somon Air, on Sunday to discuss resuming the airline's flights to Iran, expanding air transport cooperation and removing obstacles to the resumption of services, Mehr news agency reported.

Somon Air had operated two weekly flights to Iran before the

US-Israeli war began in late February, but the flights were suspended because of the resulting conditions. The Tajik side is now seeking to resume the flights and expand air cooperation with Iran.

Under an existing memorandum of understanding between Iran and Tajikistan, the two countries have capacity for 23 weekly flights.

Oil loading resumes at Kharg Island after 25-day halt



● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran has resumed crude oil loading at the western terminal of Kharg Island after a 25-day halt, Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday, citing maritime intelligence company Windward, as satellite images also showed a rise in tanker and cargo vessel traffic near Larak Island. A very large crude carrier (VLCC), about 333 meters long, which had been anchored in the terminal's waiting area since July 11, docked on Aug. 12 and began loading crude, Tasnim reported.

Iran's southern ports remain under a US naval blockade imposed by Washington in mid-April, aimed at pressuring Tehran into an agreement after a 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February. After a pause of several weeks, the naval blockade was reinstated in mid-July. Iran is seek-

ing to diversify its logistics corridors to counter growing restrictions on its trade routes.

"Iran isn't waiting for the blockade to lift. It's re-routing around it," Windward said in a post on X on Sunday. TankerTrackers.com, a maritime intelligence company specializing in tracking crude shipments and dark-fleet tankers, separately said on Friday a National Iranian Tanker Company VLCC was loading about two million barrels of crude at the Azarpad jetty on Kharg Island. It described the loading as the first observed at the island since late July, according to thenationalnews.com.

Although this is the first loading noted on the island since last month, Iran has continued loading tankers at other terminals, TankerTrackers.com said.

Satellite images also showed the number of tankers and cargo vessels at the northern anchorage of Larak, near the Strait of Hormuz, had risen to 35 on Aug. 12 from 28 on Aug. 10, according to the report. About 74% of the vessels had their automatic identification systems switched off, while at least 10 were identified as sanctioned vessels.

The developments come as the Strait of Hormuz has remained a focus of tensions between Iran and the United States. The US waged a war of aggression with Israel against the Islamic Republic in late February. In response, Iran closed the strait and began talks with Oman to establish a joint mechanism for shipping arrangements. The move pushed oil prices from around \$70 a barrel to above \$100, with prices topping \$110 on some days.

CBI chief, Iraqi trade minister push to ease trade barriers, expand banking ties

Economy Desk

Head of Central Bank of Iran Abdolnaser Hemmati and Iraq's trade minister Mustafa Nizar al-Ani discussed ways to ease economic ties, remove obstacles to bilateral trade and expand banking cooperation on Sunday, Fars news agency reported. The meeting, held on the first day of Hemmati's official visit to Iraq, focused on strengthening bilateral trade, investment and monetary cooperation, with the two sides discussing ways to implement previous



Head of Central Bank of Iran Abdolnaser Hemmati (L) meets Iraq's trade minister Mustafa Nizar al-Ani in Baghdad, Iraq, on August 16, 2026.

● FARS

agreements and increase banking interactions between the neighboring countries.

Hemmati stressed the need for new mechanisms to speed up trade, particularly at border entry points, and highlighted the role of the private sector in facilitating imports and

exports.

Al-Ani welcomed the expansion of cooperation and said the Iraqi government was committed to addressing challenges facing business people and strengthening trade ties with Iran.

Iran adds 2,028 MW of power capacity, reaching 75% of annual target

Economy Desk

Iran has added 2,028 megawatts of new power generation capacity since March 21, achieving 75% of its target for the current Persian calendar year (began on March 21), a thermal power industry official said on Sunday, as the country works to expand electricity supplies amid persistent shortages and the summer peak in demand. Ruhollah Efsanani, deputy head of development projects at Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company, said the country had planned to add 2,709 MW of new capacity this year through projects involving both the public and private sectors, according to IRNA. Speaking at a news conference, he said none of the country's power-generation development projects had been halted despite the special conditions facing the country over the past seven months resulting from the war. Installed power-generation capacity has grown 42% from a year earlier, Efsanani said. Two more units are scheduled to come online, including a nearly 300-MW steam unit at a combined-cycle power plant and a 183-MW gas unit, adding another 490 MW to generation capacity once operational. A US-Israeli coalition launched at-



● IRNA

tacks on Iran on February 28, including strikes on civilians and power infrastructure.

Iran was already experiencing energy shortages before the attacks, a situation that has been exacerbated by the conflict and the peak of the summer heat season.

Thermal plants reach 98.8% readiness

Masoud Moradi, deputy head of production operations at the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company, said Iran's total installed power-generation capacity stood at 101,366 MW, including 79,158 MW of thermal power capacity. Efforts to improve plant performance resulted in thermal power plants reaching 98.8% readiness during the peak electricity consumption period, while the rate of emergency outages at power-generation units fell to 1.2%, Moradi said, describing the

figures as a record for Iran's thermal power industry.

Renewable capacity hits 6,000 MW

Ali Qaseminejad, head of the solar power development group at Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), said the country's installed renewable power capacity had reached 6,000 MW, with more than 80% coming from solar power plants, according to Tasnim news agency.

The government has set a target of installing 30,000 MW of renewable energy capacity within the next two years to help reduce daily power shortages and improve the long-term stability of electricity supplies.

Qaseminejad said the Seventh Development Plan calls for the addition of 12,000 MW of renewable energy capacity, and that the government was seeking to move closer to that target by the end of the current year.

"The development of solar power plants, in addition to reducing dependence on fossil fuels, has positive environmental impacts and is considered one of the most important solutions for reducing the imbalance between electricity supply and demand in the country," Qaseminejad said.

Five decades of Israeli covert strategy to push US, Iran into confrontation



By **Mohammad Javad Zarif**
Former Iranian foreign minister

OPINION

Before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met US President Donald Trump, there was good reason to expect that he would use the meeting to discourage any move towards ending hostilities in the Persian Gulf. This expectation is grounded in a historical record spanning more than five decades.

Declassified intelligence, memoirs by senior American officials, investigative reporting, and academic scholarship further reinforce this assessment. Taken together, these sources point to a recurring pattern: successive Israeli cabinets, often with the support of elements within the entity's security establishment, have repeatedly sought to obstruct efforts to end regional conflicts or attempts to manage tension between the United States and Iran.

While the methods have varied — from intelligence operations and public diplomacy to lobbying and political pressure — the strategic objective has remained strikingly consistent: preserving a state of confrontation between Washington and Tehran while opposing diplomatic initiatives that could weaken Israel's leverage in shaping US Middle East policy.

Prolonging the Iran-Iraq war

The logic underpinning this approach emerged during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). Several scholars, including Trita Parsi and David Menashri, argue that Israeli strategic thinking at the time favoured preventing either Iran or Iraq from securing a decisive victory or ending the war. A prolonged conflict, from this perspective, would leave both regional rivals militarily and economically weakened. According to several studies of wartime media, Israeli state broadcasting also became part of the broader contest for psychological influence. Broadcasts emphasised Iraqi vulnerabilities when Iranian decision-makers appeared hesitant while highlighting Iranian setbacks when Iraqi and Arab audiences required reassurance. Scholars of wartime communications argue that this messaging sought to influence public expectations on both sides, making political compromise more difficult and reinforcing incentives to continue the conflict.

'Goodwill begets goodwill'

The release of Western captives in Lebanon in 1991 appeared to offer an opportunity for modest conflict management in US-Iranian relations. Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani had encouraged my own cooperation with international mediation efforts, and many observers expected US President George H W Bush's administration to

reciprocate in accordance with his inaugural pledge in 1989 that "goodwill begets goodwill". According to United Nations mediator Giandomenico Picco, who coordinated much of the diplomacy, that opportunity ultimately went unrealised. In his book *Man Without a Gun*, Picco argues that Israeli officials foiled aspects of the negotiated framework. Deliberately impeding the release of remaining American captives, Israel refused to implement agreed-upon arrangements involving the release of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners.

As the Iranian negotiator, I was suddenly notified by Picco that Israel had stalled the process, pending the resolution of the fate of missing Israeli servicemen, which was the subject of a separate search arrangement involving the fate of four missing Iranian diplomats and an Israeli airman, all of whom had been missing for nearly a decade in Lebanon.

Picco further contends that these disagreements complicated Washington's ability to respond positively even after we found other means to ensure the release of the final American captive. At the same time, domestic political pressures, primarily from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) — including debates surrounding US loan guarantees to Israel — limited the Bush administration's diplomatic flexibility.

From our perspective, American rhetoric about reciprocal confidence-building had not been matched by policy, reinforcing a pattern of mistrust that would shape later negotiations.

'Axis of evil'

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Iran and the United States briefly found themselves pursuing overlapping objectives in Afghanistan. Despite widespread belief, the US did not spend the weeks after September 11, 2001, forging a broad international coalition to topple the Taliban.

As the late US diplomat James Dobbins explained, "It would be more accurate to state that the United States moved to join an existing coalition [put in place by Iran] that had been trying to overthrow the Taliban since the mid-1990s." Former US secretary of state Colin Powell and Dobbins also described Iranian participation in the Bonn negotiations as instrumental in helping establish the post-Taliban political framework.

Within weeks, Israel orchestrated a dramatic shift in political dynamics in Washington. The interception of the *Karine A* ship in the first week of January 2002 was staged by Israel with huge publicity to argue that Iran represented the principal long-term security challenge in the region. David Frum, the speechwriter involved in drafting President George W Bush's 2002 State of the Union address, in which he lumped Iran with Iraq and North Korea as the "axis of



● SÉBASTIEN THIBAUT/BARRON'S

evil," later recalled that Israeli strategic thinking influenced broader discussions about how Iran should be framed within the axis of evil.

During this period, particularly at the time of the summit between Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and Bush in February 2002, senior Israeli officials argued publicly and privately that Iran — not Iraq — posed the more consequential long-term threat.

Contemporary reporting in *The Washington Post* suggests that these arguments were repeatedly conveyed to senior members of the Bush administration. For instance, Israeli defence minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer explicitly briefed the Bush administration that Iran was "more dangerous than Iraq". Lawrence Wilkerson, who was Powell's chief of staff, confirmed that Israeli communications consistently warned Washington: "Iraq is not the enemy — Iran is the enemy".

The nuclear file and the JCPOA

The removal of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein in 2003 al-



Former UN under-secretary general Giandomenico Picco (L) poses for a photo with the UN secretary general Kofi Annan (C) and Mohammad Javad Zarif (R), who later became the foreign minister of Iran, in 2001.
● lavocedinyork.com



After more than four decades of direct involvement in efforts to prevent these fundamental differences from erupting into active hostility and all-out war, I have reached an inescapable conclusion: attempts to manage tensions between Washington and Tehran have repeatedly unfolded within a broader strategic contest. That context has been shaped not only by repeated US failures to honour its commitments, but also by the actions of regional actors with profoundly different conceptions of what constitutes stability in the Middle East.

tered the regional balance but did not diminish Israeli concerns about Iran. As the immediate prospect of military confrontation receded, the Iranian nuclear programme increasingly became the central focus of Israeli diplomacy and intelligence efforts. From that point onward, debates over Iran's nuclear activities largely displaced earlier discussions about broader regional security. Several journalists and former intelligence officials have argued that Mossad arranged for information concerning Iran's Natanz enrichment facility to reach the international community through indirect channels that allowed its original source to remain obscured. Journalist Seymour Hersh, former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, and others have suggested that Israeli intelligence deliberately passed classified information regarding the Natanz nuclear facility to the Iranian exile group MEK/NCRI in 2002 — while the group was still on the US State Department's "terrorist" list — to create an international emergency and force International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) action while maintaining plausible deniability.

Israel followed a persistent policy of consistently producing intelligence on Iran to prevent the resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue at the IAEA and the UN Security Council from 2004 to 2012 and again

from 2018 onward. In 2004, the contents of a laptop allegedly containing thousands of pages of secret technical documents were turned over to Western intelligence services and the IAEA by the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK). Western governments treated the documents as compelling evidence that Iran had pursued weapons-related research. Others remained unconvinced. Mohamed ElBaradei, IAEA director-general at the time, later wrote that important questions about provenance were never fully resolved. Several investigative journalists similarly argued that the chain of custody remained opaque. They pointed to Israel's Mossad as the original source passing the files to the MEK to maintain plausibility and mask the direct origin.

The conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 opened perhaps the most significant period of diplomatic engagement between Washington and Tehran since 1979. Israeli leaders, however, viewed the agreement as the collapse of Israeli securitization efforts as well as a prelude to the United States' "pivot to Asia" strategy. Benjamin Netanyahu mounted an unusually visible campaign against the agreement both in Washington and internationally. His address to the US Congress without an invitation from the White House was the culmination of such a rather unprecedented domestic campaign within the US.

Memoirs published by senior American officials reveal recurring tensions between Washington and Jerusalem over the possibility of military action. Former US defense secretary Robert Gates describes repeated disagreements over Israeli pressure for unilateral strikes. His successor, defense secretary Leon Panetta, later warned publicly against policies that might leave the US with no practical alternative but escalation. Former president Barack Obama similarly recalled that Netanyahu consistently pressed for a more confrontational approach than his administration considered prudent.

Drawing Trump into conflict

With the election of Donald Trump to the presidency, positions that had previously remained outside the American foreign-policy mainstream moved to the centre of decision-making. In 2018, Netanyahu publicly presented what Israeli officials described as a cache of nuclear documents stolen from Iran. The presentation became an important element in the administration's broader case for withdrawing from the JCPOA.

The administration's withdrawal from the nuclear agreement soon evolved into the "maximum pressure" campaign, combining sweeping economic sanctions with an increasingly confrontational

regional posture. By early 2020, the relationship had moved beyond economic pressure. The US strike that killed General Qassem Soleimani marked a decisive escalation and fundamentally altered regional deterrence dynamics. Subsequent reporting suggested that some American officials believed Israeli preferences had contributed to an increasingly confrontational policy trajectory. Accounts published after the strike also describe concern within the administration about the possibility of becoming committed to a wider regional conflict under circum-

stances that Washington did not fully control. Several officials later expressed concern that unilateral Israeli actions could create circumstances in which the US would face overwhelming political or military pressure to intervene directly.

Derailing the 2026 memorandum

The negotiations surrounding the memorandum of understanding in Islamabad earlier this year illustrate how these historical dynamics continue to shape regional diplomacy. Public disagreements over the

memorandum soon extended beyond the negotiations themselves. Senior officials in both Washington and Tehran accused outside actors of attempting to undermine political support for the agreement. During an interview on The Joe Rogan Experience earlier this month, US Vice President JD Vance stated: "There are some people within [the Israeli] system, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt, who are manipulating and trying to change American public opinion to keep the war going on indefinitely." Vance accused Israeli cabinet-linked networks of funding American

political actors and intentionally framing the negotiation as a "surrender" to make it politically toxic. Information operations also became part of the diplomatic contest. Israeli media reporting has described Israeli digital influence capabilities directed towards Persian-language online discourse presenting the memorandum as humiliating to Iran. Iranian officials have recently stated publicly that these activities sought to amplify domestic polarisation and weaken political support for negotiations. I have reviewed only a portion of the historical record, one

that reveals a recurring pattern in diplomatic efforts to manage US-Iran differences — efforts in many of which I played a leading role. After more than four decades of direct involvement in efforts to prevent these fundamental differences from erupting into active hostility and all-out war, I have reached an inescapable conclusion: attempts to manage tensions between Washington and Tehran have repeatedly unfolded within a broader strategic contest. That context has been shaped not only by repeated US failures to honour its commitments, but also by the

actions of regional actors with profoundly different conceptions of what constitutes stability in the Middle East. The historical record suggests that successive Israeli cabinets have repeatedly viewed sustained US-Iranian confrontation as strategically preferable. Recognising and countering this systemic manipulation of intelligence, media, and domestic politics on both sides of the divide is essential if future diplomatic initiatives are to avoid the fate of so many previous efforts.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

How Netanyahu lost America



By Said Arikat
Washington-based journalist

OPINION

As Benjamin Netanyahu began his latest visit to Washington, DC, to reaffirm Israel's indispensable alliance with the United States, a public opinion survey offered a remarkable measure of how profoundly that relationship has changed. An Economist/YouGov poll released on July 28 found that 49 percent of Americans believe the Israeli prime minister should be arrested under the warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. Even more striking, 47 percent said they believe the prime minister has committed war crimes in Gaza. Only a decade ago, such findings would have been politically inconceivable. Today, they are the clearest evidence that Netanyahu has accomplished what generations of Israeli leaders worked to avoid: transforming Israel from a bipartisan cause into one of the US's most polarising foreign policy issues. That transformation did not begin with the October 7, 2023, attack, nor solely with the genocide and devastation in Gaza. Those events accelerated a process Netanyahu set in motion years earlier. His greatest strategic failure was political. By tethering Israel ever more tightly to one US party, treating Republicans as permanent guarantors while dismissing Democratic concerns, he undermined the broad bipartisan consensus that had anchored the relationship for decades. For generations, Israeli leaders understood that Israel could never afford to become a partisan issue. The alliance endured because both parties regarded Israel as a strategic partner whose security transcended domestic politics. That consensus was as valuable as any military aid package. Netanyahu inherited that asset. He is now in danger of squandering it. Ironically, few Israeli politicians knew America better. Educated partly in the US, fluent in its political language and deeply connected to Washington's establishment, he understood how power operated. Yet that familiarity bred miscalculation. Convinced that demographic and ideological changes favoured a permanently ascendant Republican Party, Netanyahu abandoned his predecessors' careful balancing act and invested

heavily in one side of the US's widening partisan divide. The decisive rupture came in 2015, when he accepted a Republican invitation to address a joint session of Congress in open defiance of president Barack Obama during the Iran nuclear debate. Conservatives celebrated the speech as an act of courage; strategically, it marked a watershed. Never before had an Israeli prime minister intervened so directly against a sitting president. Millions of Democrats concluded that Israel's leader had chosen sides, and the consequences outlasted the Iran deal. Donald Trump's presidency appeared to vindicate this strategy. He recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital, moved the US embassy, recognised Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights, withdrew from the Iran nuclear agreement, abandoned pressure over settlements and discarded demands for a Palestinian state. Netanyahu mistook those victories for proof that bipartisan support had become obsolete, believing Republican loyalty could permanently replace Democratic consensus. That belief was strategically short-sighted. Alliances survive because they are rooted in institutions, shared values and broad legitimacy — not because they depend on one administration. By allowing Israel to become identified with Republican politics, Netanyahu weakened the alliance precisely when it needed to remain strongest. Israel's genocidal war on Gaza exposed the consequences. President Joe Biden, despite unprecedented pressure from his Democratic Party, extended extraordinary military, diplomatic and political support to Israel after the October 7, 2023, attacks. He visited Israel during wartime, accelerated military assistance, defended it at the United Nations and absorbed fierce domestic criticism. Netanyahu answered with repeated public confrontations, accusing Washington of withholding weapons, rejecting US proposals for post-war governance, resisting humanitarian access and contradicting the White House on strategic questions. Even as Biden invested enormous political capital, Netanyahu appeared more intent on demonstrating independence to his domestic base than preserving the confidence of Israel's most important ally. Meanwhile, the conduct of the



war fundamentally altered global perceptions. Relentless bombardment devastated Gaza, destroying hospitals, schools, universities and entire neighbourhoods, while severe humanitarian restrictions produced warnings of famine. Senior ministers openly advocated permanent displacement, collective punishment and indefinite military control. Whether the alleged conduct meets the legal definition of war crimes will be determined by courts; politically, the verdict is already forming — not only worldwide but increasingly within the US.

The poll findings are significant beyond Netanyahu personally. The fact that nearly half of Americans believe the Israeli prime minister should be arrested, and nearly half believe he has committed war crimes, reflects a profound shift in how Americans view Israel under his leadership. Polls fluctuate; strategic realignments do not. Once public attitudes harden across generations, rebuilding trust becomes extraordinarily difficult. The political consequences are visible. Within the Democratic Party, unconditional support has given way to demands that military assistance be made conditional on compliance with international humanitarian law. Younger voters discuss the conflict in terms of occupation, apartheid and universal human rights rather than traditional alliances. Members of Congress once reluctant to criticise Israel

Pro-Palestine protesters demonstrate outside the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., on July 24, 2024. Protesters are demanding the arrest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
● JONATHAN FERNANDES/SIPA USA

now openly challenge successive cabinets. Even Republican support can no longer be assumed to be permanent; younger conservative populists have become sceptical of unconditional foreign commitments. The bipartisan consensus that once protected Israel is steadily giving way to a far more volatile environment. Netanyahu's governing coalition has deepened that crisis. By empowering ultranationalist ministers who openly advocate annexation, reject Palestinian self-determination and defend collective punishment, his cabinet has blurred the line

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks about Iran during a joint meeting of the United States Congress in the House chamber at the US Capitol in Washington, D.C., on March 3, 2015. Republican representatives are seen sitting to his left.
● WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES.



between extremist rhetoric and official state policy. Settler violence and the near absence of accountability have further eroded Israel's standing. Most revealing is the complete absence of any serious political vision for ending the conflict. Netanyahu has consistently rejected meaningful discussion of Palestinian statehood, opposed the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza and offered no credible framework for reconstruction beyond prolonged military control. Nor is this simply Netanyahu's project; a clear majority of Israelis and virtually all mainstream political leaders share these convictions. Military power can destroy infrastructure and weaken armed groups; it cannot by itself resolve a national conflict rooted in competing claims to land, sovereignty and self-determination. By refusing a viable political horizon, Netanyahu has made perpetual conflict appear not as an unintended consequence but as official policy. History may be kinder to tactical victories than to strategic failures. Netanyahu secured significant diplomatic gains during favourable administrations, but those achievements rested on a foundation built over decades: bipartisan confidence that Israel remained both a strategic ally and a democratic partner. That foundation is now visibly cracking. The timing of the poll could scarcely be more symbolic. As Netanyahu met US leaders to reinforce the alliance, nearly half of the American public viewed him not as a trusted ally but as a leader who should face arrest, while almost as many regarded him as a war criminal. These numbers suggest that Netanyahu's political strategy has fundamentally altered Israel's standing in American public life. Military superiority can deter enemies. Political legitimacy cannot be manufactured once lost. Trust, credibility and bipartisan support are strategic assets accumulated over generations and squandered far more quickly than they are rebuilt. If future historians search for the moment when Israel's unrivalled position in Washington began its most consequential decline, they will not begin in Tehran, Gaza or Beirut. They will begin in Washington itself — and with the decisions of Netanyahu.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

FIVB U17 Boys' World Championship:

Iran out for revenge against Pakistan in pool phase

Sports Desk

Iran will look to avenge its two setbacks against Pakistan at last year's Asian U16 Championship when the two teams go head-to-head again at the upcoming FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship, which kicks off on Wednesday in Doha. The new draw for the second edition of the global showpiece took place on Saturday after Japan, USA, Puerto Rico and Czechia withdrew from the event due to security concerns in the region.

Iran and Pakistan have been drawn alongside Chinese Taipei and Algeria in Pool E of the 20-team tournament. Iran will take on Algeria on the opening day of the competition, followed by a highly anticipated clash against

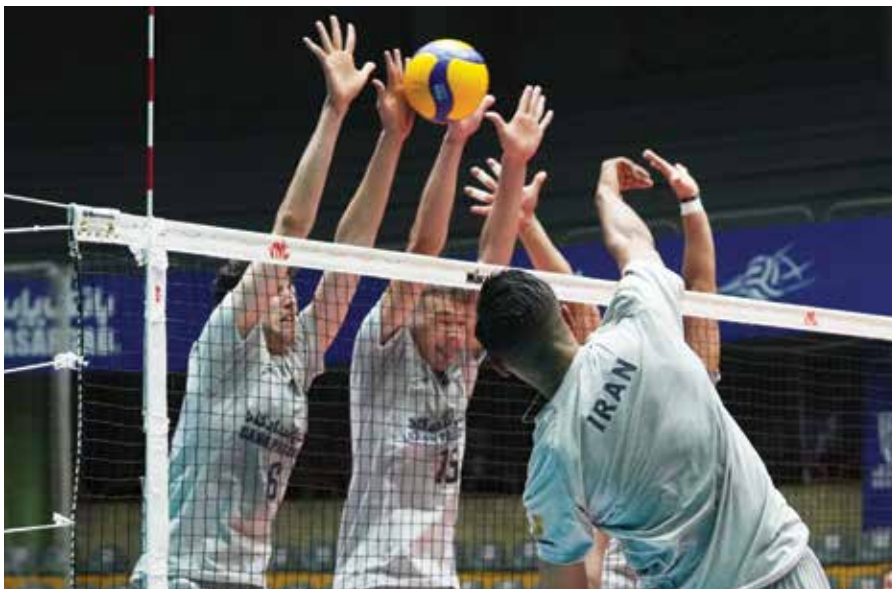
Pakistan on Friday.

Pakistan came out on top against Iran in four sets in the second-round pool phase at the Asian U16 event, before rallying from two sets down to stun Arash Sadeqiani's boys in the final in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

The final day of the pool phase will see Iran face Chinese Taipei on Sunday. Chinese Taipei was a surprise bronze medalist at the inaugural U17 World Championship in Sofia in 2024, defeating Spain 3-2 in the third-place match.

A global powerhouse in age-group volleyball, Iran had to settle for fifth place in the Bulgarian capital after defeating Belgium 3-2 in its final classification match.

Setter Aydin Poozesh and outside hitter Azhvan



Iranian players are seen in action during a training session in Tehran, Iran, on Aug. 11, 2026.
● AMIRMAHDI AKHOONDI/volleyball.ir

Namazi, who were named to the tournament's Dream

Team at the Asian Championship, headline the Ira-

nian roster in Doha. The squad also includes Sina

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

Sadeqiani's team played Egypt in the first of its two warmup games in Doha on Saturday, winning 3-1 (25-15, 25-22, 30-32, 25-21).

"Egypt is a strong team and put in a respectable performance in the previous edition. We tried to implement different tactical approaches on the court and used various combinations during the match," Sadeqiani said after the game.

"Thankfully, I am satisfied with the team's condition on our first day in Qatar. Considering the weather

conditions, the difference in altitude and other such factors, the players are adapting well to the new circumstances," added the Iranian coach, whose team will face Italy in a second friendly in Doha today.

Elsewhere in Saturday's draw, host Qatar was joined by France, Venezuela and Tunisia in Pool A.

Defending champion Italy has been drawn in Pool B along with Cuba, India and Romania, while Pool C features Argentina – beaten by Italy in the 2024 final – Brazil, Poland and Mexico.

Spain, Egypt, Bulgaria and Türkiye complete the lineup in Pool D.

Each team will play three preliminary-round matches, with the top 16 teams in the combined ranking advancing to the knockout stage.

Faraji bags historic bronze at Europe Youth Smash

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis wonderkid Benyamin Faraji claimed a historic bronze medal at the prestigious Europe Youth Smash event in Malmö, Sweden, on Saturday. The teen prodigy secured five successive victories before suffering a 4-3 defeat (7-2, 6-7, 7-2, 4-7, 7-6, 5-7, 7-5) against Japan's Ryuusei Kawakami in the U19 boys' singles semifinals, finishing joint third alongside Colombia's

Emanuel Otlavaro at the second WTT Youth Grand Smash of the season.

Faraji opened his campaign with a 4-2 (7-5, 6-7, 7-5, 5-7, 7-2, 7-3) victory over Italy's Francesco Trevisan on Friday before making quick work of France's Antoine Noiraud in straight games (7-4, 7-3, 7-1, 7-6).

A 4-2 win (3-7, 7-5, 7-3, 6-7, 7-5, 7-6) against Denmark's Dominykas Samuolis saw Faraji win Group 6 and advance to the last 16, where

he defeated Hung Che-Yen of Chinese Taipei 4-2 (7-3, 6-7, 7-3, 4-7, 7-5, 7-1).

Faraji then defeated Portugal's Tiago Abiodun 4-0 (7-5, 7-6, 7-2, 7-1) to set up a last-four clash with Kawakami, who won the U19 boys' singles title at last year's ITTF World Youth Championships.

Faraji, who also won the U19 boys' singles title at the latest WTT Youth Contender event in Vientiane, Laos, earlier this

month, will be part of the Iranian squad at September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

Iran will look to emulate the impressive success of Hangzhou 2022, which yielded men's doubles and team bronze medals – the country's first table tennis medals at the multi-sport event in 65 years.

The winner of Iran's maiden and, to date, only medal at the World Youth Championships – a bronze in the U15 category in 2024 – Faraji will aim for further international glory when he takes part in the upcoming Summer Youth Olympics, starting Oct. 31 in Dakar, Senegal.



● WTT

Persian Gulf Premier League:

Persepolis launches new era with victory over Shams Azar

Sports Desk

Persepolis got off to a winning start to its Persian Gulf Premier League campaign, defeating Shams Azar 2-0 in Qazvin on Saturday.

Marquee summer signing Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi put the visitors ahead 10 minutes into the game, pouncing on Abolfazl Jalali's cross and firing home into the roof of the net from close range.

Mohammad Omri doubled the Tehran Reds' lead five minutes later when his side-footed effort from the edge of the box found the bottom corner.

With new head coach Mahdi Tartar in charge and a completely revamped starting XI following a busy transfer window, Persepolis will look to build on the impressive start to its new era as it chases an eighth domestic top-flight title since the 2016-17 season, having missed out

on the title in the previous two campaigns.

Saturday's result came after the other three members of the so-called "Big Four" of Iranian football also delivered opening-day statement victories on Friday.

Saied Saharkhizan scored twice, with Mohammad-Hossein Eslami and 20-year-old midfielder Esmaeil Qolizadeh also finding the net late on, as Persepolis' archrival Esteghlal defeated newly promoted Mes Shahr-e Babak 4-0 at home.

In Tabriz, Tractor gave head coach Javad Nekounam, who only replaced Mohammad Rabiei last week, a fitting start to life on the bench by defeating 10-man Paykan 2-0, thanks to a first-half goal from Iranian international striker Shahrar Moghanlou, who joined from Emirati club Ittihad Kalba in the summer.

Sepahan, meanwhile, secured a hard-fought 2-0 away victory over Chadormalou. Ehsan Hajsafi broke the deadlock from the spot with 14 minutes remaining before Alireza Arta's own goal in the sixth minute of stoppage time secured all three points for Moharram Navidkia's side. Elsewhere on Saturday, Zob Ahan and Foolad Khuzestan played out a goalless draw in Isfahan, while San'at Naft Abadan, back among the domestic elite after spending two seasons in the second division, shared the spoils with Malavan at home.

Matin Karimzadeh gave the home side an eighth-minute lead, only for Malavan to equalize three minutes before the break.



Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi (c) celebrates his goal with Persepolis teammates during a 2-0 win against Shams Azar in the Persian Gulf Premier League in Qazvin, Iran, on Aug. 15, 2026.
● IRNA

FIBA 3x3 Youth Nations League 2026:

Iran men, women secure Stop 5 double

Sports Desk

Iran enjoyed a dominant fifth stop at the FIBA 3x3 Youth Nations League in Cangzhou, China, winning both the men's and women's basketball events in the Asia Central/East division on Saturday.

In the men's competition, Iran defeated China 21-11 before beating Kazakhstan by the same score to win Pool A and advance to the final. Comprising Mohammad-Mahdi Rahimi, Seyyed Mohammad Ghaffari, Mohammad-Basir Mo'meni, Sarem Jafari and Argen Minasians, the Iranian team beat Mongolia 19-17 in the final to add to its Stop 4 victory from the previous day, when it de-

feated Japan in the final. The Iranian men had finished runners-up behind South Korea at Stop 1 before placing third at Stop 3 on Thursday. The Iranian women's team, meanwhile, began the day with an overtime 16-14 win over Japan, followed by a comfortable 21-12 victory over Kazakhstan to finish top of Pool A.

Iran then pulled off an impressive 20-13 victory over hosts China in the final.

Featuring Mahla Abedi, Mahsa Karani, Farnaz Khodamardi and Shamim Nouri, the Iranian team began its campaign with a third-place finish at Stop 1 and then repeated the feat at Stop 4.



Iran's women's team poses for a photo after winning Stop 5 at the FIBA 3x3 Youth Nations League - Asia Central/East in Cangzhou, China, on Aug. 15, 2026.
● FIBA

Yazd demonstrates Iran’s living heritage, desert culture

Iranica Desk

Sometimes, “understanding Iran does not require traveling all across the country. It is enough to walk through Yazd’s mud-brick alleys, rest beneath the shade of a centuries-old Sabat, a covered passageway, feel the breeze from a traditional windcatcher and spend a night beneath the star-filled desert sky. Then it becomes clear that Yazd is more than a tourist destination: it is a living story of Iran, preserved in every brick, windcatcher, Sabat, Persian garden and in the hands of the region’s artisans.

Seyyed Mohammad Rostami, director general of Yazd’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, said the province represents Iranian ingenuity in adapting to the desert climate and is one of the world’s most authentic cultural tourism destinations, according to chtn.ir.

“Yazd is known not only for its historic sites and world heritage inscriptions, but also as a living expression of Iranian culture, civilization, architecture, handicrafts, rituals and way of life,” he said. “From the World Heritage city of Yazd to Persian gardens, historic caravanserais, tourism villages, tranquil desert nights and the craftsmanship of local artisans, the province offers visitors an enduring experience.”

Yazd, he said, is the product of centuries of intelligent coexistence between people and the desert environment.



Dowlatabad Garden, Yazd
● wikipedia.org



Shah Abbasi Carvansera, Meybod
● visitiran.ir

Its residents have drawn on knowledge, creativity and a deep understanding of the local climate to turn wind into windcatchers, water into qanats, earth into enduring architecture and art into an inseparable part of the region’s identity.

“Today, the province is not only a valuable legacy from the past, but also a living model of Iranian culture, sustainability and way of life,” Rostami said. He noted that the inscription of the historic city of Yazd on UNESCO’s World Heritage List represented more than the recognition of a city.

“It was also the recognition of a way of life, climate-adapted architecture, intelligent water management and a culture that has preserved its authenticity over centuries and continues to inspire people around the world,” he said. Yazd, he added, should not simply be viewed but

experienced. From walking through mud-brick alleys and narrow passages known locally as Koocheh-ye Ashti-Konan to passing through cool Sabats, visitors can see windcatchers that still channel breezes into historic homes and explore markets and neighborhoods where everyday life continues.

Rostami pointed to the province’s potential for summer tourism, saying that although the desert is associated with heat, Yazd’s traditional architecture developed sophisticated ways of coping with the climate centuries ago.

At sunset, the city takes on a different character, Rostami said. The gentle desert breeze, illuminated historic buildings, quiet mud-brick alleys and star-filled sky create exceptional conditions for nighttime tourism, combining tranquility, authenticity and beauty.

He said Yazd offers a different

face of Iran in every season, adding that the current period of desert travel and clear, starry nights provides an especially appealing opportunity to experience the province.

“As the heat of the day subsides, the historic district comes alive again,” Rostami said. “The warm glow of its earthen walls, the quiet of the Sabats, life in the historic neighborhoods and the star-filled desert sky offer visitors a unique experience of tranquility and authenticity.”

The official added that Yazd’s architecture was not simply a legacy of the past but the product of centuries of knowledge, experience and adaptation to the desert climate.

“Windcatchers, Sabats, water reservoirs, qanats and mud-brick houses represent Iranian ingenuity in creating sustainable habitats,” he said, adding that the heritage continues to fascinate and inspire both

domestic and international visitors.

Rostami also highlighted the province’s Persian gardens, saying Dowlatabad Garden, known for having the world’s tallest mud-brick windcatcher, and Pahlavanpur Garden in Mehriz are two outstanding examples of Persian garden design. Along with seven other Persian gardens in Iran, they are inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List.

“These gardens tell the story of the sophisticated relationship between water, architecture, nature and life in the heart of the desert,” he said.

The historic caravanserais of Meybod, Ardakan and Mehriz also form part of the identity of Iran’s historic trade routes. For centuries, the buildings served as stopping points for caravans, merchants and travelers and today reflect Yazd’s historic role in connecting cultures and civilizations, Rostami said.

He also pointed to the tourism potential of villages in Taft and Mehriz. With their green gardens, historic fabric, eco-lodges and traditional local culture, the villages offer visitors an opportunity to experience rural life and the distinctive tranquility of the region.

“What distinguishes Yazd from many historic cities around the world is the continuity of life in its historic district,” Rostami said. “Cultural heritage here is not confined to mud-brick buildings. It lives on in the markets, neighborhoods, rituals, cuisine, handicrafts and hospitality of the people.”

Rostami highlighted the province’s prominent handicrafts sector, noting that Meybod has received global recognition for Zilu carpet weaving and Yazd for traditional jewelry. Bafq has been nationally registered for mat weaving, Ardakan

for traditional textiles.

“These recognitions demonstrate the province’s important role in preserving and continuing Iran’s intangible cultural heritage,” he said.

Yazd has 18 handicraft groups encompassing 156 crafts and 143 subcategories, making it one of the country’s most diverse ecosystems of traditional arts, the official added.

He also highlighted Yazd’s well-known culinary souvenirs, including Baghlava, Qottab, Pashmak, Loz and Haji-Badam. Traditional drinks and evenings spent in historic houses, he said, are also part of the lasting memories created by a trip to Yazd.

Rostami invited domestic and international tourists to visit the province.

“Today, more than ever, the world is looking for destinations that have preserved their authenticity,” he said. “With its world heritage city, Persian gardens, historic caravanserais, exceptional handicrafts, tourism villages, tranquil desert nights and people who embody a culture of hospitality, Yazd is ready to present an authentic face of Iran to the world.”

“Visitors who come to Yazd, return with more than photographs and souvenirs,” he added. “They take with them a part of Iran’s history, culture, art and tranquility. Yazd should be seen, experienced and told, because it is not merely a legacy of the past; it is a living story of Iran for today and tomorrow.”

National Bonab Kebab Festival to be held in September

Iranica Desk

The eighth National Bonab Kebab Festival will be held from September 8 to 11 at Fadak Park in Bonab, East Azarbaijan Province, the deputy governor for coordination and planning affairs of Bonab announced.

Firooz Mobin said preparations for this year’s festival are underway to showcase Bonab’s culinary, cultural, tourism and handicraft capacities more broadly. He said efforts had been made to design the festival’s programs in line with the reputation of Bonab kebab and the city’s cultural and tourism potential, chtn.ir wrote.

The festival will feature a range of cultural, artistic and exhibition programs for residents and tourists, he added.

Referring to Bonab’s traditional kebab as an important part of the city’s culinary identity, Mobin said the dish is one of Bonab’s best-known culinary and tourism attractions. Its reputation has drawn large numbers of travelers to the



● yazeco.ir

city each year, he added. Alongside kebab stalls, booths will be set up to showcase and sell local products, goods produced in Bonab and handicrafts, giving visitors an opportunity to see some of the city’s economic and cultural capabilities.

Mobin also said cultural and artistic programs, including performances of traditional music, would be held on the sidelines of the festival. He added that efforts would be made to

create a welcoming atmosphere for families, residents and tourists.

The deputy governor said the festival has a broader tourism role beyond showcasing a well-known local dish. It provides an opportunity to promote Bonab’s culture, arts, handicrafts, local products and tourism attractions at the same time, he said, adding that the event could help attract more tourists and support local producers and businesses.

Gonbad-e Kavus home to over 7,000 handicraft artisans

Iranica Desk

More than 7,000 artisans are active in 42 handicraft fields in Gonbad-e Kavus, highlighting the northern Golestan city’s strong potential for preserving and developing traditional crafts, the head of its Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department said.

Maryam Aghatabay said the city’s diverse ethnic communities have helped create a rich handicraft tradition and provide a valuable foundation for promoting traditional arts and developing new opportunities for skills training.

She added that the private sector is prepared to establish a handicrafts school specifically for girls in Gonbad-e Kavus. The necessary correspondence has been conducted with the city’s Education Department to pursue the initiative and obtain the required permits.

Establishing the school could play an important role in preserving traditional crafts, providing specialized training and passing skills on to younger generations, Aghatabay said. It could also help strengthen the position of traditional and indigenous arts in the local economy.

She noted that experienced artisans from various ethnic commu-



● IRNA

nities, including Qizilbash, Kurdish, Semnani, Sistani, Baluchi and Turkmen communities, are active in Gonbad-e Kavus. Their expertise, she added, could be used to train young people and help preserve traditional techniques.

Some of the city’s handicrafts, including Turkmen kilim weaving and embroidery, have received international recognition, while others have received UNESCO’s Seal of Excellence.

Aghatabay expressed hope that, once the necessary permits are issued, the handicrafts school will

begin educational activities in the coming academic year.

Gonbad-e Kavus is one of the main cultural and historical centers of Golestan Province and is known for its diverse ethnic and cultural heritage. The city is home to the Gonbad-e Qabus Tower, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most prominent examples of medieval Iranian architecture. Its cultural diversity, traditional arts and proximity to natural attractions in Golestan also give the city considerable potential for cultural and heritage tourism.



Historic Si-o-se-pol bridge appears on global irrigation heritage list

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's historic Si-o-se-pol bridge in the central city of Isfahan has been added to the World Heritage Irrigation Structures (WHIS) list after being recognized by the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), a move the province's heritage chief said on Sunday should lead to practical conservation rather than become a publicity label.

Amir Karamzadeh, director-general of Isfahan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, said the listing could pave the way for greater research, documentation, scientific conservation and restoration of Si-o-se-pol, IRNA reported.

The Safavid-era bridge, built

on the Zayandeh Rud river under Shah Abbas I in the early 17th century has 33 arches, is 295 metres long and 14 metres wide. It is one of Iran's largest historic bridges and a globally recognized symbol of Isfahan.

"The bridge, also known as Alahverdi Khan Bridge, is part of Isfahan's historic memory and one of the main links in the Chaharbagh axis and the city's historic structure connected to the Zayandeh Rud river," Karamzadeh said.

Its value should not be reduced to its architecture or tourism role, he added.

Karamzadeh noted that Si-o-se-pol should instead be viewed alongside Isfahan's wider water heritage, with its historic bridges reflecting the region's relationship with water, settlement

and urban development.

The global listing could also open the door to interdisciplinary research bringing together architectural history, engineering, urban planning and water management, he said.

The official called for long-term monitoring, funding, public participation and joined-up action, saying restoration should be documented, technical and measurable.

Three other Iranian sites have also been included on the WHIS list: Band-e Amir in Fars, Band-e Shadorvan in Khuzestan and the hydraulic structures of Siraf in Bushehr.

A commemorative award will be presented at the 26th World Congress on Irrigation and Drainage in Marseille, France, in October 2026.



● IRNA

Creative industries could drive economy, cultural influence, minister says

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture Minister Abbas Salehi said on Sunday creative industries could become a key driver of the country's economy, identity and cultural influence, describing the sector as a potential shortcut to development despite Iran's economic woes and recent wars. Speaking at the launch of the Culture and Arts Development Research and Technology Fund, Salehi said Iran's revenues from creative industries were currently below \$1 billion, despite the sector's vast untapped potential, IRNA reported.

"Creative industries have become a strategic part of the global economy," Salehi said, contributing significantly to output, employment, turnover, exports and national income. Iran's thousands of years of historical and civilizational heritage give it considerable advantages in the sector, he said, adding that creative industries could help restore Iran's historical and cultural influence.

Salehi also said the growing



overlap between the cultural and artistic economy, lifestyle and identity offered a new opportunity to develop Iran's cultural relations with the world. "Despite difficult economic conditions, creative industries were an area where Iran could work with greater confidence and determination," he said, noting that the country's cultural and artistic capabilities had continued to show themselves even during the recent war that the US and Israel waged against Iran in late February.

The newly launched fund has

initial capital of 1,000 billion rials (\$538,000) and aims to finance, invest in and commercialize businesses in culture, arts and media. It is intended to replace grants with more productive and sustainable financing, acting as a financial bridge between ideas, capital and markets and helping cultural and artistic players turn ideas into marketable products.

Salehi identified 10 major challenges facing Iran's creative industries. The first was weak statistical and information systems, with the sector



Iran's Culture Minister Abbas Salehi (c) address a high level meeting in Tehran on August 16, 2026.
● IRNA

still relying heavily on estimates rather than accurate data.

He cited inadequate regulations as a second problem and called for "short, issue-based single-article laws" to create rules that facilitate growth and provide greater stability.

The gap between Iran's creative-industry technology and the pace of global development was another major challenge, he said, warning that it could hold back growth.

Salehi also pointed to the migration of talent, a weak private sector and fragmented government agencies, calling for greater coordination among the institutions involved.

If these capacities can be brought together, he said, creative industries could become one of the foundations of Iran's economy, identity and regional and global influence.

Pezeshkian calls students Iran's 'most important social capital'; urges education reform

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday students were the country's "most important asset and social capital", urging education officials to change their approach to teaching, promote teamwork and focus on problem-solving.

Speaking at the 39th national meeting of education officials in Tehran, Pezeshkian stressed educational equality and greater attention to disadvantaged areas, calling on teachers and administrators to shift their focus towards improvement, IRNA reported.

The president said capable people in schools were the country's greatest asset, while mines and industries were simply tools to be placed in the hands of Iran's experts and children.

"Our greatest pride is our human resources and our children," he said.

He urged teachers to teach students to serve their country, take responsibility, live well and believe that all problems could be overcome through unity and cohesion. Referring to regional tensions, Pezeshkian said Israel had plunged the Middle East into instability, making scientific and comprehensive investment in children essential.

He said educational equality meant addressing the needs of all social groups, rather than focusing only on students with special circumstances. The government, he said, must recognize the needs of all sections of society for equality to be properly implemented.



President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a national meeting of education officials in Tehran, Iran, on August 16, 2026.
● president.ir

Pezeshkian urged education officials to break out of existing mindsets and teach students problem-solving, teamwork and group-based learning.

Every student had a talent, he said, and those talents could succeed in solving problems when brought together.

"Accepting the status quo would lead to stagnation adding that reaching ambitious goals first required the belief that they could be achieved," he said.

Changing teaching and management methods, improving efficiency and using new technologies could create different paths to excellence, he said.

The president also said that teachers should be given room for creativity and administrators should avoid excessive orders and instructions.

Iran breaks into global top 20 for AI, claims 3rd spot in Muslim world

Social Desk

Iran ranks 18th worldwide and third among Islamic countries in artificial intelligence, with 5,068 research papers published in the field, Science, Research and Technology Minister Hossein Simaei Sarraf said on Sunday. Speaking at a ceremony honoring winners of the International AI Olympiad, Sarraf said about 44,000 students and 400 specialized companies were active in the field, IRIBNEWS reported.

"Digital economy companies account for 27% of Iran's tech-based businesses," he said, adding that about 16,000 technology units oper-

ate across 60 science and technology parks. Sarraf said the achievements had been made despite wartime conditions, which had affected some facilities and resources used to prepare Iran's teams. "Nevertheless, Iran's team broke new ground by winning a gold medal at the International AI Olympiad for the first time."

The minister referred to an attack on the laser laboratory at Shahid Beheshti University during the 40-day US-Israeli war that broke out in late February and said it was wrong to think that destroying a building could bring down Iran's scientific structure.

"Iran's thousands of years of civilizational,

scientific and cultural history could not be erased by targeting several buildings," he said. "Even advanced countries cannot easily compete with Iran's capacity" in human resources, Sarraf said, while acknowledging limitations in facilities and infrastructure.

He called on officials to value the country's human capital and provide the resources needed for its development.

The minister said the country would roll out 25 new AI degree programs for the new academic year. "A dedicated fast-track system has also been created to recruit AI faculty members, while AI has been added as a key subject in educational curricula."