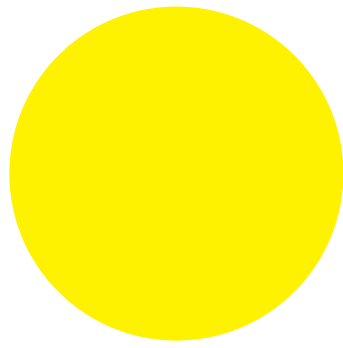


Iran ranks eighth in barley cultivation area, 11th in production

3 >



Iran Daily

Vol. 8235 • Sunday, October 11, 2026 • Mehr 19, 1405 • Rabi' al-Thani 29, 1448 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



> irandaily.ir

| newspaper.irandaily.ir

| IranDailyWeb

Qalibaf to Rubio: Western arrogance will end in 'dust and shame'

2 >

Marco Rubio, return to confrontational narrative of civilizations



By Kourosh Ahmadi
Former diplomat

O P I N I O N
E X C L U S I V E

The recent speech by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Athens is yet another example of the oversimplification—and distortion—of historical processes and narratives in pursuit of narrow political objectives. The Israeli far right has also repeatedly resorted to this kind of oversimplification coupled with historical distortion.

Rubio framed 480 BC as an unprovoked Persian attack on an innocent Greece, which is historically distorted and incomplete. The Greeks — specifically Athens and Eretria — had attacked and burned Sardis, in the Achaemenid Empire just 18 years earlier. So there was a cycle of retaliation. Rubio's remarks in Athens likewise reveal a selective approach to human civilizations and a damaging attempt to set them against one another. By invoking the golden age of one civilization while overlooking periods of decline within that same civilization, Rubio presents an incomplete picture and a distorted historical narrative. No doubt that ancient Greek civilization is praiseworthy in itself. What is questionable, however, is Rubio's selective treatment of human civilizations. There can be little doubt that no civilization as a whole is either entirely virtuous or entirely evil. Both Iranian and Western civilizations have experienced numerous periods of rise and decline, and both have been sources of achievements as well as destructive consequences. There is no doubt that ancient Greek civilization, particularly the classical Greek philosophical and political tradition, was one of the most important sources of philosophical reason, critical thought, and political theory in human history.

Page 3 >

President calls for scientific advances to make country stronger against bullying

2 >

Pezeshkian hails rural, nomadic communities as 'irreplaceable' assets

8 >



President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) poses for a photo with a nomadic boy during a visit to a fair on Iranian nomadic and rural life in Tehran on October 10, 2026. president.ir



Is China Trump's only hope for ending Iran war?

OPINION 4 >



Teen prodigy Beheshti sets sights on Olympic gold after Nagoya success

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE 6 >



Mehregan Festival highlights Kurdistan heritage

7 >



President calls for scientific advances to make country stronger against bullying



President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at a ceremony marking the start of the country's agricultural year Karaj, Alborz Province, on October 10, 2026.
● president.ir

at a ceremony marking the start of the agricultural year, which was held in Alborz Province. The president underlined the role of modern technology in improving the country's scientific standing and production capacity. Pezeshkian pointed to Iran's technical expertise, particularly in assembly and artificial intelligence, as an existing resource that should be put to more effective use. "Our experts are among the best assemblers in the world; we have some of

the best in artificial intelligence. Why should we not use the best technology?" he asked. Pezeshkian further called for effective use of artificial intelligence and other advanced tools to improve production methods, increase efficiency, and strengthen Iran's technological capacity. His remarks come as the United States has imposed further sanctions and restrictions on Iran following its recent aggression to force Tehran accept its demands. The war started with US and Israeli attacks on Iran, while Washington and Tehran were locked in negotiations on Iran's nuclear program. The warring parties agreed a memorandum of

understanding in June that spelled out a framework for a permanent resolution to the conflict, but the US violations of the agreement prompted a resumption of military operations. Negotiations have effectively been at an impasse since then, and recent indirect talks between the US and Iran on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly failed to produce a breakthrough. The US also recently shifted toward a campaign of what it calls "economic asphyxiation" of Iran, imposing sanctions on various sectors in Iran. Despite a hiatus in negotiations, exchange of messages and proposals through regional mediators are underway to end the war.

According to Iranian officials, Tehran is reviewing a Washington's response to its recent proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which was delivered to US officials during the 81st session of the UN General Assembly in New York. Meanwhile, the Kremlin said on Saturday that Russian President Vladimir Putin has told US President Donald Trump about Iran's position on a possible peace deal. The Kremlin said Tehran's stance was relayed in a phone call held between the two leaders on Friday. Putin met Pezeshkian on the sidelines of a summit in Turkmenistan earlier this week, where the Russian leader expressed an interest in helping broker peace.

National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday called for further scientific advances to make the

country stronger against bullying and coercion, stressing on the role of modern technology in improving the country's scientific standing.

"If we are not to bow to the bullying and coercion of our enemies, we must not put ourselves in a position of weakness," President Pezeshkian said

Qalibaf to Rubio: Western arrogance will end in 'dust and shame'

International Desk

A speech by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio invoking memories of ancient Persia has been met with strong reactions from Iranian officials amid Washington's ongoing war on Iran. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf delivered a rebuke to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's imperialist rhetoric, warning that foreign powers seeking to erase ancient civilizations will ultimately face historic humiliation and defeat.

In a post on X, Qalibaf responded to Rubio's recent remarks romanticizing Western hegemony, making it clear that the Iranian nation has successfully defied self-proclaimed "masters of the universe" for millennia. "Throughout history we Iranians have faced those who declared themselves masters of the universe and sought to erase ancient civilizations. They came in fire and flame, only to depart in dust and shame," Qalibaf stated. "Those who chase Alexander's legacy will share Valerian's fate: you will kneel."

Qalibaf's response was triggered by a statement from Rubio on October 8, in which the US Secretary of State attempted to frame Washington's aggressive foreign policy as a continuation of ancient Western glory.

"We believe that the West can awaken



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks in Athens, Greece, on October 7, 2026, with the Acropolis in the background.
● EPA

from its long slumber – and rekindle the fire that was first lit in ancient Greece millennia ago," Rubio claimed. Major General Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), also reacted to Rubio's remarks, invoking the ancient defeat of Rome by Sasanian king Shapur I to counter an attempt by US officials to frame the aggression against Iran as a civilizational war.

"When they go to Athens after defeat and humiliation before Iran to shape a narrative of a civilizational war, it would be better for them to read another important part of history: where the Roman emperor knelt before Shapur I of the Sasanian Empire," he wrote.

He added that "Whoever brings history into it must be ready for its repetition!" Rezaei's response invoked one of the

most significant military episodes in ancient Iranian history, countering the US official's civilizational framing by recalling a time when the Sasanian Empire inflicted a major defeat on the Roman Empire.

Shapur I, who ruled the Sasanian Empire from 241 to 272 AD, fought several campaigns against Rome and expanded Persian influence across Mesopotamia and parts of the eastern Mediterranean. In 260 AD, his forces defeated the Roman army near Edessa, in present-day Turkey, and captured Emperor Valerian, who had led the campaign against Persia.

Culture Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri urged Western politicians to speak about Iran with a "language of respect" since "it is not an enemy created in a political speech but a living civilization, a great nation and a lasting reality in world history" that dates back millennia.

Vali Nasr, professor of international affairs and Middle East studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, said he believes Rubio's aim was to define a common enemy for the US and Europe to rebuild their relations around. "It also reflects US frustration that Europe has not played a major role in the war and seeks to paper over deep divisions between the US and Europe on Russia and Ukraine," Vali Nasr said.

Pezeshkian demands immediate investigation into killing of police official in Zahedan

National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday called for immediate investigation into a terrorist attack in southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, which led to the killing of a senior police official.

The president in a message said indiscriminate and terrorist acts aimed at creating insecurity and spreading violence would achieve nothing beyond shedding the blood of innocent people and exposing the criminal nature of their perpetrators.

He called on relevant authorities to swiftly identify those responsible for the crime.

Nosrat Eftekhari, deputy for cultural and social affairs of the police command in southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan was killed after a roadside bomb struck her vehicle on the road to the province's Cheshmeh Ziarat village. Several police officers were also injured in the attack.

The killing of Eftekhari was a bitter example of such inhumane crimes, the president said.

He stressed that such criminal acts would never weaken security forces' resolve to



Nosrat Eftekhari
● FARS

protect the lives, peace and well-being of the public.

Safeguarding citizens' security and confronting terrorism and those responsible for creating insecurity would continue with determination, he added.

Iran's police chief, Brigadier General Ahmadreza Radan, also vowed revenge for the assassination of Eftekhari.

Radan said she was killed while visiting Cheshmeh Ziarat village to help address local communities' concerns.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf also reacted to the terrorist act, vowing that those responsible for the assassination of Eftekhari will face justice.

Qalibaf described the police official as a highly educated and dedicated woman who worked in remote areas, addressing the concerns of local communities and ethnic groups while promoting solidarity.

FM says Netanyahu seeking to save himself with 'US blood and treasure'

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Saturday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is desperately trying to evade justice by sacrificing more American lives and resources. In a post on his X account, Araghchi said Netanyahu is a "wanted war criminal" who is responsible for the deaths of Arabs, Americans and Iranians, Press TV reported.

He added that the Israeli prime minister is seeking to evade justice while showing no regard for the lives of his own people. The top Iranian diplomat likened Netanyahu to a "degenerate gambler," saying he was desperately trying to save himself by spilling more American blood and squandering US resources.



Abbas Araghchi
● IRNA

"Even US Senators want out," Araghchi wrote.

The Iranian foreign minister attached a video to his post featuring Maj. Gen. Avi Gil, a former senior aide to Netanyahu, who has renewed criticism of the Israeli prime minister over the events of October 7, 2023.

Gil, who served as Netanyahu's military

secretary from July 2021 to May 2024, has said that the Israeli leader was warned internally of the potential for war ahead of the October 7 attacks and that there remained "enormous gaps" between what the public knows and what really happened.

Gil woke up the Israeli prime minister on the morning of the deadliest attacks in its history. His comments put fresh pressure just weeks before a critical election that will determine Netanyahu's political future.

Late in February, 36 former Israeli officials, including five former heads of the spy agency Shin Bet, have said Netanyahu bears sole responsibility for the military and intelligence failures that enabled the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation on October 7, 2023.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran ranks eighth in barley cultivation area, 11th in production

Economy Desk

Iran ranks eighth globally in barley cultivation area and 11th in production, with barley imports declining in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year, the deputy agriculture minister for crop production said on Saturday.

Speaking at a national ceremony marking the start of the new crop year, Majid Anjafi said the country had made progress in barley production and recorded a decline in imports during the first six months of the year, which began on March 21.

"The entry of the private sector into the country's seed production cycle is a welcome development, and we hope its share will increase," he said.

He said 169 wheat varieties had been developed for the

country's different climatic conditions through the efforts of research centers and the private sector. These include high-yielding varieties resistant to salinity and tolerant of early-season drought.

Anjafi added that only 74 barley varieties were currently cultivated in Iran.

He also referred to the selection of more than 1,000 collaborative farms nationwide, where different methods were implemented.

Anjafi said wheat quality had improved across all indicators in recent years, including during the previous crop year, as a result of measures taken to improve production.

The average protein content of domestically produced wheat samples has now exceeded 13%, while wet gluten content has also increased, he said.

>

Deputy Agriculture Minister for Crop Production Majid Anjafi speaks at a national ceremony marking the start of the new crop year at the Seed and Plant Improvement Institute in Karaj, Alborz Province, on October 10, 2026.

● IRNA

He added that technical programs and guidelines for all autumn crops, prepared in cooperation with research institutes, had been sent to provincial authorities.

A US Department of Agriculture report on global grain production has also estimated that Iran's wheat output climbed 18% to 16 million metric tons in the 2025/26 crop year, making it the world's 14th-largest producer. The estimate compares with 13.5 million tons produced in the 2024/25 crop year, which ended in September



or October 2025. The USDA report also estimated that Iran's barley production increased 16% to 3.5 million tons in 2025/26, up from 3 million tons a year earlier.

Tehran-Almaty trade rises to over \$430m in 2025

Economy Desk

Trade between Iran and Kazakhstan increased to more than \$430 million in 2025 from about \$340 million in 2024, Iran's trade counselor in Kazakhstan told ISNA.

Nasrin Pabarja said the two countries had complementary economic strengths across several sectors, offering opportunities to expand trade and economic cooperation.

Kazakhstan has significant capacity in grains, oilseeds, agricultural products, livestock and food products, mining and metals, and energy-related industries. Iran, meanwhile, has export potential in food products, agricultural and processed goods, construction materials and equipment, industrial parts and equipment, petrochemicals and chemicals, and technical and engineering services, she said.

Identifying complementary economic sectors and making better use of these capacities could help diversify traded goods and expand bilateral trade, Pabarja added.

She also highlighted opportunities under the free trade



agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which took effect on May 15, 2025, saying effective use of the accord could help boost Iranian exports to member states, including Kazakhstan.

Pabarja said capitalizing on trade opportunities required a thorough understanding of target markets, trade regulations and technical standards, as well as product registration requirements, sanitary and quarantine rules, packaging and labeling.

Expanding economic ties also depended on understanding destination markets, complying with legal requirements and standards, and strengthening links between companies and business operators

in the two countries, she said.

Pabarja also pointed to the countries' transport and logistics potential, saying their geographic positions and regional transport links offered opportunities to expand cooperation in transportation, transit and logistics.

Making use of Caspian Sea ports and land routes, alongside stronger logistics cooperation, could facilitate trade and broaden economic ties between the two countries.

She identified industrial and mining cooperation, food and agriculture, technical and engineering services, and oil and gas-related equipment and services as other areas with potential for expanded bilateral cooperation.

Steel output seen at 26-27m tons as exports face disruptions

Economy Desk

Iran's steel production is expected to reach 26 million to 27 million metric tons this year, below an earlier forecast of 30 million tons, as a naval blockade, war-related damage and transport restrictions disrupt production and exports, the head of the Iranian Steel Producers Association said.

Bahram Sobhani told IRIB in an exclusive interview that the country had lost its place among the world's top 10 steel producers and now ranked 11th or 12th, depending on monthly output.

Before the US naval blockade, the industry had expected to produce 30 million tons despite damage to some steel plants in attacks, Sobhani said. He said the industry's unused capacity had initially been expected to offset production losses at damaged facilities.

Some plants had been unable to operate because of electricity and gas shortages, he said. The expectation was that electricity previously allocated to damaged plants could be redirected to idle facilities, allowing them to resume production without reducing overall output.

However, production figures over the past few months, amid the war and naval blockade, have shown that the industry is unlikely to



meet the 30-million-ton target, Sobhani said. If output in the second half of the year, which began on March 21, matches the first-half pace, annual production will reach about 26 million to 27 million tons.

Iran, which has long been among the world's leading steel producers, has annual production capacity of more than 30 million tons. It dropped out of the global top 10 in June after Vietnam increased output by 27.5% year on year to 2.6 million tons, according to Steel Radar.

The country's two largest steelmakers, Mobarakeh Steel Company and Khuzestan Steel Company, sustained damage during the US-Israeli war that began in late February.

Recent conflicts, risks to steel plants and infrastructure, as well as logistical and energy constraints, have severely disrupted the industry. In addition, the country's aviation sector has faced new US sanctions, while maritime trade from the south

has been subject to a US naval blockade.

Sobhani said steel exports had been sharply curtailed, reducing the industry's foreign-currency earnings alongside lower production. The sector had previously generated as much as \$10 billion in foreign currency annually, he said. Steel cannot readily be transported and exported by truck, Sobhani said, noting that Iran's main steel markets were in distant destinations, particularly Southeast Asia, with some exports going to regional markets in the Persian Gulf.

Restrictions and disruptions affecting the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf and neighboring countries had made it difficult to ship and sell steel, he said.

Transport had been disrupted in addition to the impact of sanctions, including shipments to distant markets.

The export restrictions had also forced producers to scale back output, Sobhani said.

The industry also relies on imported raw materials, including coking coal shipped by sea for blast furnaces. Imports of these materials have also been disrupted, he said, expressing hope that the restrictions would be lifted soon so production could resume at a stronger pace.

Marco Rubio, return ...

Iranian civilization, too, made outstanding contributions to humanity in the fields of intellectual thought and institution-building and nation-building, from antiquity through the Islamic period. Civilizations are not isolated islands; they are links in a historical chain. They learn from one another, preserve one another's heritage, subject it to criticism and reconstruction, and pass it on to subsequent generations and civilizations.

Indeed, during one of its own periods of flourishing, Iranian civilization played a major role in preserving and developing the heritage of Greek civilization. Especially, during its golden age, it was

able, over several centuries—roughly the 4th-9th centuries AH (10th-15th centuries CE)—to play, under somehow similar politically and religiously decentralized circumstances, a role that can be compared to that played by the Greek city-states in their own era. During this period, Iranian and Islamic scholars and eminent men of letters played central roles in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, history, geography, poetry and literature, architecture and the arts, and political thought.

Meanwhile, Western civilization—with its multiple sources, including Roman, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Germanic, Byzantine, and other traditions—was going through the grim intellectual and

institutional conditions of the medieval period.

What Rubio overlooks, particularly in his reference to the brilliant period of ancient Greek civilization, is the fact that Iranian-Islamic intellectual traditions in the Middle Ages played a decisive role in preserving, developing, and transmitting the Greek intellectual heritage. A substantial part of the Greek heritage was translated into Persian and Arabic during this period by Iranian and Islamic scholars and institutions, while concepts derived from that heritage were reproduced, reinterpreted, and further developed. Indeed, during centuries in which Europe faced the disparaging and proscription of substantial

portions of the scientific and philosophical heritage of ancient Greece, the Sassanid Iranian, Syriac, and Iranian-Islamic intellectual traditions played a crucial role in preserving, translating, interpreting, and developing important parts of that heritage. This legacy subsequently reached Europe through multiple channels, including Iran, other parts of the Islamic world, and the Byzantine world.

Scientific scholarship, free from political narrow-minded objectives and ambitions, has taught us that civilizations can undoubtedly experience multiple periods of creativity and decline without this negating their intrinsic historical value. Just as the decline of

Greek and Western civilization during the medieval period cannot and should not be used as a basis for denying or disparaging the West, periods of decline in Iranian civilization cannot be used as grounds for disparaging Iranian civilization. The cycle of rise and decline is not a rule that applies to only one civilization. Iranian civilization is no exception. Ironically, Rubio himself, in his remarks at his Senate confirmation hearing on January 15, 2025, indicated that: "The people of Iran are people of an ancient civilization, an ancient culture with tremendous pride and advances, who take great pride in their Persian heritage and identity..."

Is China Trump's only hope for ending Iran war?



By Trita Parsi
Co-founder of the Quincy Institute

By Tom Pickering
Former US representative to the United Nations



OPINION

The current war with Iran and its chaotic unfolding open a door of great danger for the US and the planet.

At best, we are condemned to negotiations dominated by personal and political imperatives that seem to fit with a common description of insanity — to keep doing the same thing and expect a different result. At worst, the crisis raises the prospect that tactical nuclear weapons could be employed to solve it.

The situation has now become so grave, and its implications for the global economy so devastating, that even China — which otherwise is notoriously disciplined in avoiding entanglement in other countries' conflicts — has indicated openness to joining a mediation effort to end the conflict.

Both China and the US are right to be concerned about the crisis. The two have a mutual interest in solving this problem and keeping it from becoming a worse irritant. A joint US-China effort would bring the constancy of oil supply from the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, and the global damage that it is causing, under careful control. Their cooperation is an obvious imperative. For some, this raises the specter of an unwanted development leading to more confusion and chaos. For others, it offers an opportunity for the emergence of a new paradigm of cooperation.

Escalation risks

President Donald Trump has lost control over the war. He was supremely confident that it would last no more than 100 hours. The assassination of Iranian Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei was envisioned to either cause the collapse of the Iranian theocracy or force it to surrender. A suitable replacement — most likely from within the same theocratic system — was to be appointed by Trump in line with the blueprint from Venezuela. There was no need for a plan B.

Things did not go as envisaged. More than seven months later, Trump believes he has exhausted all the options except one: All-out War.

By the US campaign's fourth day, once his loss of control had become clear, Trump began issuing threats to use unprecedented force against Iran; strike Iranian energy infrastructure; invade Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf or take other Iranian territory; and even wipe out Iranian civilization.

In the end, he never acted on even one of these threats, apparently recognizing the disaster that would unfold in the region once — not if — Iran retaliated in kind. Among the factors that have deterred Trump are pressure from regional states, concerns about large numbers of casualties, fears about the global economic fallout, and about political repercussions at home.

There are now indications, howev-



US President Donald Trump (c) and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping (2nd-R) get ready for their bilateral talks at the White House in Washington, D.C., the US, on September 24, 2026.

● **CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES**

er; that his calculations may change after November 3. No longer constrained by the midterm election, and with little confidence that diplomacy, sanctions, or limited war will provide an exit, let alone victory, he appears poised to pursue a swift and massive escalation. The goal of such an effort would be to bring down the theocracy and limit Iran's ability to inflict severe costs on the global economy for an extended period of time. As he appears to see it, it's the only option that enables him to turn a colossal failure into a win that terminates his Iran problem.

But massive escalation will most likely only intensify the problems he has faced. Tehran will counterescalate massively. As demonstrated by the recent Ansarullah (Houthi) advances in Yemen, Iran and its network still have formidable escalatory options. Beyond targeting energy infrastructure, the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces militia could overrun Kuwait or assist a popular uprising in Bahrain. The political geography of the region could change.

As for China, Trump's gamble may prove to be a bridge too far. Beijing has traditionally opted against mediating conflicts, both to avoid inadvertently assuming ownership of conflicts for which it otherwise bears no responsibility and also to

avoid the diplomatic damage that a failure to resolve them would cause.

But if President Trump opts to escalate after the midterms, Chinese President Xi Jinping may calculate that China can no longer contain the cost of this war. China's decision to sharply reduce its oil demand has been the major reason why world petroleum prices never surged to \$150 a barrel.

This was a balancing act China could play as long as the war only created a bottleneck problem in the Strait of Hormuz rather than a production problem as a result of direct targeting of the region's energy production capabilities. If the region's oil production facilities are knocked out and some monarchical governments wiped out, China may still remain the world's swing consumer, but it will not be able to prevent world oil prices from breaking the \$150 per barrel barrier or the global economy from slipping into a much deeper crisis. This may be why Xi hinted at a Chinese diplomatic intervention during last month's BRICS summit and why Chinese diplomats have told us privately that Beijing is ready to step in if requested by the parties.

While Oman, Qatar and Pakistan must be commended for their in-

genuity, creativity and persistence as mediators, none of them can assert the leverage over the United States and Iran that the PRC can. It is this leverage that enabled Beijing to secure a normalization agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023. Most of the legwork in that mediation had been conducted by Iraq and Oman over the course of the previous years. But the distrust between Tehran and Riyadh proved too deep. When Xi visited Riyadh in December 2022, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman asked for China's help to overcome the obstacles that prevented the resumption of relations between the Iranian theocracy and the Saudi Kingdom.

Rather than just mediate between the two, China became a co-signer of the agreement and its guarantor. Crown Prince Bin Salman recognized that the agreement required the involvement of a power with enough leverage over both sides to hold them to their commitments. Because China is simply too important for either side to risk a rupture with it, Beijing's role as guarantor proved crucial, not only to reach the agreement, but perhaps much more importantly, to make it last. Despite all the mayhem and tensions in the past three years, the agreement has stood firm.

That was the crucial ingredient China brought to the table. And it may be the very ingredient US-Iran diplomacy currently needs.

That is not to say that the situation is entirely similar. The relationship between Washington and Beijing



Massive escalation will most likely only intensify the problems he has faced. Tehran will counterescalate massively. As demonstrated by the recent Ansarullah (Houthi) advances in Yemen, Iran and its network still have formidable escalatory options. Beyond targeting energy infrastructure, the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces militia could overrun Kuwait or assist a popular uprising in Bahrain. The political geography of the region could change.

is much more complex and sensitive. Neither Iran nor Saudi Arabia views China as a rival or peer competitor. The United States does. But since China does enjoy leverage with both Tehran and Washington, it is able to press for an enduring settlement in a manner that the current mediators cannot. This opens a small window for hope.

What could China do?

Beijing's first challenge will be to create a diplomatic opening. Trump has made clear that he has no interest in diplomacy at the moment. In the administration's reading, the combination of the blockade on Iran and the restoration of much of the flow of oil through the Strait is sufficient to turn the tables on Iran, if only given enough time. This is why Trump has told regional interlocutors that he will not lift the blockade even if Tehran agrees to completely open the Strait. He doesn't need to use the blockade to win on the Strait; rather, he wants to use the blockade to win on the nuclear file.

But this strategy has two fatal flaws: it ignores how the status quo hurt America's regional allies and the global economy, and it assumes Trump can ensure stability in the Persian Gulf and in the oil markets. Ansarullah's closure of the Bab el-Mandeb to Saudi ships and the strikes against Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline put this assumption under considerable strain. So does the sheer cost of the US operations to escort ships — a cost that does not appear sustainable.

Once again, the US appears to confuse a tactical advantage in the Strait with a decisive strategic shift. And on cue, the administration has dramatically hardened its position even though the underlying reality does not warrant it, and, in so doing, pushed the prospects of a diplomatic deal further away. When Trump met Xi in Washington on September 24, he did not want to talk about diplomacy, but rather how China should go along with America's extraterritorial sanctions on Iran.

China could counter such pressures by putting forward a draft compromise proposal that seeks to meet all sides' key concerns, while offering guarantees to Trump that China will ensure speedy negotiations and offering Iran assurances about American compliance and implementation of the agreement. The proposal should build on both the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding of July 2026 and the 2015 JCPOA.

Key elements should include 1) a permanent cease-fire throughout the region — including Lebanon and Yemen — to put the entire region on a de-escalatory trajectory; 2) the permanent opening of the Strait with environmental service fees to be shared by all littoral Persian Gulf states to help manage the environmental restoration of the waters as well as reconstruction and humanitarian needs created by the war; 3) the lifting of the American blockade on Iran; and 4) the establishment of working groups to negotiate a final agreement on Iran's nuclear activities within six months. China would offer to act as a guarantor for all four points.

The key must be an Iranian civil nuclear program limited by



Fire and smoke rise in the UAE's Fujairah oil industry zone after Iran's retaliatory strike on March 4, 2026, amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran.

● **REUTERS**

International Atomic Energy Agency inspections on an enhanced basis. “No nukes” is a great mantra, but it requires vigorous and intrusive inspections to work. Capping enrichment at 3.67% of U235 is an absolutely vital necessity. Moreover, any agreement must entail full IAEA access to all Iranian nuclear sites, as well as to undeclared sites if credible evidence emerges that they are being used for nuclear purposes. This is not easy or simple, but it is necessary to assure the world that Iran is ful-

ly adhering to its obligations under the NPT. China can also play a key role in resolving the dispute over Iran’s stockpile of 60% enriched uranium. The US wants all of it shipped out; the Iranians had earlier agreed to ship out 98% of it, but neither side could agree on which country it should be shipped to. Though Washington was earlier cool to the idea of China holding Iran’s stockpile, it may be more open to it if it is embedded in a larger agreement with Beijing. An additional step regarding nu-

clear power should be given the most careful consideration: the creation of a regional consortium, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, that will jointly plan and carry out all production of nuclear reactor fuel and other sensitive activities. The presence of multiple players with respect to each of these activities would provide a further reassurance to the international community, to which the consortium will regularly report, that the agreement is doing its job well. The IAEA and the new UN agency on the Straits would issue quar-

terly reports to the UN Security Council and General Assembly. All the agreements negotiated in connection with this problem would also be approved by the UN Security Council. The resolution of approval would specifically authorize the UN inspections and control arrangements as finally negotiated.

Why China should step forward

In truth, what we are proposing goes against some current instincts in both Beijing and Washington. China prefers to stay out

of conflicts which do not involve it directly, and the US does not want to offer Beijing a diplomatic role, even less to be saved by the PRC. But absent Chinese diplomatic intervention, the war is more than likely to escalate and intensify beyond what any side can currently anticipate. The escalation thus far has been controlled and calibrated. But a third round of war risks going beyond what either side can control. Both the US and China share an interest in avoiding such a scenario. If Washington refuses cooperation because Beijing would

benefit from it, and Beijing refuses engagement because the conflict is not its creation, both states risk allowing a regional war to become a global crisis of unmanageable dimensions. The choice before them is therefore not between American leadership and Chinese involvement. It is between cooperation that neither side particularly wants and consequences that neither side will be able to control or afford.

The full article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.

Netanyahuism against Middle East peace

By Ahmed Kandil
Deputy director at Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies

OPINION

As Israel heads towards elections later this month, the dominant question is whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can survive yet another political reckoning. But this focus on the man may obscure the more important issue. Even if Netanyahu leaves office, will Israel leave Netanyahuism behind? Netanyahuism is about more than loyalty to Israel’s longest-serving prime minister. It is a strategic doctrine built on a single proposition: Israel can enjoy security without resolving the Palestinian question. It can contain the Palestinians, deter Iran and its allies, normalise relations with Arab governments, and integrate itself into the region, all without making the territorial and political compromises that a genuine peace would require. For years, the strategy seemed remarkably successful. The Palestinian movement was divided between a weak Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. Israeli settlements expanded without provoking decisive international pressure. Arab governments increasingly focused on economic modernisation, technological cooperation, and the threat from Iran. The Palestinian issue appeared to be losing its traditional centrality. The Abraham Accords then became the crowning achievement of this approach. They suggested that Israel could normalise relations with the Arab states without first reaching peace with the Palestinians. In effect, regional integration would replace territorial compromise. Then came the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023. This did not simply expose an intelligence and military failure, but it also shattered the central assumption of Netanyahuism: that the Palestinian question could be managed indefinitely at an acceptable cost. The conflict had not disappeared. It had been compressed, and when it returned, it did so with extraordinary violence. In most political systems, a strategic failure of this magnitude would trigger a fundamental reassessment. In Israel, however, it produced a paradox. Netanyahu’s security doctrine was discredited, but the politics sus-



The illustration depicts Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) shaking hands with an American official. ● SOCIAL MEDIA

taining it became even stronger. War allowed the Israeli cabinet to postpone accountability, present criticism as disunity, and transform every debate over responsibility into a debate over national survival. This is one reason peace remains so difficult. Netanyahu does not necessarily oppose every agreement with the Palestinians. He has accepted cease-fires, prisoner exchanges, and limited diplomatic arrangements. He has also pursued normalisation with the Arab states. But these are instruments for managing Israel’s external environment, not steps towards ending the conflict. A genuine settlement would require choices Netanyahuism was designed to avoid such as restricting settlement expansion, accepting meaningful Palestinian sovereignty, and acknowledging that military dominance cannot substitute for political legitimacy. Each of these steps would threaten the coalition of nationalist and religious forces on which Netanyahu’s power depends. The contradiction is therefore structural. Israel may need peace, but Netanyahuism needs

an unresolved conflict. Persistent danger reinforces its message, binds its political coalition, and allows its leaders to argue that this is no time for experiments or concessions. The upcoming elections in Israel could thus remove Netanyahu while leaving the Netanyahu system intact. Many of Netanyahu’s opponents in Israel object to his attacks on the country’s institutions, his alliance with the far right, and his refusal to accept responsibility for the October 7 attack. But the opposition to Netanyahu is not necessarily opposition to Netanyahuism. Several rival Israeli leaders remain reluctant to endorse Palestinian statehood or explain what political future they envisage for millions of Palestinians living under Israeli control. Israel could therefore replace its prime minister without replacing his policies. The tone might soften. Relations with Washington might improve. The pressure on the judiciary might ease. But the occupation, settlement expansion, and the preference for indefinite conflict management could continue. This matters for the entire Middle East at a time when the region is undergoing a major transformation, with the Arab states pursuing economic diversification, technological development, and more flexible relations with the great powers.

Israel could play an important role in this emerging order. Saudi-Israeli normalisation, in particular, might reshape the region more profoundly than the earlier Abraham Accords. But Netanyahuism seeks the prize without paying the price. It wants normalisation with Saudi Arabia while resisting a credible pathway towards Palestinian statehood. It wants Israel to be fully accepted by the region without Israel accepting that the Palestinians possess legitimate national rights. Before October 7, some believed that this contradiction could be ignored. That is no longer plausible today. Arab governments might maintain discreet security cooperation or limited economic ties with Israel, but a durable regional order cannot rest on the permanent exclusion of the Palestinians. Gaza has returned their cause to the centre of Arab public consciousness and international diplomacy. None of this means that Netanyahu’s departure after the next elections in Israel would automatically bring peace. Palestinian politics is fractured, Israeli society has moved to the right, and trust between the two peoples has collapsed, while the geography required for a viable Palestinian state is being steadily eroded. The obstacles are not merely personal; they are political, institutional, and psychological. But moving beyond Netanyahuism is necessary because its deepest flaw is strategic, not

simply moral. It confuses military superiority with lasting security, deterrence with political order, and temporary quiet with peace. But power can suppress a conflict; it cannot resolve one. It can destroy capabilities; it cannot erase national aspirations. Next month’s elections will formally determine who rules Israel. Their real significance lies in whether Israelis are prepared to reconsider a doctrine that promised security through permanent control but instead delivered recurring war and deepening isolation. Netanyahu may lose while Netanyahuism itself survives. That is the more consequential possibility in next month’s Israeli elections since political leaders eventually leave the stage, but the assumptions they implant can endure for decades. Until Israel abandons the belief that normalisation can replace peace, that force can substitute for politics, and that Palestinian aspirations can be managed forever, the region will remain trapped in the very conflict Netanyahuism promised to contain.

The article first appeared on Al-Ahram.

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid uses his phone in a shelter after retaliatory missiles were launched towards Israel from Iran following strikes by Israel and the US on Iran on February 28, 2026. ● ALEXANDER CORNWELL/REUTERS

The opposition to Netanyahu is not necessarily opposition to Netanyahuism. Several rival Israeli leaders remain reluctant to endorse Palestinian statehood or explain what political future they envisage for millions of Palestinians living under Israeli control. Israel could therefore replace its prime minister without replacing his policies. The tone might soften. Relations with Washington might improve. The pressure on the judiciary might ease. But the occupation, settlement expansion, and the preference for indefinite conflict management could continue.



Teen prodigy Beheshti sets sights on Olympic gold after Nagoya success



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

women's 86kg category.

Beheshti became the youngest weightlifter at the continental multi-sport event, helping Iran's women make history by winning two medals in the competition for the first time after her compatriot Reyhaneh Karimi had earlier claimed bronze in the 77kg division. Beheshti lifted 113kg in the snatch to finish fourth in the discipline before managing 146kg in the clean and jerk, securing bronze with a total of 259kg.

The bronze medal marked the latest achievement in an impressive 12 months of her short career. The teen prodigy first made headlines at last year's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, where she lifted 134kg to add the clean and jerk gold to the snatch and total bronze medals in the 86kg class on her senior international debut.

Beheshti was then in a league of her own at the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in August.

She registered three successful lifts to win the snatch gold with a best effort of 113kg.

She picked up where she left off in the snatch by lifting 136kg in the clean and jerk before going on to post 142kg and 148kg – 14 kilograms better than her mark in the Saudi capital – to win her second gold of the afternoon. She then claimed the total title with a combined 261kg.

Her splendid performance also saw Beheshti sweep the gold medals in the junior 86kg class, taking her tally to six golds in the Uzbek capital.

In an interview with Iran Daily, Beheshti discussed her introduction to weightlifting, the support she has received from her family and coaches, her experience in Nagoya and her ambitions for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.



● aichi-nagoya2026.org

IRAN DAILY: How did you get involved in weightlifting? Were you interested in the sport from the beginning?

BEHESHTI: I was not particularly interested in weightlifting at first. I took up the sport at my uncle's suggestion because his son was also a weightlifter, and my interest gradually grew over time.

When I first told my family that I wanted to try weightlifting on my uncle's recommendation, they were surprised and asked whether girls could compete in the sport, too. However, when my parents realized that I was serious and determined to pursue it, they not only supported my decision but also gave me considerable encouragement.

Did you ever imagine competing at the Asian Games and winning a medal when you first started?

When I began weightlifting, my goal was not necessarily to achieve international success. Gradually, however, I learned about the achievements of Elham Hosseini, our current national team head coach, and other Iranian women who had won medals at international competitions. That helped me realize that Iranian women could also compete internationally and achieve success. It gave me tremendous motivation, and I decided to work hard to win an international medal myself.

When did winning a medal at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games become a serious target?

After the Asian Youth Games in Bahrain, Coach Hosseini told me that I had the potential to win a medal in Nagoya. From that moment, the Asian Games became almost my entire focus. I did everything I could to prepare

for the competition. We should also acknowledge the federation's support. Even during the war, its officials worked hard to help us. Federation president Sajjad Anoushiravani organized a training camp for us in Ardabil. Our camps were subsequently moved to Tehran and then Chalus, allowing us to train properly and acclimatize to weather conditions closer to those we would encounter at the competition.

Given that it was your first appearance at such a high level, what was your goal in Nagoya?

When we were training in Ardabil, I was thinking about nothing but returning from Nagoya with a gold medal. I genuinely did not consider any other medal.

However, I faced very strong rivals who had competed in several World and European Championships

and had much more experience than I did. Nevertheless, I managed to win bronze. I was happy that I could return home with a medal rather than empty-handed, and I felt I could return to my country with my head held high.

What do you think was the biggest difference between you and your rivals in Nagoya?

There was a considerable age gap between us, but more importantly, they had much more experience. Before the Asian Games, I had never competed at an event of that level, whereas my rivals had participated in World and European Championships. My Bahraini rival, who had previously represented Ukraine, had also competed at several European Championships.

I essentially gave up the Asian Games gold medal to my rivals because of their greater experience. At 17,

I was the youngest weightlifter at the competition, so it was natural that they were in a different position in terms of experience. Still, I achieved a good result and identified my weaknesses during the competition. Now I know which areas I need to work on before my next events.

Do you believe you can beat those rivals in future competitions despite their greater experience?

Absolutely. I do not believe age has to limit an athlete. I will work to address the weaknesses I identified in Nagoya and arrive at future competitions better prepared.

My goal is to beat my rivals in upcoming competitions.

You competed at the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Tashkent just one month before the Asian Games. How did that short interval affect your preparation and performance?

Yes, I competed in Tashkent a month before Nagoya and won six gold medals across the youth and junior categories, becoming the strongest youth lifter in Asia.

There was only a month between the two competitions. Thanks to Coach Hosseini's training plan, we managed to ensure that I recovered properly. However, my rivals in Nagoya had prepared differently because their focus was directly on the Asian Games.

In addition to the pressure of the previous competition, I was also somewhat unsettled mentally. With Coach Hosseini's help, I managed to regain my focus, and those circum-

stances did not prevent me from achieving a satisfactory result in Nagoya.

What is your next goal after winning bronze at the Asian Games?

Before the Asian Games, I wanted to reach 120kg in the snatch and 155kg in the clean and jerk in my personal bests. I was not far from those targets, but my ambitions have grown since Nagoya.

My goal is to break the senior world records in my weight category. The records are 128kg in the snatch and 161kg in the clean and jerk. I want to reach those marks and break them.

At just 17, do you think competing at senior level and challenging world records will be difficult?

No. I believe that if I have a clear goal and train properly, I can achieve it. Winning an Asian Games medal at this age has given me greater confidence. Now I know that I need to work on my weaknesses and prepare myself to lift bigger weights.

Are you already thinking about competing at the Olympics and winning a medal there?

Yes. Ever since I joined the national team's training camp, I have always dreamed of winning an Olympic medal.

Now I have an opportunity to work toward competing at the 2028 Olympics. I will do everything I can to produce my best performance and achieve the required results in the qualifying competitions, secure an Olympic quota place and return home with the highest-colored medal possible.

My dream is to win Olympic gold.

What path do you need to follow to achieve that goal?

I need to progress step by step. First, I must improve my records, gain more experience at international competitions and address my weaknesses. My goal is to beat the rivals who had more experience than me in Nagoya and gradually reach the level of the world's best.

Can women's weightlifting achieve international success on a par with the men's sport? How do you assess its current position?

Women's weightlifting is not yet as well established as the men's sport, but we are doing everything we can to close that gap.

We want to reach the same level as the men, compete at the Olympics and senior World Championships, and win medals for our country.

How important has support from the Ministry of Sports and the federation been in this process?

Conditions for women have improved considerably since Mr. Anoushiravani became federation president. Our accommodation has been renovated, a physiotherapy center has opened, and even an English teacher is provided for us.

These facilities and services are very important for athletes. We are trying to make the best possible use of this support.

With Mr. Anoushiravani's backing and Coach Hosseini's hard work, we hope to win medals at the next Asian Games and ultimately achieve our bigger goal of competing at the Olympics and winning medals there.



Iranica Desk

A ceremony marking the second anniversary of Mehregan Festival's inscription on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list was held at the historic Karaftu Cave in Kurdistan Province on Friday.

Addressing the ceremony, Arash Zarehtan Lahoni, governor of Kurdistan Province, said holding the festival near the historic cave offers an opportunity to showcase Kurdistan Province's cultural and historical heritage and draw greater attention to the site as efforts continue to secure its inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List, according to chn.ir.

Zarehtan Lahoni said the festival was being held in the province for the second consecutive year near the historic cave, adding that the decision to choose the site was intended to raise public awareness of its historical significance and cultural potential.

He noted that efforts were underway to secure UNESCO World Heritage status for Karaftu Cave, stressing that cultural events at historical sites can help familiarize the public with the province's valuable heritage and strengthen Kurdistan's tourism profile. Emphasizing the importance of continuing the festival in the coming years, the governor said the strong public reception demonstrated the province's capacity to host cultural and tourism events. He added that such programs play an important role in promoting Kurdistan's historical and cultural assets.

Mohsen Fat'hi, head of the Iranian Parliament's Tourism Faction,

Mehregan Festival highlights Kurdistan heritage



● yjc.ir

also stressed the need to introduce Kurdistan's historical and cultural attractions to national and international audiences.

He said completing the nomination dossier and preparing the necessary documentation for the cave's proposed inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List remained a priority, with efforts continuing to advance the process. Fat'hi recalled that the need to pursue World Heritage status for the cave had been highlight-

ed during last year's Mehregan Festival. He added that appropriate funding had been allocated to advance the nomination and that a team was responsible for preparing and completing the required documentation.

He expressed hope that, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, the dossier would be submitted in the near future for the next stages of the nomination process.

Referring to the cave's signifi-

cance in Kurdistan's historical and cultural identity, Fat'hi said the inscription of the Hawraman Cultural Landscape on UNESCO's World Heritage List had helped raise the international profile of the province. He added that the cave could similarly help promote Kurdistan's heritage and attract more tourists if its nomination succeeds.

Pouya Talebnia, director general of Kurdistan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Depart-

ment, said Mehregan was an ancient Iranian festival embodying values such as affection, friendship and solidarity.

He described holding the celebration at one of the province's prominent historical sites as an opportunity to promote Kurdistan's cultural heritage and tourism potential simultaneously.

Talebnia noted that Mehregan had been jointly inscribed by Iran and Tajikistan on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Eshkevarat's hazelnut orchards offer new opportunities for tourism

Iranica Desk

Tourism is no longer limited to visiting historic buildings and natural attractions. Sometimes, a journey winds through orchards and farmland, introducing visitors to the lives, culture and livelihoods of local communities. Known as agritourism, this connection between nature, agricultural production and rural life can offer visitors a distinctive experience while creating opportunities to boost local economies and preserve agricultural heritage.

In Gilan Province, Eshkevarat region is a notable example of this connection. This mountainous region's hazelnut orchards are an integral part of its landscape, economy and culture. The hazelnut trees covering its slopes and valleys are more than a crop to be harvested and sold; they could also become part of a tourism experience. Visitors could stroll through the orchards, learn about cultivation and harvesting methods, sample local products and gain firsthand insight into village life.

Hazelnut tourism in Eshkevarat region represents an underdeveloped opportunity. With proper planning, suitable infrastructure and local community participation, it could bring agriculture and tourism together to support sustainable development.

Mahmoud Hoshyarfard, a faculty member at the Gilan Agricultural Research Center, told ISNA that Gilan's hazelnut crop is closely linked to Eshkevarat's ancient history. The orderly rows of hazelnut trees planted along mountain slopes and in valleys create a distinctive and picturesque landscape, he said.



Hoshyarfard said the region's extensive hazelnut orchards rank among Iran's most beautiful natural landscapes. They are not only a major source of hazelnut production in the country but also have the potential to become an attractive tourist destination.

Hazelnuts, he added, are part of the region's natural and cultural heritage, with their traditions and significance passed down across generations. He believes hazelnuts themselves can serve as a draw for tourists.

As an emerging branch of tourism, hazelnut tourism could create new visitor experiences while also benefiting the domestic hazelnut market, Hoshyarfard said. Such tours could take visitors to hazelnut orchards and processing facilities, offering opportunities to learn more about the history, diversity and distinctive characteristics of hazelnuts grown in Eshkevarat.

He described hazelnut tourism as a viable way to advance sustainable rural development, noting that tourism can serve as a tool for strengthening village economies and supporting long-term development.



The relationship between agritourism and sustainable rural development, he explained, is strengthened when both operate within settings that accommodate different forms of rural and agricultural tourism. Hazelnut orchard tourism can encourage villages to make better use of their human and natural resources and pursue sustainable development more effectively.

As a leading hazelnut-producing province, Gilan could use hazelnut tourism to attract visitors and expand its domestic and international markets, Hoshyarfard said.

He added that hazelnut tourism could introduce local varieties and related products to con-



● IRNA

sumers around the world. In Gilan, the sector could help boost hazelnut sales, improve export prospects and raise the profile of Iranian hazelnuts in international markets.

Beyond generating income for orchard owners, hazelnut tourism could support sustainable agriculture, create local jobs and help revive traditional occupations, he said. By strengthening the market for hazelnuts, raising consumer awareness and promoting organic products, it could contribute to economic growth and improve the crop's standing in domestic and international markets.

Hoshyarfard also pointed to the scenic value of Eshkevarat's hazelnut orchards, saying Iran

could seek to have its hazelnut-growing landscapes in Eshkevarat, and Alamut, in Qazvin Province, included in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) programme.

Such recognition could also draw greater attention from tourists to these landscapes. Although Gilan is a potential destination for hazelnut tourism in northern Iran, tourism policies and planning have so far given the sector little specific attention, he said.

Activities such as guided excursions, orchard visits, tours of hazelnut-drying and processing facilities, and cultural events celebrating hazelnuts should be developed and promoted as part of the tourism offering, he added.

Hazelnut tourism in Eshkevarat, which encompasses areas in Rudsar, Amlash and Siahkal, could help strengthen local livelihoods, Hoshyarfard said. Promoting the region as a destination for community-based hazelnut tourism could provide a new source of support for rural residents.

However, several obstacles

He said commemorating the festival helped pass ancient Iranian traditions on to future generations.

He added that choosing Karaftu Cave as the venue not only honored the festival but also brought the site's historical and cultural significance into focus, helping strengthen cultural tourism and event-based tourism in the province. Talebnia also highlighted the role of local artists and cultural groups in showcasing Kurdistan's arts and traditions alongside the region's historical landmarks.

The ceremony marking the second anniversary of Mehregan's inscription featured a range of cultural and artistic programs, including a performance by a group of 1,000 tanbur musicians, an address by historian and cultural researcher Mohammad Ali Soltani, a display of purebred Kurdish horses, Kurdish music performances, and an exhibition of handicrafts and local products. Located in Divandarreh, Karaftu Cave is one of Kurdistan Province's prominent historical sites. Its rock-cut architecture, carved-out spaces and archaeological significance have given it a distinctive place among Iran's historical landmarks.

Preparations for the cave's proposed inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List are ongoing, with further research and the completion of specialized documentation remaining key steps in the process.

Mehregan, rooted in Zoroastrian traditions, symbolizes the end of the harvest season and the start of autumn to express gratitude to God for granting livelihood.

stand in the way of developing the sector. Hoshyarfard identified inadequate infrastructure, the need for workforce training, poor service quality and marketing, insufficient coordination among tourism stakeholders, limited safety and security measures in orchards, a lack of local expertise in hazelnut tourism, and the absence of a comprehensive policy framework.

If the region's potential could be harnessed to develop a combination of high-quality accommodation and agricultural tourism experiences, it could help address youth unemployment while establishing a new model of sustainable development in which nature, agriculture and tourism support one another, he said.

Eshkevarat's key strength — and a potential engine of regional economic growth — lies in the close relationship between agriculture and tourism. This emerging market could also help preserve both the tangible and intangible heritage associated with hazelnut cultivation, while creating jobs and generating economic benefits, Hoshyarfard said.

Through guided hazelnut tours, visitors could explore the heart of Eshkevarat's mountainous landscape, beginning their mornings with walks through private orchards and photographing hazelnut trees in the soft early-morning light. Food tourism enthusiasts could also experience local culture by sampling hazelnuts and related products.

Hoshyarfard expressed hope that greater recognition of Eshkevarat's natural assets would encourage tourism planners to develop this largely untapped sector.

Pezeshkian hails rural, nomadic communities as ‘irreplaceable’ assets

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday called rural and nomadic communities “irreplaceable” assets of Iran, praising their role in production and pledging government support to address their needs. Pezeshkian made the remarks during a two-hour visit to the International Exhibition of Rural and Nomadic Capabilities in Tehran, IRNA reported. The event displays products and capabilities from rural and nomadic communities scattered nationwide. He said rural residents and nomads helped meet the needs of the public and the country by making a wide range of goods. “Being among these dear people is the essence of life,”

Pezeshkian commended. He vowed his government would stand alongside all Iranians, especially villagers and nomads, to resolve their issues. Asked about the message the exhibition sent to Iran’s enemies and those threatening the country, Pezeshkian pointed to the active, lively and energetic presence of visitors. He said their participation showed that they were not afraid of threats. In the exhibition’s guestbook, Pezeshkian wrote that he would serve “the proud people of heroic Iran” for as long as he lived. He described rural and nomadic people as devoted, entrepreneurial and committed. The exhibition, held from October 8 to 11 at Tehran International Permanent



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd R) visits an exhibition displaying rural and nomadic products in Tehran, Iran, on October 10, 2026.

● president.ir

Fairgrounds, aims to highlight rural and nomadic production, including handicrafts, small-scale industries and other locally made goods. Its goals also include showcasing successful rural development projects, cultural traditions, natural attractions, tourism opportunities and young talent. The exhibition also aims to promote successful development models and help create jobs, raise local incomes and reduce consumer costs by strengthening production networks and supply chains.



Iranian film ‘Sun Girl’ shines at US, Italy festivals

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Bahar Ghasemi has won two international awards for her short film ‘Sun Girl’, earning honors for best international narrative short in New York and best director in Genoa, Italy. The film received the top prize for Best International Narrative Short at the 11th Imagine This Women’s International Film Festival, held in New York from September 25 to 27, 2026. The festival shows independent films by women and supports women filmmakers. Ghasemi also claimed the Best Director Award at the eighth Dubbing Glamour Film Festival in September in Genoa, in Italy. Ghasemi wrote, directed



and produced ‘Sun Girl’, her second short film as a director, known in Persian as ‘Dokhshid’. The film tells the story of

a teenage girl who dreams of becoming a singer and prepares to attend an international music academy. Just as she nears her

goal, her mother learns that the girl’s brain tumor has returned and that she needs urgent surgery. The diagnosis threatens to derail the teenager’s plans and reshape her future. The cast includes Parnian Noori Ghasemi, Mehrnoush Dara, Arsalan Hemmati and Zeus Halakou. ‘Sun Girl’ has previously competed at the Beirut International Women Film Festival and Turkey’s AFSAD International Short Film Festival. It has also been selected for Brazil’s ECOCINE Film Festival and the women filmmakers’ competition at the Dhaka International Film Festival. The awards strengthen the film’s international profile, recognizing both its storytelling and Ghasemi’s direction.

Paris art show pays tribute to Iranian kids killed in US-Israeli war

Arts & Culture Desk

An exhibition of artwork by children who lost their lives in a war waged by the United States and Israeli against Iran in late February opened in Paris on Friday, commemorating dozens of students fallen in a missile strike on their school as well as other kids killed in the conflict. Titled “Dreams Blown Away,” the exhibition was staged at the cultural office of Iran’s Embassy in the French capital and will run for one week, IRNA reported. It features paintings honoring victims of the strike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh elementary school in Minab, in southern Iran’s Hormozgan province, as well as other child victims of attacks on Iran. The strike took place on



February 28, the first day of the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran. According to Iranian officials, US forces fired Tomahawk missiles that struck the school, killing 168 students and staff members. Three young musicians performed several mournful pieces at the opening, seeking to convey the tragedy’s emotional impact and show solidarity with grieving families.

The exhibition is the third in a series of weekly cultural events planned for October at the Iranian cultural office in Paris. Earlier exhibitions covered ancient Iran’s history and civilization, and contemporary Iran’s art, culture and innovation. The fourth event will feature images of works by Iranian prominent painter Mahmoud Farshchian and is scheduled to open on October 16.

Iranian short film ‘In Turn’ secures spots in US, Colombia festivals

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film ‘In Turn’, directed by Sahra Asadollahi, heads to festivals in the United States and Colombia, adding to its international profile. The film will screen at the 19th Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, scheduled for November 5 to 15, 2026,

in Philadelphia, US. The festival showcases films exploring the experiences and histories of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, IRNA reported Saturday. ‘In Turn’ will also compete at the 26th Festival International de Cortometrajes Cine a la Calle (FICICA), set for October 20 to 24 in Barranquilla, a

city in northern Colombia. The festival features short fiction, documentary and experimental films, with a focus on socially engaged filmmaking and public access to cinema. Asadollahi has described ‘In Turn’ as the third part of a trilogy about cinema and its relationship with different generations. She said the film focuses on older

people who have never had the opportunity to appear in front of a camera. The theme gives the film a social dimension by drawing attention to people whose experiences may be overlooked in mainstream cinema. Asadollahi and Atefeh Salehi wrote the screenplay, while Amirhossein Ahmadi produced the

film. ‘In Turn’ previously received the Best Foreign Film prize at the Philadelphia Independent Film Festival and was nominated for best film at Italy’s Dubbing Glamour Film Festival. It has also featured in the competition programs of Italy’s Brixia Film Fest and Britain’s Short Focus festival.



A scene of Sahra Asadollahi's "In Turn"