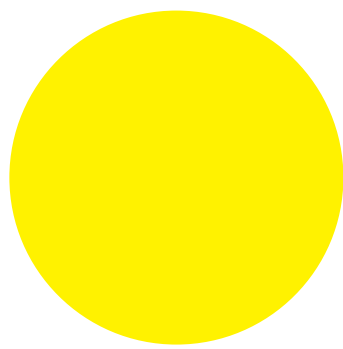


Skilled people are Iran's greatest asset: President

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Iran Daily

Vol. 8241 • Sunday, October 18, 2026 • Mehr 26, 1405 • Jumada al-Awwal 07, 1448 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



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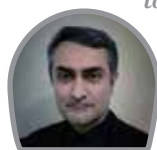
Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (2nd L) departs with other delegates after a family photo during the 52nd session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers in Baghdad, Iraq, on October 17, 2026.
● AFP

Riyadh could tap Iran's diplomatic clout to help resolve Yemen crisis

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

While Saudi officials have accused Iran of involvement in Yemeni operations, Tehran has dismissed the allegations and expressed its readiness to use its good offices to help bring the hostilities to an end, offering its capabilities if requested by the parties. In an interview with Iran Daily, international affairs expert



Abed Akbari

Abed Akbari said Riyadh could benefit from Iran's diplomatic clout, provided it viewed Tehran not as part of the problem but as a player capable of helping resolve it. Ultimately, the success of any such effort will depend on whether both sides see de-escalation not as a concession to a rival, but as an investment in their own national security.

IRAN DAILY: Given that the escalation of Saudi-Yemeni hostilities coincides with broader military developments across the region, what do you see as the strategic calculations of the Yemeni forces? Could the current situation affect their assessment of the balance of power and how they pursue their demands? What factors could prevent the conflict from widening and help bring the parties back to a political process?

AKBARI: From a strategic perspective, the actions of the Yemeni forces should be analyzed in the context of their efforts to turn military capabilities into leverage at the negotiating table. These forces have come to recognize that Yemen's geopolitical position, particularly its proximity to the Bab al-Mandab Strait and vital global trade routes, gives them leverage that extends well beyond their conventional military capabilities. Yemen's strategic significance, in fact, is not confined to its territory and population; it stems from its location at the intersection of security dynamics in the

Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

The escalation of regional tensions could affect the Yemeni forces' calculations in two ways. On the one hand, increased pressure on regional rivals and the expansion of conflict fronts could create opportunities for them to strengthen their bargaining position. On the other hand, the same conditions could pave the way for broader military coalitions and raise the political, economic and security costs of their actions. It would therefore be wrong to assume that any escalation in hostilities will necessarily enhance these forces' strategic standing. At times, the use of military power without a clear political endgame can undermine the very gains the actor deploying it seeks to secure. Preventing the conflict from spreading requires a distinction between Yemen's security concerns, regional rivalries and the country's humanitarian crisis. Halting reciprocal attacks, ensuring maritime security, reducing military intervention and establishing an inclusive political framework that takes into

account the demands and concerns of Yemen's main actors could help contain the crisis. The key point is that a lasting solution cannot be pursued through military pressure alone. Any arrangement imposed without regard for Yemen's political and social realities is likely to reproduce the crisis.

What diplomatic tools and capabilities does Tehran have at its disposal to ease tensions between Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni side? How optimistic can one be about Tehran's ability to play a role in this regard? Might Riyadh also draw on Iran's diplomatic potential to advance a political solution?

Iran has a range of political, diplomatic and regional capabilities that could enable it to play a constructive role in easing tensions between Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni forces. Diplomatic ties between Tehran and Riyadh, their experience of bilateral dialogue in recent years, and Iran's contacts with some influential actors in Yemen's political and security landscape could provide a

basis for conveying messages, facilitating dialogue and helping reduce security-related misperceptions. However, it is important to distinguish between having the capacity to mediate and being able to guarantee an outcome. No actor, even one with considerable influence, can single-handedly substitute its own will for the political will of the parties to a conflict.

In my view, Iran's greatest diplomatic advantage in this context lies in its ability to link bilateral talks to a broader framework for regional security. Tehran can stress the need to halt the cycle of attacks and retaliatory actions, ensure the security of maritime routes, respect national sovereignty and resolve disputes through political means. At the same time, any diplomatic initiative will be effective only if it takes a realistic view of the limits of various actors' influence and recognizes the independence of the Yemeni parties' political calculations. The resumption of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia has not, in itself, resolved the two countries' strategic differenc-

es, but it has created an essential channel for managing them. There is therefore reason to be optimistic about Tehran's potential role, provided it is defined as part of a multilateral process based on mutual interests, rather than as a unilateral initiative or a competition to secure geopolitical advantages.

Riyadh, too, could benefit from Iran's diplomatic capabilities, particularly if it concludes that prolonging the conflict carries greater security and economic costs than reaching a political settlement. This would, however, require Saudi Arabia to view Iran not as part of the problem, but as an influential player in managing it. Tehran, in turn, could demonstrate that stability in Yemen and regional security serve the shared interests of countries across the region, regardless of their bilateral differences. Ultimately, the success of such a process will depend on whether both sides view

de-escalation not as a concession to a rival, but as an investment in strengthening their own national security.

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Araghchi: Tehran ready for dialogue based on credible guarantees

International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Saturday that Iran will not accept coercion, threats or intimidation and will not surrender its sovereign rights under pressure but he said Tehran remained ready for dialogue based on mutual respect and credible guarantees. Speaking at the 52nd session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers in Baghdad, Araghchi said the peoples of the region shared both a common region and a common future, and faced a straightforward choice: "We either build security together or endure insecurity together." Iran had remained steadfast in its commitment to international law, the United Nations Charter and diplomacy, Araghchi said, adding that Tehran had continued to pursue diplomatic efforts over the past two years to resolve differences with the United States. However, he said the US has chosen the opposite path, resorting to aggression, threats, assassinations and economic warfare in blatant disregard for

international law and the UN Charter. Araghchi accused the US and Israel of gross violations of international law by killing around 5,000 people, including Iran's Leader and senior political and military officials during their military aggression against Iran, which began on February 28.

"The deaths of more than 160 students and teachers in Minab, a cluster-bomb attack on a sports stadium in Lamerd, the bombing of a desalination plant on Qeshm Island and an attack on a wedding ceremony in Kouhestak, in Sirik, were among documented examples of US-Israeli war crimes against Iran". Washington and Israel could not cover up these crimes by distorting the truth and turning victims into aggressors, Araghchi said.

Calls for OIC reaction

He called on all OIC members to take a firm stand against attacks on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one of the organization's founding members. The Iranian foreign minister underlined that Iran would defend its people, sovereignty and legitimate interests



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (c) looks on during the family photo during the 52nd session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers in Baghdad, Iraq, on October 17, 2026.

● AFP

but there is no contradiction between defending its rights and pursuing peace. Tehran understands the damage caused by war and values peace precisely for that reason, he added.

Araghchi also reaffirmed Iran's commitment to safe and secure navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway vital to energy supplies and trade for many OIC member states. The strait had remained fully open and secure until February 28, 2026, he said.

The Iranian foreign minister underlined that insecurity and disruption to maritime traffic has been a direct result of acts of aggression by the United States and Israel.

Security could not be restored by repeating past mistakes and crimes, Araghchi said. A country could not be



bombed, threatened with annihilation and placed under blockade, then be expected to see maritime security return to normal, he added.

The closed the waterway after the US and Israel launched their joint aggression against Iran in February.

The strait remains closed, and Iran has made clear that it will not allow its

reopening until the US fulfills its commitments under the Islamabad understanding which signed between the two countries to end the war.

The Islamabad agreement was aimed at ending the war, but Washington soon violated the agreement by failing to respect Iran's arrangements concerning the Strait of Hormuz.

Super tanker explodes after hitting sea mine in Hormuz: IRGC

International Desk

A super tanker carrying over 2 million barrels of crude oil was engulfed in flames after striking a sea mine in the Strait of Hormuz while attempting to transit through an unauthorized route with its tracking systems switched off.

A massive explosion and fierce fire engulfed a super tanker carrying more than 2 million barrels of crude oil after the vessel struck a sea mine in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy announced. According to the IRGC Navy, the tanker was attempting to transit through an unauthorized route in the Strait of Hormuz when it struck the mine, triggering a catastrophic explosion and intense blaze, Press TV reported.

In its statement, the IRGC Navy revealed that the tanker had deliberately switched off all of its positioning and radar systems in an attempt to deceive Iranian maritime authorities.

The vessel was attempting to cross the strait with the support and protection of the United States. The statement underscored that the tanker's decision to disable its tracking equipment and rely on US military escort rather than coordinating with Iranian authorities was the direct cause of the disaster.

The IRGC Navy issued a warning to all maritime traffic, declaring that the Strait of Hormuz remains closed in accordance with Iran's sovereign decisions and maritime regulations.

"The Strait of Hormuz is closed, and the



consequence of defying Iranian regulations in the Strait of Hormuz is burning in the fire of trust in the terrorist US army," the IRGC Navy stated, in a rebuke to vessels attempting to rely on US military protection rather than adhering to Iranian maritime protocols.

The incident comes against the backdrop of the ongoing US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, which began on February 28.

Following the US military's violation of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in July, the Iranian Armed Forces launched devastating retaliatory strikes against strategic American positions across West Asia and declared the Strait of Hormuz closed to unauthorized traffic.

The IRGC has repeatedly warned that all vessels must coordinate with Iranian authorities before transiting the strait and that unauthorized passage, particularly under US military escort, will be treated as a hostile act with severe consequences. Tehran has said it will not reopen the waterway until the United States meets its demands and takes steps to restore Iran's trust.

Iran denies accusation of encouraging Yemenis to attack Saudi Arabia

International Desk

Iran on Friday denied everything to do with attacks by Yemen's Ansarullah movement, a day after Saudi Arabia accused it of having encouraged the group's recent escalation against the kingdom.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran rejects any claim that Iran has played a role in Yemeni operations," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement.

"Yemen's armed forces act according to their own interests and assessments, and such claims are not credible to those familiar with relations between Iran and its friends. Nevertheless, Iran does not consider an escalation of tensions to be in the interests of any party," he added.

Baqaei however reiterated an offer to mediate between the two sides, saying Tehran "has always been ready to use its good offices to help end the hostilities".

The Iranian official stressed that resolving the Yemen issue requires respect for the

country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, an end to all interference in its internal affairs and, most importantly, the lifting of the air and sea blockade.

His remarks came after Saudi Foreign Ministry's official Rayed Krimly claimed that Iran had "encouraged" the escalation in Yemen.

He also accused Tehran of continuing to "arm, train and support" the movement.

Saudi Arabia has supported Yemen's government in south militarily against Ansarullah since 2015 in a long-running civil war that has created a humanitarian crisis.

The Ansarullah movement has repeatedly struck Saudi targets including Red Sea tankers, oil facilities and Riyadh's international airport, where 13 people were killed in a single attack last week.

The Ansarullah's attacks have proliferated since the group launched a lightning offensive in Yemen in September, seizing strategic territory along the Red Sea coast overlooking a major chokepoint for global



shipping, which was in control of Saudi-backed forces.

The pressure on Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, comes as global energy markets were already rattled by Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz at the outset of the wider Middle East war in February.

Yemeni Saudi-backed forces have launched a counteroffensive with Saudi air support to retake areas seized by Ansarullah, but have so far failed to reverse their gains.

On Friday, the local security office in Aden, the government's interim capital, said two missiles landed within the perimeter of the city's airport, "in the second incident of its kind in less than a week", adding that no one was killed.

Deputy FM rejects claims of meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs

International Desk

Iran rejected accusations of interference in Lebanon's internal affairs, saying a distinction must be drawn between domestic Lebanese issues and resistance to Israeli occupation and aggression.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh in an exclusive interview with Lebanon's Al Jadeed television said allegations alone, without evidence to back them up, were insufficient

to establish claims of interference. He called on those accusing Iran of meddling in other countries' internal affairs to present their documents and evidence.

"When we talk about Lebanon's internal affairs, we must distinguish between issues within Lebanon and the question of fighting and resisting occupation and aggression," the deputy foreign minister said.

The Palestinian issue, which he described as fundamental to all, as well as Israel's

expansionist policies in the region and its continued acts of aggression, were separate matters that should be discussed and examined independently, he said.

Khatibzadeh also pointed to interventions by some countries in Lebanon's internal affairs, saying Tehran had sought to prevent the Arab country from becoming an arena for outside interference.

Khatibzadeh also said Iran and Lebanon are exchanging proposals aimed at resolving

diplomatic differences between the two countries. He described Iranian-Lebanese cultural, economic and political ties as deep-rooted and important, adding that Tehran is working to strengthen them further.

The two countries maintain high-level diplomatic relations across various levels, he said, noting that multiple channels of communication remained open between their governments and that diplomatic visits were also part of their bilateral engagement.



The screen grab shows Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh during an interview with Lebanon's Al Jadeed television, which was aired on October 16, 2026.

Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan discuss regional gas cooperation

NIGC proposes seasonal gas, electricity swaps to strengthen energy ties



CEO of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Saeed Tavakoli (C) attends a specialized session of the eighth Russian Energy Week international forum in Moscow, Russia, on October 16, 2026. ● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran, Russia and Azerbaijan discussed regional energy cooperation, including the use of existing pipelines, seasonal gas and electricity swaps, and new energy corridors, at a meeting in Moscow on Friday, IRNA reported. The talks also examined the potential impact of a 2024 Iran-Russia memorandum on Russian gas supplies to Iran and its implications for peace and security

in the South Caucasus. The discussions brought together officials from Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia under the 3+3 regional framework. Speaking at a specialized session of the eighth Russian Energy Week international forum on Friday, Saeed Tavakoli, Iran's deputy oil minister and CEO of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), highlighted Iran's substantial natural gas resources, electricity

generation capacity and extensive gas network, comprising 41,000 kilometers of transmission pipelines and 480,000 kilometers of distribution pipelines. He described Iran's geographical position, connecting major energy production and consumption centers, as a distinct advantage for gas swaps and transit. Referring to the 2024 memorandum between Tehran and Moscow on Russian gas supplies to Iran, Tavakoli said the first priority should be to use

existing infrastructure, noting that the region already had the necessary pipeline networks. Closer coordination, he added, would help countries make better use of those facilities. Under a 30-year deal signed between NIGC and Russian energy giant Gazprom, Iran is expected to receive up to 55 billion cubic meters of gas annually through a new pipeline that Moscow plans to build across the Caspian Sea. Iranian officials have said the supplies would help address domestic gas shortages, strengthen the country's export capacity on a sustainable basis and establish Iran as a regional gas hub. Iran holds the world's second-largest natural gas reserves after Russia, with about 34 trillion cubic meters. Tavakoli also proposed seasonal exchanges of gas and electricity, saying countries could trade energy at specific times of the year to meet demand and help strengthen regional peace and stability.

Russian Deputy Energy Minister Roman Marshavin said details of the Iran-Russia gas supply agreement, which envisages transit through Azerbaijan, were still being discussed behind closed doors. He suggested that regional countries share their energy strategies through 2050 to develop a common approach to energy security. Elshad Nasirov, deputy vice president of Azerbaijan's state energy company SOCAR, supported the proposal, saying it could be implemented with limited investment by repairing existing pipelines and upgrading compression facilities. He also expressed hope that Tehran and Moscow would resolve outstanding issues and turn the memorandum into a formal contract. Armenian officials expressed readiness to expand energy cooperation, while Georgian analyst Archil Sikharulidze said political differences and pressure from the United States and Europe were hindering Georgia's participation in the 3+3 framework. The eighth Russian Energy Week international forum opened in Moscow on Wednesday with a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin. The event focuses on the development of the fuel and energy sector, interregional cooperation and international partnerships in the energy industry.

Iran exports \$250 million in goods to Tajikistan in seven months

Economy Desk

Iran exported about \$249.97 million worth of goods to Tajikistan in the first seven months of 2026, accounting for 4.1% of the Central Asian country's imports, Iran's commercial attaché in Tajikistan, Amir Fakhrian, said, according to IRNA. Tajikistan's total foreign trade reached about \$7.94 billion during the period, up 42.3% from a year earlier, according to the country's statistics agency, Fakhrian said, as reported by IRNA. Tajikistan's exports totaled about \$1.78 billion, while imports exceeded \$6.16 billion.



Fakhrian said the country's demand for industrial goods, machinery, food and agricultural products, and construction materials offered opportunities for Iranian companies to expand their presence in the market. He said stronger cooperation between private-sector businesses, bilateral trade meetings, the

identification of reliable business partners, and improved transport and logistics infrastructure could help increase Iran's non-oil exports and diversify its export portfolio. Food and agricultural products, construction materials, industrial machinery and equipment, mining industries, and technical and engineering services were among the areas with potential for expanded trade ties, he added. Fakhrian said closer direct links between Iranian and Tajik companies and consistent follow-up on trade agreements could help strengthen Iran's position in the Tajik market and expand bilateral economic relations.

Riyadh could tap ...

Given Saudi Arabia's expanding defense cooperation with Pakistan and Turkey, how effective could these security arrangements be in managing tensions with the Yemeni forces? Could greater reliance on defense pacts and military arrangements help contain the crisis, or might it instead heighten security competition and further complicate the regional landscape?

Saudi Arabia's expanding defense cooperation with Pakistan and Turkey should be viewed in the context of Riyadh's efforts to diversify its security partners, strengthen its deterrence capabilities and reduce its vulnerability to regional threats. Such cooperation could prove effective in areas including intelligence sharing, military training, defense industry development, air defense capabilities and operational capacity. However, it is important to recognize that greater military strength does not necessarily translate into a greater ability to resolve crises. In the case of Yemen, the issue is not

simply one of military superiority. It involves a range of political, geographical, social and security factors that cannot be managed through defense arrangements alone. Even if Saudi Arabia's military cooperation with Pakistan and Turkey strengthens its deterrence, the question remains whether this added capability could persuade the Yemeni forces to accept a political agreement or merely encourage them to bolster their capacity to resist and expand the scope of their operations. From this perspective, exclusive reliance on defense pacts could have a dual effect. On the one hand, raising the costs of military action for the opposing side could help prevent certain clashes. On the other, the emergence of rival military coalitions and an expanding arms race could intensify the region's security dilemma. Under such circumstances, each actor may view its own actions as defensive and necessary, while the other side interprets those same moves as a threat to its security. The result would be growing mistrust

and less room for diplomatic maneuver. More importantly, Saudi Arabia's defense cooperation with Pakistan and Turkey should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of a clearly defined operational alliance against the Yemeni forces or Iran. The nature of this cooperation, the extent of mutual commitments and the parties' willingness to become involved in an actual crisis are all decisive factors that must be assessed separately. My overall assessment is that military deterrence can complement diplomacy, but it cannot replace it. Lasting security in West Asia will be possible only when regional countries move away from exclusive reliance on military alliances and toward arrangements in which one country's security is not secured at the expense of another's. For Saudi Arabia, Iran and other regional actors, combining proportionate deterrence with active diplomacy and inclusive dialogue would be less costly and more sustainable than entering a cycle of escalating military competition.

Steel industry maintains output despite war damage, export barriers: Association

Economy Desk

Iran's steel industry has localized more than 90% of its production chain, enabling it to maintain operations despite war damage, sanctions and export restrictions, Alireza Ebrahimi, a member of the Iranian Steel Producers Association, said on Saturday, according to IRNA. Speaking at a meeting on the latest state of steel production, Ebrahimi said domestic capabilities had made the industry largely self-sufficient, allowing local manufacturers to produce even complex components and equipment. Only about 5% of specialized components used in control systems and instrumentation remain dependent on foreign suppliers, he said, adding that these components have long service lives and do not require frequent replacement. The industry relies mainly on domestic raw materials, with iron ore sourced almost entirely from local mines. A small share of the coal or coke it needs is imported because domestic production falls short in volume and quality, Ebrahimi said. Alternative supply routes and the use of gas have helped offset these shortages and maintain production, he added. Claiming that the war and sanctions have caused no damage would be an exaggeration, but the steel industry remains alive and its economic activity continues steadily, Ebrahimi said.



The country's two largest steelmakers, Mobarakeh Steel Company and Khuzestan Steel Company, sustained damage during the 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February. The conflict has disrupted steel production and exports through damage to industrial facilities, logistical constraints and energy shortages. Iran's aviation sector has also faced new US sanctions, while maritime trade from the south has been subject to a US naval blockade. Iran, long among the world's top 10 crude steel producers, dropped out of the ranking in June after Vietnam increased output by 27.5% year over year to 2.6 million metric tons, according to Steel Radar. Iran's annual steel production capacity has previously been reported at more than 30 million metric tons. Ebrahimi said steel exports had continued despite restrictions on shipping and export routes, as well as longstanding financial and banking sanctions. The industry has faced severe banking restrictions for more than 20 years, disrupting trade flows, complicating risk management between buyers

and sellers, and limiting access to letters of credit (LCs), he said. Despite these constraints, a strong domestic trading network has developed to manage export transactions. Although shipments have declined to some extent, exports have not stopped, and alternative routes are being developed, he added.

Production capacity exceeds 40m tons

Ebrahimi said investment of more than \$7 billion across the mining and steel value chain had helped push Iran's annual steel production capacity above 40 million metric tons. The investment has supported the development of more than 40 major industrial complexes and created opportunities for direct employment, he said. Bahram Sobhani, head of the Iranian Steel Producers Association, recently told IRIB that Iran's steel production was expected to reach 26 million to 27 million metric tons this year, below an earlier forecast of 30 million tons. He cited the naval blockade, war-related damage and transportation restrictions as factors disrupting production and exports.

Tombak speaking in 'universal language of rhythm'

Musician proving that Iranian percussion instrument can shine solo



By Alireza Sepahvand
Freelance journalist

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The Iranian percussion instrument has the potential to move beyond its traditional accompanying role and establish an independent presence on international stages, says Iranian musician and instructor Milad Valizadeh.

Valizadeh, a tombak player, believes that the Iranian percussion instrument can shine on international stages as an independent instrument rather than serving solely as an accompaniment to vocals and melodic instruments. Emphasizing the importance of preserving the authenticity of Iranian music and the universal communicative power of rhythm, he discusses the goals of Kooban, an ensemble that explores new possibilities in Iranian percussion through group performances featuring tombaks alone, without melodic instruments.

Valizadeh began his professional journey in Amol, a city in northern Iran, where limited educational opportunities and a shortage of qualified instructors presented significant challenges. Through perseverance and continuous practice, he eventually moved to Tehran to study under prominent musicians, including Kambiz Ganjei, Navid Afghah and Mohammadreza Lotfi. These experiences helped him deepen his understanding of tombak performance, rhythm and the theoretical foundations of music. His collaborations with leading figures in Iranian classical and regional music have also shaped his understanding of the instrument's role in different musical traditions. Valizadeh regards rhythm as one of music's most fundamental elements and a language that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. From this perspective, he sees the tombak not merely as an accompanying instrument but as one with considerable potential for independent performance and meaningful communication with audiences unfamiliar with Iranian music.

The establishment of Kooban reflects this artistic vision. By bringing together multiple tombak players without relying on melodic instruments, the ensemble seeks to explore the instrument's sonic, rhythmic and performance possibilities in a different format and create opportunities for its appearance at international events.

In this interview, Valizadeh discusses his artistic journey, his experiences working with prominent Iranian musicians, the independence of the tombak, the importance of preserving musical authenticity in a global context, and the challenges facing music education today.

SEPAHVAND: You began your career outside the capital and eventually performed in different countries. What made you believe that an Iranian instrument such as the tombak could cross the nation's borders and connect with audiences who might not even know its name?

VALIZADEH: My journey was full of ups and downs, particularly because of the limitations I faced in my hometown. There

was a shortage of teachers, experienced mentors and other educational resources.

I decided to make the most of the opportunities available to me. Through persistent practice, studying photographs of prominent musicians and finding ways to motivate myself, I continued pursuing my goal until I eventually moved to Tehran.

That was where my professional training really began under the guidance of the distinguished

master Kambiz Ganjei. I also studied with Navid Afghah for a period and learned music theory and rhythmic cycles, known as *advar*, under the late master Mohammadreza Lotfi.

I subsequently joined musical ensembles and gradually began working with respected musicians. These collaborations have always served two purposes for me: they have been an extension of my education and an opportunity to gain

practical experience.

My activities in Iran and abroad, as well as my participation in various album recordings, have helped bring the tombak into greater prominence, both in ensemble performances and as a solo instrument. This is particularly evident outside Iran, where rhythm and percussion occupy a special place and instruments such as the tombak can demonstrate their distinctive capabilities.

Unlike many Iranian instruments, the tombak is fundamentally rhythmic. When you perform for European audiences, do you feel they can connect with its rhythmic language even without knowing the Iranian modal system or the instrument's cultural background? What has your experience with international audiences been like?

As I mentioned earlier, rhythm holds a special place throughout the world because it is full of movement and energy. It is undoubtedly capable of attracting audiences. Rhythm is a universal language, and this applies to the tombak as much as it does to other percussion instruments. These instruments often draw large audiences and generate considerable curiosity. People are particularly surprised by the tombak's wide range of nuances

and the variety of sounds it can produce. Discovering how such diverse sounds emerge from a single instrument often encourages listeners to approach it with greater interest and appreciation.

You have worked with a diverse range of Iranian musicians, from leading performers of classical and percussion music to artists specializing in regional traditions. What have these collaborations contributed to your personal musical language? In particular, how have your experiences working with figures such as Ardashir Kamkar, Majid Derakhshani, Navid Afghah, Kambiz Ganjei and Faraj Alipour influenced your understanding of ensemble performance and the role of the tombak?

Working with these distinguished masters, who are a source of pride for Iranian music, has been an invaluable learning experience. It has been, and will continue to be, a source of knowledge and inspiration for me. My collaborations in both Iranian classical music and folk and regional music have broadened my perspective and deepened my understanding of music and rhythm.

Each of these musicians has a distinct artistic identity, musical vocabulary and approach. A percussionist, particularly a tombak player, must understand these different musical worlds and be able to communicate with each of them. You cannot rely on the same



Kooban Ensemble, founded by Milad Valizadeh (3rd-r) and comprised of tombak players, poses for a photo with their instruments after a performance.

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Percussion instruments often draw large audiences and generate considerable curiosity. People are particularly surprised by the tombak's wide range of nuances and the variety of sounds it can produce. Discovering how such diverse sounds emerge from a single instrument often encourages listeners to approach it with greater interest and appreciation.



Tombak player Milad Valizadeh (R) performs on stage outside Iran with the legendary Luri kamancheh player and vocalist, Faraj Alipour.

● IRAN DAILY



repetitive style when performing works by different composers. Instead, you must understand the character and atmosphere of each composer's music and adapt your performance accordingly. Your playing must reflect the particular feeling and artistic expression of the work. This is one of the most important lessons I have learned throughout my career.

If we are to present the tombak not merely as an accompanying instrument for a singer or a melodic instrument, but as an independent instrument, where should we draw the line between preserving tradition and developing a new musical language?

Absolutely. The tombak has its own distinct identity and independence. More broadly, Iranian percussion encompasses the tombak, the daf and other instruments, each of which has its own capabilities.

I want to emphasize the importance of percussion because rhythm and movement are fundamental elements of music. Without rhythm, movement would not occur, and musical ideas would lose one of their essential foundations.

In Iranian classical music, we have different forms, including avaz (free-rhythm vocal music), tasnif (structured vocal compositions), chaharmezrab (a fast, rhythmically driven instrumental form) and reng (a lively instrumental composition, traditionally associated with dance).

My question is simple: Can a tasnif be created without rhythm? Rhythm is an essential component of music, and the tombak has an independent role within that framework.

Around the world, major percussion festivals provide opportunities for soloists and ensembles to demonstrate the capabilities of percussion instruments. Many distinguished Iranian musicians have also performed internationally as soloists, whether on the tombak, the daf or other percussion instruments. Their achievements demonstrate that these instruments are capable of standing on their own.

What convinced you that three tombaks could create a complete and independent musical performance? Do you see Kooban primarily as a musical ensemble or as an experiment to discover the instrument's unexplored possibilities?

Kooban certainly has a distinctive concept, both in its approach to ensemble performance and in the number of musicians involved. We currently have players in training, including both men and women. As the founder of Kooban, I have ambitious plans for the group, including releasing albums and staging performances in Iran and abroad. My principal goal is to present Kooban on international stages.

One of the defining features of the ensemble is its commitment to performing without melodic instruments. The entire performance is built around rhythm, with different arrangements developed using one or two rhythmic lines.

Another important aspect of the project is that it will draw on outstanding students. Some of these young musicians face personal challenges, including educational commitments and work responsibilities. They need motivation, clear goals and opportunities to develop their skills.



Milad Valizadeh (L) practices an original tombak piece alongside Mehdi Tavakkoli, a senior member of the Kooban Ensemble.
● IRAN DAILY

This means analyzing their individual practice, providing practical guidance and giving them the experience of playing in recording studios and on stage. The process will undoubtedly involve many challenges, but I believe the outcome will be worthwhile. The establishment of Kooban, its recordings and its performances on international stages will be the result of this collective effort.

When a European musician or student picks up a tombak for the first time, which of its characteristics tends to attract the most attention? Has teaching non-Iranian students encouraged you to reconsider any aspects of your own teaching methods or performance?

In workshops held outside Iran, one of the first things that attracts attention is the instrument's physical structure, shape, design and skin.

However, what fascinates people most is the playing technique. The tombak involves intricate finger movements and a range of striking techniques that produce an extraordinary variety of sounds. These sounds can be used to create different musical expressions, styles and rhythmic patterns, both in ensemble performances and in solo playing.

What do you believe is the best way to introduce Iranian music to the world? Should musicians attempt to make it more international, or should they preserve its distinctly Iranian character and allow international audiences to discover it on its own terms?

I firmly believe that the original cultural identity of the music must be preserved. Consider regional and folk music. Should its original melodic character, musical atmosphere and traditional instruments be altered, or should musicians preserve its authenticity and allow it to reach listeners in its original form?

We have seen the latter approach in the music of Lorestan, Mazandaran, Kurdistan, Bal-

uchistan, Khorasan and other regions of Iran. These traditions have continued to develop while retaining their essential characteristics.

Iranian classical music should follow the same path. Many distinguished musicians, including Mohammad Reza Shajarian, Parviz Meshkatian, Mohammadreza Lotfi, the Kamkar family and Majid Derakhshani, have presented authentic Iranian musical traditions on major international stages. Their commitment to preserving the foundations of this music resulted in enduring works that introduced Iranian culture to audiences around the world.

Unfortunately, I feel that some of this legacy is gradually being forgotten because of declining cultural awareness and insufficient attention to the traditions that shaped earlier generations. This is particularly concerning among younger people today.

You have learned from generations of tombak masters whose playing styles differed considerably, from Hossein Tehrani and Mohammad Esmaili to Nasser Farhangfar and contemporary musicians. What is the most important lesson the younger generation should retain from the traditional master-apprentice system? Conversely, what aspects of music education need to change to meet the needs of today's musicians?

The first thing worth retaining is gratitude and respect. The second is maintaining a clear sense of one's own place and responsibilities as an artist, without becoming conceited.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, I have witnessed many instances of people losing their sense of professional boundaries and failing to respect the positions of others.

In music education, for example, some people begin teaching without sufficient performance experience. Online classes and instructional posts on social media have also become widespread. What concerns me is that some individuals reproduce lessons they learned from their own teachers and present them as their original material, without developing their own ideas or creating anything new.

Some publish instructional books without an adequate professional background, a substantial body of work or an understanding of the responsibilities involved. This problem is not confined to the tombak; it exists in other musical disciplines as well.

Such practices can be damaging. Overconfidence, a lack of critical thinking and disregard for professional boundaries can lead musicians in the wrong direction. Instead of concentrating on artistic discipline and developing their individual performance skills, some become preoccupied with appearances and superficial displays of musicianship.

Consider the distinguished masters who have accumulated decades of teaching experience, performed extensively and collaborated with leading musicians. Some have spent more than 40 years in professional music without rushing to publish instructional books. Why? Because they understand the responsibilities involved. They respect their roots, recognize the limits of their own knowledge and observe the ethical standards of their profession. The younger generation must learn to recognize these boundaries and show the respect that their teachers deserve.

In recent decades, the tombak has evolved from an accompanying instrument into one with an increasingly sophisticated technique and a broad range of expressive possibilities. Do you believe it can establish an independent role in contemporary world music, jazz, experimental music and intercultural collaborations, or will it continue to be recognized primarily as part of Iranian music?

The tombak undoubtedly has a distinctive place of its own. As I mentioned earlier, rhythm and the tombak can function independently. We are increasingly seeing a variety of percussion and rhythmic performances, including tombak playing, in recordings, albums, concerts and live performances. Audiences are responding positively, demonstrating that these performances have considerable potential to attract listeners.

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The instrument can generate a remarkable level of excitement and energy, both through its technical possibilities and through the expressive power of live performance. I believe these qualities will continue to help the tombak find a special place in the experience of audiences around the world.

For you, is the sound of the tombak simply a musical sound, or does it also carry elements of Iranian history, identity and worldview?

I would want the audience to experience the culture, civilization, history and artistic heritage embodied in this instrument. I believe a powerful live performance can communicate these qualities directly to listeners, allowing them to experience something of the cultural identity behind the music.

In recordings and live performances, microphone placement and sound quality remain major challenges for percussion instruments. The problem is particularly noticeable with the daf, whose natural sound can be difficult to reproduce accurately. To what extent does the tombak face similar challenges?

The situation is very similar to that of the daf. One of the main problems is a lack of understanding of percussion sound, both in album production and in live performances. Some sound engineers seem to assume that because an instrument is percussion, its sound does not require particular attention.

That is a serious misconception. Percussion is one of the pillars of an ensemble and plays a crucial role in shaping its overall sonic character. It helps maintain the tempo of a piece, contributes to the ensemble's rhythmic precision and adds colors and dynamics that make the music more engaging. Properly balanced percussion also allows listeners to hear and understand the performance more clearly.

Unfortunately, I do not believe this is adequately understood in Iran in many cases. In other countries, by contrast, I have encountered sound engineers who demonstrate a high level of professionalism in mixing and balancing percussion instruments. They understand acoustic principles and the specific characteristics of percussion sounds, allowing even the finest details of a tombak player's technique to be reproduced clearly. This level of attention makes a significant difference to the final listening experience.

Finally, could you outline your main artistic activities, including notable performances, albums and educational publications?

I have performed at various venues in Europe and Australia alongside distinguished musicians, including Ardeshir Kamkar, Majid Derakhshani and Faraj Alipour.

I have also participated in recording several albums, both in duo formats and as part of larger ensembles, working with fellow musicians and respected masters.

At present, three volumes of my tombak instructional book series are in preparation and are expected to be published soon. I hope they will become useful resources for students and anyone interested in learning more about the tombak and its musical possibilities.

AFC Awards Bangkok 2026:

Beiranvand shortlisted for Player of the Year as Iran receives five nominations

Sports Desk

Iranian international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand is among the three finalists for the Player of the Year award after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) unveiled its list of nominees for the upcoming AFC Awards on Friday.

The 30th edition of the annual ceremony will be held at Bangkok's Aksra Theatre King Power on November 19. Hoping to become the fifth Iranian footballer to win the prestigious award, following Khodadad Azizi (1996), Ali Daei (1999), Mahdi Mahdavi (2003), and Ali Karimi (2004), the Tractor goalkeeper faces competition from Saudi international duo Feras Al Brikan and Salem Al Dawsari.

"A stellar showing at the FIFA World Cup 2026 underlined Alireza Beiranvand's world-class abilities as the Islamic Republic of Iran narrowly missed out on



● VCG

the Round of 32 on goal difference. His nation's most-capped custodian, he also enjoyed a solid club campaign by helping Tractor FC to the AFC Champions League Elite 2025/26 Round

of 16. This is the 34-year-old's second nomination, after his first in 2019," the AFC website wrote of the Iranian. Beiranvand was one of Iran's standout performers at June's global showpiece

in the United States, with the highlight of his campaign coming in a man-of-the-match display during the goalless draw against Belgium. Beiranvand has also made

an impressive start to the domestic season, keeping six clean sheets in eight league appearances for Tractor and conceding just twice. Al Brikan, meanwhile, earned his maiden nomi-

nation after a memorable campaign that saw him score the winner in the AFC Champions League Elite. The 26-year-old striker also scored twice for Saudi Arabia during its World Cup qualifying campaign. Nominated for the third time in four editions, reigning AFC Player of the Year Al Dawsari increased his World Cup appearances to nine over the summer. He also captained Al Hilal to an unbeaten 2025/26 league campaign and a record-extending 10th King's Cup title, as well as a place in the AFC Champions League Elite knockout stage.

Jafari, futsal duo nominated

Marzieh Jafari, who made history last year by becoming the first Iranian to win the Women's Coach of the Year award, has again been shortlisted for the prize. She faces stiff competition from Ma Xiaoxu, head coach of

China's U17 women's team, and Park Youn-jeong, coach of South Korea's U20 side.

Jafari was in charge of the Iranian national team at January's Women's Asian Cup, where her team's politically charged campaign in Australia ended in a group-stage exit. She then led Bam Khattoon to the AFC Women's Champions League group stage after finishing top of its preliminary group in August. Meanwhile, Iran will look to claim a fourth successive AFC Futsal Player of the Year award, with international duo Hossein Tayyebi and 2023 winner Saied Ahmadabbasi among the nominees. The pair scored nine goals between them to help Iran secure a record-extending 14th Asian Cup title in January.

The Iranian Football Federation was also shortlisted alongside Football Australia and the Japan Football Association for the AFC President's Recognition Award for Grassroots Football (Gold).

U23 Wrestling World Championships:

Iran's Rahmani, Mohammadnejad into freestyle finals

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers Abolfazl Rahmani and Abolfazl Mohammadnejad advanced to the finals of their respective events on Day 1 of the freestyle competition at the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas, United States, on Friday.

Looking to secure a second team title in three editions, Iran will also chase three bronze medals through Ebrahim Khari, Ali Karampour, and Reza Afshar across five weight classes.

An 86kg bronze medalist at last year's competition, Rahmani, who settled for silver at the U20 World Championships in August, began his 92kg campaign with an 11-1

victory by technical superiority over Jamaica's Steven Burrell Jr., before outmuscling Georgia's Sandro Kurashvili 11-6 in the quarterfinals.

A 6-3 win over Turkey's Fatih Altunbas saw the Iranian advance to the final, where he will take on 2024 champion Arslan Bagaev of Russia.

Defending superheavyweight champion Mohammadnejad, meanwhile, picked up where he had left off at the U20 Worlds, marching into the final without conceding a single point across three bouts.

The Iranian prodigy crushed Ukraine's Volodymyr Kochanov 10-0 in his opening bout and then hammered Russia's Andrei Bestaev 11-0 before defeating Azerbaijan's Khetag Karsanov 5-0 in a re-

match of last year's final in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Standing between Mohammadnejad and the gold medal is Georgia's Aleksandre Abramishvili, a two-time European U20 bronze medalist. Elsewhere, Khari – a silver medalist at the Zagreb Open in February – suffered a 7-1 loss to American Benjamin Davino in his opening 61kg bout but was given a second chance to add to his 2024 bronze after the American reached the final. Khari will resume action in the repechage against Japan's Akito Mukaida, who was beaten 11-0 by Davino in the quarterfinals.

In the 74kg class, Karampour enjoyed an emphatic run to the semifinals, claiming three

victories by technical superiority, but came up short against American Jayden James, who pinned the Iranian while leading 10-2 to reach the final.

Karampour kept trying to score exposure points using a whizzer, but James countered with his own whizzers. On his third attempt, James wrapped his arms around Karampour's chest and drove him to the mat for the fall.

Afshar, a world U17 champion in 2024, got off to a losing start in the 86kg class, falling 7-1 to Turkey's Ahmet Yagan. He will begin his bid for bronze with a repechage clash against Mexico's Kevin De Leon.

Iran aims to complete a



team-title double in Las Vegas after the country's Greco-Roman squad secured a third successive crown at the competition on Wednesday. Erfan Jarkani (63kg), Abolfazl Mohmedi (82kg), and Yasin Yazdi (87kg) won gold in their respective classes, while Mohammad Kamali

(67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Seydi (97kg) added two bronze medals. Iran finished atop the team standings with 119 points, five ahead of runner-up Kazakhstan, while Russia – eligible to score team points for the first time since 2021 – finished third with 105.



Iranian freestyle wrestler Abolfazl Rahmani (blue) attempts a single-leg takedown against Jamaica's Steven Burrell Jr. in a 92kg bout at the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States, on Oct. 16, 2026.

● IAWFIR



Sports Desk

Iran defeated South Korea 67-62 to secure a second victory in the men's wheelchair basketball event at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in Japan on Saturday.

Mohammad-Hassan Sayyari led Iran's scoring with 17 points in 21 minutes and 10 seconds on the court at Nagoya's Aichi International Arena, while Vahid Gholamzad added 14 points as Iran moved atop the Group B standings with four points, hav-

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games:

Iran beats South Korea in men's wheelchair basketball, blind football

ing routed Iraq 81-23 in its opening game on Friday. Omid Hadiazhar also played a key role in Saturday's victory, recording an impressive double-double of 12 points and 10 assists, while Mahdi Abbasi and Morteza Abedi contributed 11 points apiece, helping Iran to recover from a three-point deficit at halftime.

Gim Donghyeon scored a game-high 18 points for South Korea, silver medalists at Hangzhou 2022, with Kim Sangyeol and Cho Seunghyun chipping in 15 points each. Having claimed bronze in the two editions either side of their 2018 gold, Iran will continue its

bid for a fourth medal in as many editions with a match against the Philippines on Monday, the final day of the group stage.

The Philippines, beaten 84-31 by South Korea in its opener, suffered a 72-35 defeat to Iraq later on Saturday.

Elsewhere at the multi-sport event, Iran suffered a 5-3 defeat to South Korea in men's goalball. In men's blind football, Iran bounced back from a 1-0 opening-day loss to Thailand to beat South Korea 3-1.

Hossein Rajabpour scored twice in the opening 14 minutes, with Sadeq Rahimiqasr adding a third

goal in the 17th minute. Kwon Kangmin pulled one back for South Korea in the first minute of the second half.

The fifth edition of the Asian Para Games will officially open with a ceremony at Nagoya's Paloma Mizuho Stadium today.

Iran is represented by 166 athletes, including 62 women, across 15 sports at the event, which will run through Oct. 24.

Having finished fourth in the first two editions – Guangzhou 2010 and Incheon 2014 – before finishing third in Jakarta 2018, Iran achieved its best-ever finish in the history of the Games in Hangzhou

in 2022, collecting 44 golds, 46 silvers and 41 bronzes to finish runner-up in the medal table behind China.

The country's most successful campaign in terms of medals, however, came in Jakarta in 2018, where Iran bagged 51 golds, 43 silvers and 42 bronzes, but ultimately settled for third place behind China and South Korea.

Athletics has been Iran's most productive sport across the five editions, yielding 238 medals, including 83 golds, while swimming, archery and powerlifting have each contributed 13 gold medals.



Hegmataneh keeps unveiling Iran's ancient past

Iranica Desk

Hegmataneh's ancient history stretches back to the dawn of civilization in the region. The Aryans are believed to have chosen the area as their home, while the Medes later made it their summer capital. Neither could have imagined that Hegmataneh would one day be recognized as one of Iran's oldest centers of civilization and gain global renown. Known throughout history by names including Hegmataneh, Ecbatana and Hamadan, this ancient city has maintained an urban character since its earliest days. From the era of the Aryans and the Medes to the present, it has endured countless upheavals yet remained standing through the passage of time.

The Hegmataneh archaeological site was inscribed on Iran's National Heritage List in 1931. Since then, generations of archaeologists, researchers, and cultural heritage specialists have worked to uncover its hidden secrets. Over the past decade, the sustained efforts of heritage experts and conservationists have also paved the way for the site's inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Each excavation at ancient



● IRNA

Hegmataneh has revealed remarkable discoveries from this enigmatic city. Archaeologists believe the site still holds many untold stories and countless secrets waiting to be uncovered.

Hegmataneh is widely regarded as one of Iran's most magnificent archaeological landscapes and a powerful

symbol of the country's ancient history. Scientific excavations and archaeological research have uncovered evidence spanning several millennia, reflecting the civilization, culture, and achievements of the people of present-day Hamadan. It has justifiably earned the title of the "mother of the ancient

cities of Persian civilization." Like many of Iran's historic sites dating back to the Median period, Hegmataneh possesses distinctive characteristics that have attracted some of the most prominent archaeologists in Iran and around the world.

Yet Hegmataneh is far more than an archaeological site. It is one of Iran's most important living archaeological laboratories, where each excavation season has illuminated another chapter of the previously unknown history of the Iranian Plateau. Research and excavations indicate that the settlement was built according to a

highly organized and advanced urban plan, with surviving sections of its city layout offering researchers an exceptional glimpse into ancient architectural planning.

Among Hegmataneh's most significant features is the discovery of a carefully organized network of architectural spaces arranged according to a clear and systematic plan. Straight streets, uniformly sized architectural units, and the city's geometric layout point to a sophisticated urban planning system that has few known parallels among contemporary sites in the Middle East. This unique characteristic has given Hegmataneh exceptional importance not only from a historical perspective but also in the fields of urban planning and architectural studies.

Archaeological excavations carried out across different parts of the site have uncovered the remains of massive mud-brick walls, residential quarters, workshops, and sections of urban infrastructure. These discoveries demonstrate that Hegmataneh was not merely a political and administrative center but a vibrant city with complex social, economic, and cultural dimensions.



Ahrar Cable Car offers scenic views of Lahijan

Iranica Desk

Ahrar Cable Car, also known as Lahijan Green Roof Cable Car, is one of the most popular recreational attractions in Lahijan, Gilan Province. Located in the Green Roof Complex on the slopes of Sheytan Kuh (Sheytan Mountain), the cable car offers visitors panoramic views of the city, tea plantations, rice fields and Lahijan's colorful rooftops. The cable car is part of the Green Roof Complex, a popular destination that is easily accessible from the city center. Visitors do not need to travel far outside Lahijan to reach it. The complex is about 48 kilometers from Rasht and 15 kilometers from Langarud, according to kojaro.com. Ahrar Cable Car was developed through a joint project between Lahijan Municipality and Ahrar Company and began operating in 2005. Since then, it has become one of the city's best-known attractions, drawing many visitors each year.

The cable car route begins at the Green Roof station and travels approximately 1.5 kilometers to its final station in an area known as Taj-e Khrous. The round trip takes about 20 minutes. Along the way, passengers can enjoy sweeping views of Lahijan, its famous lake, surrounding rice paddies and lush tea plantations. The system has five towers and 33 cabins, each with a capacity of six passengers. Its route passes over green tea fields and provides a different perspective of Lahijan's landscape.

Ahrar Cable Car is also considered one of the most technologically advanced cable car systems

in Iran. It is equipped with a hydraulic traction system, motion-control equipment, a system for measuring the distance between cables, and a powerful generator for use in emergencies. The Green Roof Complex surrounding the cable car provides a range of amenities, including parking, restrooms, a prayer room, restaurants, cafes and pic-

er recreational area offering several other attractions. One of them is an amusement park near the cable car station. Its Ferris wheel, located on the slopes of Sheytan Kuh, is considered one of the tallest in northern Iran and offers particularly attractive views of Lahijan at night. The amusement park also features rides and activities such

as a Frisbee ride, bumper cars, a sled ride, a haunted castle, an escape room and a children's train. An indoor children's entertainment center known as Bazino is also available.

Another popular attraction is the zipline. The approximately one-kilometer course begins along the pedestrian route on Sheytan Kuh and ends near the

Jahangardi Hotel on the edge of Lahijan Lake. The route passes above tea gardens and part of the lake, providing visitors with a distinctive view of the area. It is regarded as one of the largest ziplines in Iran and the Middle East.

Hiking route

The pedestrian route leading

while the surrounding pomegranate and walnut trees add to the appeal of the walk. However, the numerous steps can be tiring for older visitors and young children.

Near the lake, visitors can also stop to visit Ahrar Waterfall, an artificial waterfall that has become a popular spot for photographs. Another, somewhat longer walking route connects the Green Roof Complex with the second cable car station. Hiking enthusiasts can take this route uphill and return to the first station by cable car.

Best time to visit

Spring is widely considered the best time to visit Ahrar Cable Car and Lahijan. The city is known for its extensive rice fields and tea plantations, which take on a particularly lush and vibrant appearance during the spring months.

Summer can bring high humidity and muggy weather to Gilan, but the elevated location of the cable car and the cooler air around Sheytan Kuh make the area a popular summer destination as well.

Autumn offers another attractive experience, particularly along the forested routes leading to the cable car. The cooler weather and colorful landscape make hiking especially pleasant, while a cup of locally produced Lahijan tea can add to the experience. Winter is generally colder around the Green Roof Complex, but visitors who are prepared for the weather can still enjoy the views and recreational facilities when the complex is operating.



● kojaro.com



Skilled people are Iran's greatest asset: *President*

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Saturday that Iran's greatest asset was its people, stressing that investment in education and skills training was essential to national development. Pezeshkian made the remarks at a ceremony where he remotely launched 3,851 educational, cultural and sports projects nationwide by the Ministry of Education, IRNA reported. The event was held at Imam Ali Smart School in Eslamshahr, southwest of Tehran. He said the goal of Iran's educational equity initiative should go beyond building schools to improving the quality of

education.

"Schools should help develop a generation that is skilled, creative and responsible, able to cooperate with others, solve problems and contribute to society," he said.

Strengthening practical skills, he added, could help address youth employment challenges and enable young people to play a greater role in tackling the country's problems. Pezeshkian also called for better-equipped schools and improved educational services, saying investments in buildings and equipment would not deliver their full value without trained people able to use them effectively.

He urged provincial officials, Friday prayer leaders, families



President Masoud Pezeshkian (1st R) pays tribute to school children lost their lives in a US missile strike on a primary school in southern Iran earlier this year at an educational center near Tehran on October 17, 2026.

● IRNA

and the public to work together to advance educational equity. He praised charities involved in school construction and called on Iranians to contribute what they could toward improving education. The president highlighted the education system's role in developing the country's specialized workforce and capabilities, stressing the need to pool resources to improve both school facilities and learning outcomes.



Iranian illustrators, authors shortlisted for Swedish festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Five Iranian authors and illustrators, along with a reading-promotion initiative, have been nominated for the 2027 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, an international prize honoring contributions to children's and young adult literature, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Abbas Jahangirian (author) and Amir Shabanipoor (illustrator) were nominated by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults. Children's Book Council, the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Young Adults, and the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature nominated other candidates; Atoosa Salehi (author), Hoda Haddadi



(illustrator), and Alireza Goldouzian (illustrator). Jahangirian has more than five decades of experience in fiction writing, playwriting, research and education. Shabanipoor was recognized for his distinctive visual style, creative use of color and composition, and ability to tell stories through illustrations. Alireza Goldouzian is known for his illustration in children's books. He has won several international

awards including the Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2018 and 2021. Hoda Haddadi, illustrator, began publishing stories in an Iranian young adult magazine in the 1980s and later illustrated books by many prominent Iranian writers for children and young adults. Atoosa Salehi is an award winning, well-known Iranian author. Salehi has written and translated over 90 books and won

numerous awards, such as Book of the Year. The 'Read with Me' project was nominated in the reading-promotion category. 'Read with Me' is a project designed and implemented by the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature, to promote reading for/with disadvantaged children who are generally at risk.

The 2027 award list includes 277 candidates from 80 countries and regions, 85 of them first-time nominees. Established by the Swedish government in 2002 in memory of 'Pippi Longstocking' creator Astrid Lindgren, the award carries a prize of five million Swedish kronor.

A 12-member jury selects the winner, who will be announced on April 6, 2027, during the Bologna Children's Book Fair in northern Italy.

Iran, China seek concrete steps to boost tourism

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and China are discussing new travel packages and improved visitor services to attract more Chinese tourists to Iran, as flight disruptions and other barriers hinder tourism ties, IRNA reported.

Officials and tourism industry representatives met on Friday at the Iranian Embassy in Beijing, to explore avenues to turn cooperation into actual visitor exchanges. Iranian Ambassador Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli highlighted the countries' historical ties along the Silk Road, which carried not only goods but also culture, art, music and traditions. He called for removing barriers and better organizing tourism cooperation, describing China as an important partner and saying both countries sought peace and security in the Middle East. A proposal from Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri also presented during the meeting. It included forming a joint working group for travel agencies and tour operators, developing at least three packages for the Chinese market, arranging familiarization trips for Chinese travel executives and journalists, expanding Chinese-language guide and payment services, and setting targets and deadlines for visitor exchanges.

Chinese tourism representatives said Iran was an attractive destination and that Chinese travelers were interested in



Iranian Ambassador to China Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli (R) addresses a tourism meeting at Iran's diplomatic mission in Beijing, China on October 16, 2026.

● IRNA

visiting.

They cited unstable flight schedules linked to the 40-day US-Israeli war that broke out in late February, the lack of an Iranian tourism promotion office in Beijing and difficulties organizing familiarization tours as key obstacles.

Iranian officials said the country could host 15 to 20 Chinese tour operators in the near future. A ministry representative encouraged them to visit Iran, invoking a Chinese proverb: "Hearing something a hundred times is not as good as seeing it once." The discussions underscored the need for practical improvements in transport, marketing and visitor services to turn interest into actual trips.

Two Iranian novels published in Turkish

Arts & Culture Desk

Two Iranian religious and historical novels have been translated into Turkish, introducing Turkish-speaking readers to stories rooted in Islamic history and Persian fiction.

'Elena' by Reza Vahid, translated by Musa Denizjan, and 'The Thief and the Prince' by Majid

Mollamohammadi, translated by Aykut Pazarbaşı, were published by Turkish publisher Unsöz in Turkey, Iran's Mehr News Agency reported on Saturday.

'Elena' is set in the early years of Islam and the Byzantine Empire (330-1453). It follows Dihya al-Kalbi, an envoy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent to deliver a letter to Byzantine

Emperor Heraclius. The novel explores themes of justice and human emotion through the intertwined lives of its characters.

'The Thief and the Prince,' published under the Turkish title 'Hırsız ve Şehzade,' blends historical fiction with time travel. It follows Zar'ah, a soldier in the army that martyred Imam

Hussain (PBUH) 14 centuries ago. Zar'ah suffers from an unending thirst. Seeking a cure, he travels to the present day to abduct a boy named Peyman. The boy's escape sets off a series of events in Kufa, in present-day Iraq.

The translations extend the reach of Iranian religious and historical fiction to readers in the Turkish-language market.

