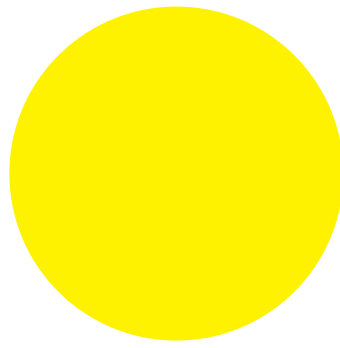


Iran seeks more UNESCO listings to elevate global heritage profile



8 >



Iran Daily

Vol. 8251 • Thursday, October 29, 2026 • Aban 07, 1405 • Jumada al-Awwal 18, 1448 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



> irandaily.ir

| newspaper.irandaily.ir

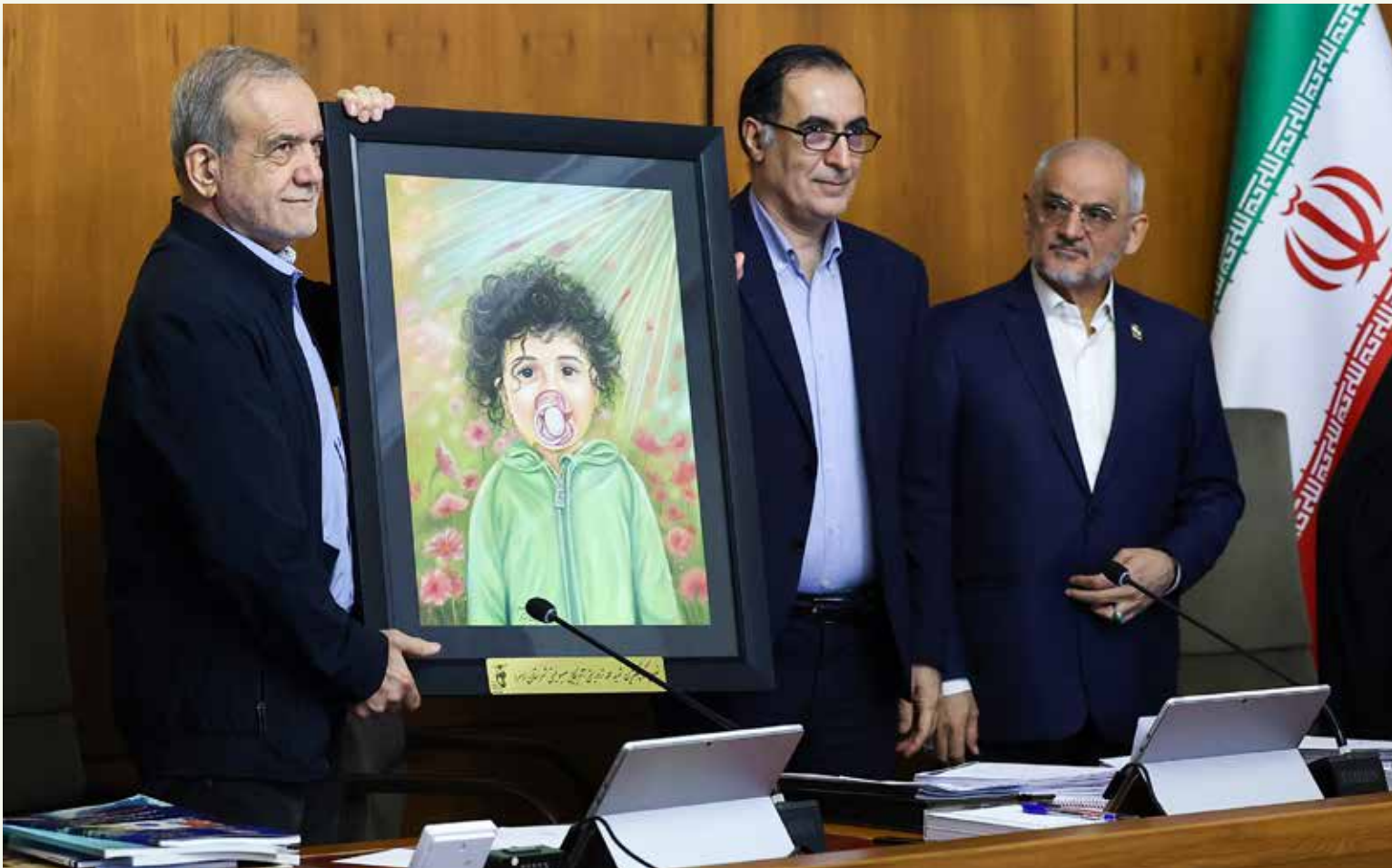
| IranDailyWeb

FM warns new Israeli-instigated attack would be 'devastating' for global markets

2 >

President condemns US-Israel's attacks on civilians as violation of int'l law

2 >



President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) holds the picture of a toddler, the youngest person killed in a US missile strike on a sports hall in Lamerd, southern Iran in late February, during a cabinet session in Tehran on October 28, 2026.

● president.ir

Threat of MOAB, strategic signaling to manage crisis

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The threat to use the so-called "Mother of All Bombs" (MOAB) has been raised repeatedly by US officials in recent weeks. In an interview with Iran Daily, international



Hossein Ajorlou

affairs expert Hossein Ajorlou said the threat is an attempt to manage the crisis through strategic signaling, i.e. sending messages to multiple actors to shape their calculations. He added that normalizing threats involving weapons of mass destruction and intensifying the arms race would be among the consequences.

IRAN DAILY: How seriously should the US threat be taken? Are such statements a sign of possible military escalation, or part of Washington's psychological and media warfare?

AJORLOU: The US threat to use MOAB or even a tactical nuclear weapon, should be viewed on two levels simultaneously. The first is psychological and media warfare, while the second involves preparations for a limited operation. With its current military logistics in the region, the US cannot achieve a strategic victory in a war with Iran through military means. Trump is therefore compelled to focus on applying comprehensive pressure, tightening the blockade and threatening further escalation. Israel's role as the principal driver of the war should not be overlooked either. Israel plays an active part in drawing up plans for joint strikes and is also exerting pressure on Washington's decision-making process. Reports of operational drills conducted by Israel and the US near Iran's borders indicate that the threat is not merely verbal. The deployment of the Roosevelt and new US-Israeli plans for further joint strikes have elevated the threat from statements to operational preparations. This raises the possibility of limited and controlled use of such a weapon against specific facilities.

Page 3 >



Gas exporters reject unilateral sanctions in Moscow summit statement
GECF warns tariffs, Mideast tensions threaten gas market stability

3 >



Confrontation with Iran not in Pakistan's defense doctrine: Former envoy
Joint defense pact 'should not be characterized as anti-Iranian'

4+5 >



Wrestling World Championships: Esmaili reigns supreme as Iran secures record Greco-Roman haul

6 >



FM warns new Israeli-instigated attack would be 'devastating' for global markets

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on Wednesday that any Israeli-instigated attack in the Persian Gulf region would have a "devastating impact" on global markets.

"Devastating impact on int'l markets of any Israel-instigated military misadventure in Persian Gulf region remains major concern for both gas suppliers and consumers," Araghchi said in a post on X.

The United States and Israel have in recent days raised the prospect of renewed attacks on Iran.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is seeking

to form a new cabinet after close elections, claimed on Wednesday he could work with US President Donald Trump to eliminate the "existential threat" posed by Iran.

Araghchi also highlighted Iran's diplomatic engagement at the eighth Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Summit in Moscow. Established in 2001 and formalized as an intergovernmental organization in 2008, the GECF serves as a platform for gas-exporting countries to exchange information and discuss developments affecting international gas markets.

The eighth summit, held in Moscow on October 27, provided a platform for member

states to discuss the role of natural gas in global energy security and the importance of cooperation among producers.

The forum's 12 member countries collectively hold approximately 70% of the world's proven natural gas reserves, making cooperation among them significant for global energy supplies and market stability.

Iran has pursued energy cooperation with other major gas producers, including Russia, as part of broader efforts to strengthen its role in international energy diplomacy.

Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz in response to the latest round of US-Israeli aggression which

began on February 28, effectively blocking US and allied vessels from navigating the Persian Gulf.

The closure sent shockwaves through global energy markets, driving up oil, gas and other fuel prices, particularly in the US, and forcing Washington and the International Energy Agency (IEA) to release strategic reserves on several occasions in an effort to ease the supply crunch.

Following the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and the US in June, Tehran reopened the Strait of Hormuz, but Iran's Armed Forces shut the maritime corridor again after Washington violated the



Abbas Araghchi
● AFP

agreement by imposing a blockade on Iranian ports.

Since then, energy prices have followed an upward trend, with Brent crude reaching \$115.47

per barrel on October 28, while European benchmark natural gas prices climbed to \$113 per megawatt-hour, their highest level since December 2022.

President condemns US-Israel's attacks on civilians as violation of int'l law

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned attacks by the United States and Israel on civilians, particularly children in Iran's cities of Minab and Lamerd during their aggression against Iran, describing the actions as contrary to humanitarian principles and the rules of international humanitarian law.

Targeting schools, hospitals, sports facilities and residential homes while claiming to be fighting terrorism raised serious questions about the contradiction between the stated claims and the actions of those responsible for the attacks, he said during a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

Back on February 28, the US launched a missile attack on an elementary school in Iran's southern town of Minab, killing 168 civilians, most of them children.

Many victims were girls and boys between seven and twelve years old, while 26 female teachers were also killed.

On the same day, US forces used similar methods to strike a sports hall in Lamerd City in southern Iran, killing 24 innocent civilians.

At least 3,500 civilians were killed



during the 40-day unprovoked US-Israeli aggression against Iran. Emphasizing the need to document and pursue the full dimensions of the incidents in international bodies, President Pezeshkian said the memory of those killed would never fade from the minds of the Iranian people and that the crimes would remain part of history.

He questioned how those who bombed schools, hospitals, sports facilities and people's homes in Iran in front of the world's eyes, claimed that they targeted terrorists.

"Were the children of Minab and



The photo shows the aftermath of a missile attack by the United States on a sports hall in Iran's southern city of Lamerd on February 28, 2026.

● iribnews.ir

Lamerd and the children of Gaza terrorists?" he asked.

Pezeshkian said, during meetings with a number of US think tank executives on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, they apologized to the Iranian people and were ashamed that their country had such a president.

Iran rejects Kuwait's allegation linking Iranian national to assassination plot

International Desk

Iran's Embassy in Kuwait strongly rejected allegations by the Kuwaiti government that an Iranian national was involved in a plot to assassinate certain individuals or in any other activity that could threaten the Arab country's national security.

In a statement, the embassy stressed that the individual in question had not been present in Kuwait at any time during the past 10 years.

The embassy also expressed deep regret over the continued negative approach toward Iran, reflected, among other things, in the repeated allegations



Iran's Embassy in Kuwait
● IRNA

of Iranian interference in Kuwait's internal affairs. It emphasized that leveling such baseless accusations against Iranian nationals runs counter to the principle of good neighborliness and violates international law. Given the dangerous

consequences unfolding across the region following the US-Israeli military aggression against Iran, the embassy said regional countries are expected to pursue responsible and prudent policies to prevent further escalation of tensions and

conflicts imposed on the entire region.

A Kuwaiti court sentenced three men to death after convicting them of collaborating with Iran and Hezbollah and plotting to assassinate senior officials, including First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah. Huseein Abdallah al-Maatouq, a religious dignitary and secretary-general of the National Islamic Alliance, was among the three condemned by the criminal court, the sources said.

The court sentenced 11 other people connected to the case to five years of hard labor.

China slams West's policy toward Iranian nuclear program

International Desk

China denounced the policy adopted by the United States and its European allies toward Iran's nuclear program, blaming US and Israeli attacks for halting inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities by the UN nuclear agency.

The UN Security Council held a meeting on Tuesday to discuss Iran's nuclear program after the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) voted to refer Tehran's nuclear dossier to the council.

During the meeting on Tuesday, Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations Fu Cong criticized US and European policies toward Iran, saying military attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities had directly blocked IAEA inspections.

"The US and Israeli military attacks on nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards are the direct reason the agency has been unable to conduct inspections," the Chinese representative said.

He also blamed Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and its subsequent "maximum-pressure" campaign for the current crisis.

"The unilateral US withdrawal from the JCPOA and the implementation of the maximum-pressure policy are the root causes of the current crisis," Cong said. The Chinese diplomat also criticized Britain, France and Germany, saying the three European countries had failed to fulfill their commitments.

The representative said the mechanism for re-imposing UN sanctions on Iran, commonly known as the snapback mechanism, had fundamental legal and procedural flaws.

Russia's representative, Vassily Nebenzia, also challenged the legality of holding the meeting under the "non-proliferation" item of the Security Council's agenda.

"We are compelled to take the floor on a point of order in connection with yet another attempt to flagrantly violate the Security Council's rules of procedure and convene a meeting under a non-existent agenda item."

He said that under Resolution 2231 the council had concluded its consideration of Iran's nuclear program on October 18, 2025, and removed the "non-proliferation" item from its agenda.

He also rejected claims that earlier UN resolutions on sanctions against Iran had been reinstated, saying such claims "have no legal basis whatsoever."

The IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution on September 9 proposed by the United States, France, Britain and Germany calling for Iran's nuclear file to be referred to the Security Council.

The US and Israel launched unprovoked aggression against Iran two times in June 2025 and February 28 amid indirect talks between Iran and the US.

Other than military and civilian facilities, including hospitals and schools, Iran's safeguarded peaceful nuclear facilities were targeted by the aggressors in both wars, as the international community and the IAEA were reticent.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Gas exporters reject unilateral sanctions in Moscow summit statement

GECF warns tariffs, Mideast tensions threaten gas market stability

Economy Desk

The Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) said its members firmly opposed unilateral sanctions and the extraterritorial application of national and regional laws in a statement issued at their eighth summit in Moscow, while warning that tariffs and geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Middle East, could threaten global gas market stability and energy security. The summit was held on Tuesday with the participation of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Ale-Thani, Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and Mohamed al-Menfi, head of Libya's Presidential Council, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Other member and observer countries also sent representatives. Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez addressed the summit by video conference.

In their final statement, GECF members warned that tariff measures could undermine the efficient functioning of markets, reliable energy supplies and investment flows.

They also expressed deep concern over the effects of geopolitical developments on global gas markets, citing possible supply disruptions, greater uncertainty over gas supply and demand security, increased investment risks and sharp



price fluctuations.

Gas and the energy transition

The leaders described natural gas as important to strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change, citing its lower carbon intensity and limited pollutant emissions.

The statement also reaffirmed the principle of "technology neutrality" as a fundamental element in developing the gas industry. It said the principle ensured non-discriminatory access to technologies, investment and markets, while

recognizing countries' right to determine their own technology development paths in line with national energy and industrial strategies, capabilities and priorities. The members pledged to deepen bilateral and multilateral cooperation, strengthen cross-border regional ties and facilitate trade in gas industry equipment and technology through measures including mutual recognition of certifications, technology transfer and localization of production.

They also called for diversifying gas trade and logistics routes through maritime and

land corridors, including by developing regional gas hubs and transit infrastructure. The aim, according to the statement, was to strengthen supply chain resilience, reduce risks arising from concentration and adapt to changing supply and demand patterns.

Long-term contracts, market security

The statement stressed the need to ensure fair value for natural gas in international trade, highlighting long-term contracts and varied pricing mechanisms, including oil-price indexation, as ways to share

risks more effectively, improve price predictability and reduce market volatility. The leaders also called for developing crisis-response mechanisms for gas markets. These could include expanded high-level consultations to assess external shocks, coordinated measures to ensure reliable supplies and more effective tools to support energy security.

The members said they would continue pursuing a realistic, fair and balanced transition toward a low-carbon energy system, with natural gas contributing to global energy security, economic and social progress, and a realistic climate agenda, while upholding technology neutrality.

They also emphasized stronger dialogue and strategic partnerships with gas-consuming countries and regional organizations, as well as engagement with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions.

The statement called for formal channels to address technical and market issues, ensure demand for gas, encourage investment and provide transparent, non-discriminatory access to gas markets.

The GECF has 12 full members and eight observer countries. Its members collectively hold about 70% of the world's proven natural gas reserves, account for 38% of commercial gas production and 42% of global pipeline gas exports, and supply an estimated 47% of LNG exports.

Annual inflation rises to 76.8%, statistics center says



Economy Desk

Iran's annual inflation rate reached 76.8% at the end of Mehr, the seventh month of the Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, up 3.2 percentage points from the previous month, the Statistical Center of Iran said.

According to the center's report, the consumer price index for Iranian households reached 761.8 in Mehr, rising 4.4% from the previous month and 88.7% compared with Mehr of the previous year.

Year-on-year inflation fell by 1.1 percentage points in the sixth month compared with the previous month. The index shows that households spent, on average, 88.7% more than in Mehr last year to buy the same basket of goods and services.

In the same month, monthly inflation was 2.4% for food, beverages and tobacco, and 5.8% for non-food goods and services.

Iran's national currency, the rial, has fallen to record lows amid mounting economic pressure. It has traded at more than 2.7 million rials per US dollar on the open market in recent weeks.

The sharp depreciation has underscored growing strain on an economy already grappling with high inflation amid Western sanctions. The country has also remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure during a 40-day conflict.

Threat of MOAB ...

However, the apparent objective of such an operation is to demonstrate resolve and lend credibility to the threat. What complicates the equation is Iran's determination to bring the cycle of war to an end. From Tehran's perspective, however, this cannot be achieved through surrender. This is an example of a hybrid crisis in which psychological, media and military instruments are deployed simultaneously. The threat to use the MOAB can be analyzed as crisis management through strategic signaling, which involves sending messages to multiple actors, including Iran, Israel, the US domestic public, China and Russia, to shape their calculations.

The escalation of the threat from public statements to operational preparations indicates that the crisis has moved beyond the pre-crisis stage and into escalation. In security crises, strategic ambiguity itself becomes a tool of crisis management, as the opposing side cannot determine how far the threat will be taken. This uncertainty encourages more cautious behavior.

The regional arms race can be analyzed through the lens of the security dilemma. Each country's defensive measures are perceived as threats by others, creating an endless cycle of armament and instability.

What implications does such a threat have for regional and international security and stability? To what extent could threats to use weapons with immense destructive power and target critical infrastructure, including energy facilities, escalate tensions and spread instability across the region? What responsibility does the international community bear in this regard?

The regional consequences of such a threat can be examined on two levels. The first is the normalization of threats involving weapons of mass destruction. This undermines international norms and lowers the threshold for the use of force and violence in the region.

The second level is intensifying arms competition. Persian Gulf countries, feeling increasingly insecure, would step up their military purchases, deepening the cycle of regional instability.

Israel stands to benefit from heightened tensions and, as the principal driver of the escalation, seeks to strengthen the

international coalition against Iran. From a legal standpoint, deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure constitutes a war crime and would entail international responsibility for the US and Israel.

China and Russia have also described US and Israeli attacks as unacceptable and warned that continuing along this path could push the region to a point of no return.

This situation lies at the intersection of a security crisis and a normative crisis, as military threats simultaneously challenge the legitimacy of international norms, including the prohibition on weapons of mass destruction.

The normalization of threats is an example of the erosion of the crisis threshold: something previously regarded as a red line gradually becomes normalized, making future crises more difficult to manage.

The regional arms race can be analyzed through the lens of the security dilemma. Each country's defensive measures are perceived as threats by others, creating an endless cycle of armament and instability.

What options does Iran have to counter this threat and prevent it from being carried out? How can Tehran strengthen its defensive capabilities and deterrence, remain prepared to respond to a potential attack and prevent its recurrence, while also avoiding a wider conflict?

Iran has options in both the defensive and political spheres. On the defensive front, Iran has significantly enhanced its missile and drone capabilities and preserved part of its air defense capacity through a dispersed and decentralized system.

Politically, Iran has come to the conclusion that the other side lacks sufficient commitment to diplomacy. The opposing side continues to rely on its assumptions about severely weakening Iran, its ability to control the Strait of Hormuz and its capacity to impose its nuclear demands. The issue is that Iran, contrary to the way it is portrayed in Western media, is

a rational actor. This rationality means carefully weighing costs and benefits.

In the security sphere, Iran could spring a security and operational surprise through operations targeting the world's internet infrastructure and other security-sensitive targets. Reports indicate that Iran has drawn up detailed plans to target undersea cables in the Persian Gulf. Iran's strategy is an example of asymmetric deterrence: using more limited means, including missiles, drones and threats to cyber infrastructure, to impose disproportionate costs on a stronger adversary.

A security surprise can be analyzed as crisis management through strategic ambiguity. Iran deliberately keeps its options unclear to complicate the adversary's calculations.

If the threat is carried out, what military, security, humanitarian and environmental consequences could be expected? How would such attacks affect regional energy security and the economies of other countries?

If the threat is carried out, the consequences can be examined at three levels: horizontal escalation, vertical escalation, and political and economic repercussions.

At the horizontal level, Iran's response could extend beyond attacks on bases in the region and reach Europe. Reports by The Wall Street Journal indicate that Iran has warned that, in the event of another US attack, it would target facilities beyond military bases, including airports, pipelines, and energy and communications infrastructure.

At the vertical level, Iran could attack the US naval fleet. Such an action would challenge a symbol of American maritime superiority and undermine Washington's deterrence credibility globally.

If Israel also becomes involved in this process, the consequences would become more complex. Israel is seeking to strike Iran's infrastructure, which would prompt a more serious response from Tehran.

At the political and economic levels,

attacks on energy facilities and critical infrastructure would trigger a major humanitarian and environmental crisis and undermine the legitimacy of US actions internationally.

Economically, experts have warned that Brent crude prices could reach \$150 per barrel if more oil facilities are damaged. In such a scenario, regional energy security, which is a backbone of the global economy, would be severely disrupted. This would be an example of a security crisis with multiple consequences, simultaneously affecting military, economic, environmental and legal spheres.

Could threats of this kind affect the security calculations of regional countries and their approach to the US military presence in West Asia? What role can regional countries and organizations play in preventing further confrontation and reducing the risk of a wider war?

Such threats have a profound impact on the security calculations of regional countries. They understand that any escalation would affect their own security and economies first and foremost. In this scenario, they would effectively become a shield for the US and Israel.

This situation has deepened divisions among members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). These countries are being pushed to diversify their relationships and seek a balance among the major powers.

The strategy of balancing relations among the US, China and Russia is an example of crisis management through diversification.

A comprehensive diplomatic agreement remains out of reach. However, interim agreements on specific issues, such as the Strait of Hormuz and economic matters, could offer a way forward. This can be understood as crisis management through confidence-building steps, gradually reducing tensions through limited, implementable agreements.

This demonstrates that, in regional security crises, temporary diplomatic arrangements can serve as a tool for managing tensions.

Confrontation with Iran not in Pakistan's defense doctrine: **Former envoy**

Joint defense pact 'should not be characterized as anti-Iranian'



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Mehdi Honardoost, the former Iranian envoy to Islamabad and the head of the Iran-Pakistan Friendship Association, told Iran Daily in the following exclusive interview that bilateral relations should be analyzed within the framework of "geopolitical coexistence" — a framework in which, despite certain disagreements and divergences, the political will exists to manage differences and preserve shared interests. Referring to Pakistan's mediating role in the recent tensions between Iran and the United States and the formation of the joint mutual defense pact among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, he emphasizes that tactical measures should not be subject to hasty strategic interpretations.

Honardoost maintained that Islamabad faces multiple considerations — namely, its geopolitical position, economic and security considerations, and close relations with Riyadh and Washington — in maintaining equilibrium in its foreign relations. Nevertheless, escalating tensions with Iran neither serves Pakistan's national interests nor accords with the necessity of preserving good-neighborly relations. Regarding the joint mutual defense pact, he stated that the agreement should be examined within the context of security developments in South and West Asia. He added that the pact's actual nature and operational conduct in the future, particularly if it progresses toward establishing a joint operational structure and military command, will be decisive in assessing its implications for Iran. The full interview with the former envoy follows:

IRAN DAILY: Iran and Pakistan have maintained diplomatic relations since Pakistan's establishment in 1947 and share historical, cultural, and religious ties. Nevertheless, security disagreements and border tensions have emerged between the two countries at various junctures. In your view, what factors have thus far prevented these disagreements from developing into enduring hostility?

HONARDOOST: Iran-Pakistan relations should be defined within the framework of geopolitical coexistence. In this type of relationship, the two countries may converge on certain issues and diverge on others, but the understanding among their leaders and decision-makers of the importance of bilateral relations provides the basis for managing disagreements. From an operational perspective, the activities of armed and terrorist groups in border regions constitute a threat to both Iran and Pakistan. These groups operate in border areas and act against the national interests of one or the other country. In Pakistan, groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan are also engaged in conflict with the government and act against the country. Drug trafficking and other illegal activities are also shared challenges for both sides. The important point is that the leaders of Tehran and Islamabad do not necessarily interpret these activities as evidence of hostility on the part of the other government. Rather, they regard these terrorist activities as threats to the security, stability, and economic development of border regions. Both countries understand that continued insecurity along their borders prevents these areas from being transformed from security flashpoints into corridors for trade and economic cooperation. Nevertheless, the broader interests of both countries necessitate that terrorist activities in their border regions not lead to bilateral tensions and that an episodic crisis not be permitted to undermine the fundamental principle of friendly and good-neighborly relations.



Mehdi Honardoost

In your view, given the reciprocal attacks by the two countries in January 2024, how can a recurrence of such a situation be prevented?

I served as Iran's ambassador to Pakistan from 2015 to 2019. Furthermore, my professional and academic work has focused on Eastern affairs for many years, and I have undertaken diplomatic assignments in India and China. During my tenure in Pakistan, I also visited and examined Balochistan and various border areas of the country firsthand on numerous occasions, from north to south. In my view, an

assessment of armed groups' activities in Pakistan's border regions must take into account the geographical and security conditions of Pakistani Balochistan. The region's complex topography and extensive mountainous terrain make operations against armed groups difficult. I disagree with the assessment that the Pakistani government has no intention of confronting these groups, although its priorities, constraints, and operational capabilities may fall short of Iran's expectations.

One of the vital dimensions of Pakistan's economic activity is its cooperation with China. This cooperation is particularly evident at Gwadar Port, where numerous development projects are underway. These projects have repeatedly been attacked by the BLA because its members do not want the Chinese to maintain a presence in the region and believe that

People and security personnel gather at the site of a terrorist attack by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) near the airport in Karachi, Pakistan, which killed two Chinese nationals, on October 7, 2024.

● XINHUA



Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir (L), shakes hand with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during the former's visit to Tehran as the head of a top-level delegation on October 20, 2026.
● IRNA

this cooperation does not benefit the Baloch population.

Overall, I believe that any terrorist activity in Pakistani Balochistan against our national interests, as well as any escalation of tensions between the two countries, does not benefit Pakistan because Pakistan is bordered by four countries. Its border with China presents access difficulties owing to the mountainous terrain. Pakistan faces problems with its neighbor over the issue of Pashtunistan and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and the two countries have disagreements over border issues. India, meanwhile, is regarded as Pakistan's principal adversary, and Pakistan's military forces devote much of their attention to Indian activities.

In this context, despite all the activities of terrorist groups, the Iran-Pakistan border offers Pakistan more favorable conditions for trade, economic activity, and other exchanges. In my view, terrorist activities along the Iran-Pakistan border are also carried out through the instigation and support of third parties and foreign actors.

Ultimately, the solution must be sought in security cooperation, intelligence sharing, the management of border disputes, and sustained dialogue. Neither country should permit a tactical action or limited incident to be interpreted as a change in the other side's overall strategy. In analyzing Iran-Pakistan relations, a distinction must be maintained between temporary disagreements and the two countries' long-term interests.

Nevertheless, existing problems should not be overlooked. Border incidents, armed groups' activities, and divergent perspectives on certain regional developments can generate tensions. The reciprocal attacks of January 2024 also demonstrated that, if crisis-management mechanisms do not function properly, even relations between two neighboring and friendly countries can be affected. However, the two sides' return to the diplomatic track demonstrated the existence of a determination to prevent that crisis from developing into enduring hostility.

Despite these historical commonalities and economic potential, why has Iran-Pakistan cooperation in areas such as trade, energy, and transit not yet reached the expected level? Do Pakistan's relations with the United States and Saudi Arabia influence this situation?

To understand this issue, Pakistan's position and its foreign policy approaches must be taken into account. Since its establishment, Pakistan has relied, in various forms, on foreign assistance and economic support. Saudi Arabia is one of its important partners in financial, oil-related, security, and military affairs, and the



Despite all the activities of terrorist groups, the Iran-Pakistan border offers Pakistan more favorable conditions for trade, economic activity, and other exchanges. In my view, terrorist activities along the Iran-Pakistan border are also carried out through the instigation and support of third parties and foreign actors. Ultimately, the solution must be sought in security cooperation, intelligence sharing, the management of border disputes, and sustained dialogue.

presence of Pakistani military personnel in Saudi Arabia has a long history. Meanwhile, Pakistan's relations with the United States are also of political, economic, and security significance. The United Arab Emirates likewise occupies an important position in Pakistan's economic and regional calculations. Consequently, Islamabad must balance these multiple considerations in its foreign relations. This situation affects Pakistan's economic and political decision-making and, in certain cases, constrains its ability to advance cooperation with Iran fully.

For example, the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, known as the Peace Pipeline, is among the initiatives that, despite their potential importance for meeting Pakistan's energy needs, have been affected by external considerations and pressures. To implement such projects, Pakistan must also calculate the costs and consequences for its relations with the United States and other foreign partners. On the other hand, the Iran-Pakistan border possesses considerable economic potential. Segments of Pakistani Balochistan's population benefit from economic exchanges with Iran, and these connections are important to their livelihoods. In my view, transforming the border from an exclusively security-related issue into an economic opportunity would benefit both countries.

Nevertheless, realizing this objective depends on more than economic potential alone. Political will, regional stability, infrastructure development, and governments' capacity to manage external pressures are also important. Unless these factors converge, the existing potential will continue to be utilized suboptimally.

Pakistan has sought to reduce tensions and facilitate negotiations during the recent confrontation between Iran and the United States. What factors have enabled Islamabad to play such a role, and to what extent can this mediation contribute to safeguarding Iran's interests?

In my view, Pakistan is among the few countries with tangible and direct interests in reducing regional tensions. This stems from its geographical position and the nature of its foreign relations. Pakistan borders Iran on one side and maintains extensive economic and security relations with Saudi Arabia and Arab countries on the other. Consequently, any escalation of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia or any expansion of warfare in the region could impose costs on Islamabad. Furthermore, Pakistan maintains good relations with the United States, and these connections can enable it to transmit messages and facilitate communication between the parties. From this perspective, Pakistan's mediation is connected to its national interests and can also help reduce regional tensions.

Nevertheless, Pakistan should not be assumed to be pursuing exclusively one side's interests in this process or to be free of its own particular considerations. Every country takes its national interests into account in its foreign policy. The important point is that, in this case, Pakistan's interest in reducing tensions and preventing the expansion of hostilities aligns with Iran's policy of establishing regional security and preventing further escalation.

In my view, Iran can utilize Pakistan's mediating capacity while simultaneously relying on its own independent interests and positions. The fundamental point is that the Islamic Republic of Iran, alongside the capabilities it has demonstrated in the military arena, must also act with authority and confidence in the diplomatic arena. Resorting to mediation does not mean relinquishing national rights and interests.

It should also be recognized that reducing regional tensions benefits Pakistan since every new crisis could make it more difficult for the country to maintain equilibrium in its relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Accordingly, Islamabad's mediation should be assessed within the context of a constellation of regional interests and considerations.



A Pakistani checks morning newspapers covering front page story of Iran's strike on a separatist group hiding in Pakistan's Balochistan region, at a stall in Islamabad on January 18, 2024.
● ANJUM NAVEED/AP

Given Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia and the United States, as well as competition among regional and extra-regional powers, could third countries' interests create circumstances in which Iran and Pakistan find themselves opposed to one another, contrary to their long-term interests?

In the world of politics, no possibility can theoretically be ruled out categorically. However, as someone who has followed developments in this region for many years, I consider the likelihood of a sustained confrontation between Iran and Pakistan to be extremely low. The principal reason for this assessment is that confrontation with Iran has no place in Pakistan's defense doctrine, and a conflict with Iran is also incompatible with Pakistan's national interests.

At present, India is Pakistan's principal rival and primary concern. Furthermore, Pakistan faces the issue of Afghanistan and the Taliban along its northern borders. Therefore, maintaining friendly relations with Iran is important to Pakistan from multiple perspectives, including trade and economic affairs. Despite occasional disagreements, Iran and Pakistan are interconnected geographically, culturally, and politically, and both benefit from the continuation of friendly relations.

What changes will the joint mutual defense pact among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey bring to the security calculations of South and West Asia? Should this agreement be regarded as an initiative directed against Iran, and

Senior delegations from Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia meet top Iranian officials in Tehran on October 26, 2026, for the first four-country regional meeting.
● TASNIM



what approach should Tehran adopt toward it?

I have conducted research on this subject, and I believe that the pact must be analyzed within the broader context of regional security developments. In my view, we are witnessing a form of security realignment in South and West Asia. In recent years, some regional countries have incurred enormous expenditures on arms purchases and reliance on the United States' security umbrella, yet they continue to face security concerns. During recent events and military confrontations, these countries realized that the United States cannot guarantee their defensive security. Consequently, this situation has prompted them to examine regional defense arrangements. This does not, of course, mean the end of these countries' security relations with the United States. The continuation of American influence and presence in the region remains foreseeable, given its considerable depth and breadth, established over many years, and its connection with American interests.

Furthermore, each of the three countries participating in the joint defense pact pursues particular objectives through the agreement. Saudi Arabia possesses financial and energy resources and seeks to strengthen its defense frameworks. Pakistan benefits from military strength, operational experience, and defense and nuclear industrial capabilities, and seeks to strengthen its geopolitical position. Turkey, meanwhile, seeks to expand its role and standing in regional affairs and the Islamic world.

Therefore, it should not be assumed that the strategic interests of these three countries are entirely identical. Their cooperation within a defense framework may be founded on shared interests alongside differing considerations.

Regarding Iran, I also believe that the pact should not be characterized as anti-Iranian from the outset. Such an assessment requires consideration of the agreement's nature, provisions, and implementation. Until sufficient evidence emerges that this structure is operationally directed

Each of the three countries participating in the joint defense pact pursues particular objectives through the agreement. Saudi Arabia possesses financial and energy resources and seeks to strengthen its defense frameworks. Pakistan benefits from military strength, operational experience, and defense and nuclear industrial capabilities, and seeks to strengthen its geopolitical position. Turkey, meanwhile, seeks to expand its role and standing in regional affairs and the Islamic world.

against a particular country, the mere establishment of a defense pact cannot be interpreted as an indication that a specific country is being targeted.

Nevertheless, Iran should monitor developments concerning the pact carefully. There is an important distinction between an agreement that remains confined to political declarations and general coordination and a structure equipped with an operational headquarters, joint command, coordination among armed forces, and joint military planning. In the latter case, its strategic implications for Iran become more significant.

In my view, Iran's initial approach to the pact should not be hostile. First, its nature and actual operations should be examined, and hasty positions should be avoided. Subsequently, the costs and benefits of any potential engagement should be assessed in accordance with national interests. If the pact expands in the future and develops into an operational structure with direct effects on the regional security balance, the need to reconsider Iran's approach will also arise, and the question of membership should be considered more seriously.

Given Iran's regional position and the close relations between Tehran and Islamabad, is Iranian participation in the joint defense pact possible? What consequences would such participation entail, and could it help reduce the presence of extra-regional powers in regional security arrangements?

In my view, this issue should be examined incrementally and on the basis of Iran's national interests. Under current circumstances, joining the pact is not necessarily a foreign policy priority for Iran, and membership should not be decided upon merely because certain friendly countries have extended an invitation or participate in the agreement.

Nevertheless, the principle of establishing regional security mechanisms based on the participation of regional countries merits consideration as it is consistent with Iran's repeatedly stated position that regional countries should ensure regional security themselves. Regional security should not be regarded as a commodity for which regional countries must depend on foreign powers.

If the pact develops into a broader and more cohesive structure in the future, with the participation of additional countries, Iran should carefully evaluate the costs and benefits of its involvement. Given its geographical position, military capabilities, and strategic standing in South and West Asia, Iran is an important player in regional security calculations, and its participation could influence the nature and weight of such a structure.

However, this participation can be seriously considered only if the objectives, obligations, decision-making mechanisms, and scope of military cooperation are clearly defined and do not conflict with Iran's national interests. It must also be established to what extent such a structure could operate independently of competition among extra-regional powers.

On the other hand, it cannot be assumed in advance that all pact members share identical views regarding the role of the United States or other powers. Turkey, for example, has considerations arising from its relations and security commitments within NATO that may influence its decisions. This demonstrates that the establishment of a regional pact does not necessarily imply its complete independence from existing security arrangements.

Overall, my recommendation is that Iran, at the present stage, should monitor developments concerning the pact without adopting a hostile position or acting precipitously. If its nature and scope of activities change in the future, Tehran should decide how to engage with it on the basis of a careful assessment of its national interests.

What matters in all these discussions is the preservation of friendly relations between Iran and Pakistan. The two countries share numerous interests and should not allow temporary disagreements or regional rivalries to divert their relations from the path of cooperation and coexistence.

Wrestling World Championships: Esmaeili reigns supreme as Iran secures record Greco-Roman haul

Sports Desk

The Greco-Roman event at the Wrestling World Championships proved one for the ages for Iran after the country captured a record nine medals – including four golds – across 10 weight divisions to defend its team title in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Reigning Olympic champion Saeid Esmaeili capped off a remarkable four days of action for the Iranian squad by cruising to gold in the 67kg class on Tuesday, while Saeid Mohmadi settled for silver in the 87kg category, as the country finished atop the standings with 192 points, claiming only its third team trophy since the World Championships were introduced in 1950.

One of the most dominant team performances in modern World Championships history also saw head coach Hassan Rangraz's roster secure seven final spots in Astana, the highest number achieved by any country in either Greco-Roman or freestyle wrestling.

Azerbaijan, with former Iran coach Mohammad Bana in charge, finished second with 104 points – courtesy of two golds and one silver medal – while Uzbekistan placed third with 80.

Esmaeili's territory

With the Los Angeles Olympics less than two years away, Esmaeili delivered a clear message to Uzbekistan's Aytjan Khalmakhanov and other 67kg contenders, as the 23-year-old sensa-

tion remains the man to beat for the top prize at the multi-sport extravaganza. Esmaeili rounded off his title defense in emphatic fashion, defeating Khalmakhanov – a world champion at 63kg last year – by fall in the final.

"This is the World Championships, which is different from other tournaments," Esmaeili said. "It gets tougher year after year. My opponents study and analyze me, making it very difficult to win medals consistently, especially in the 67kg weight class, which is one of the most competitive in the world," added the Iranian, who is arguably the best Greco-Roman wrestler, pound for pound, on the planet.

"Before a match, we face a lot of pressure because expectations have risen," Esmaeili said. "For many people, we are a primary source of joy. They rejoice in our victories and weep over our defeats. Hopefully, we can always keep them all happy."

The highly anticipated showdown turned into a one-sided affair, as Esmaeili shut down the 20-year-old Uzbek, who was coming off a victory at the recent Asian Games in Japan, from the outset.

After an early stepout, Esmaeili added a two-point throw. He then got the first chance on top in par terre and made the most of it with a lift-and-dump for four points before securing the fall in 2:22.

It was Esmaeili's second win in two career meetings with Khalmakhanov, having previously notched a 9-0



Iranian wrestler Saeid Esmaeili (red) lifts Uzbekistan's Aytjan Khalmakhanov during the Greco-Roman 67kg final at the World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on October 27, 2026.
● IAWFIR

victory in the semifinals at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November 2025. Esmaeili's victory in Astana also marked the latest triumph in a remarkable run of success that includes back-to-back Asian titles in 2024 and 2025.

Esmaeili has now suffered just a single defeat since making his senior international debut in 2023 – a 9-7 semifinal loss to former Olympic and world champion Luis Orta at the 2024 Budapest Ranking

Series event.

Esmaeili said he stepped up his preparations for Astana, knowing the tough path to victory that awaited him.

"It gets harder every year," he said. "This time, we started our training earlier than last year and spent 10 months in a full-time residential training camp. Thankfully, our hard work paid off – nothing less than gold would have been a fitting reward, and truly, nothing else could make us

happy." Looking ahead, Esmaeili pledged to put in the work needed to stay on top of the stacked weight class. "There are about seven or eight contenders, world and Olympic champions, in this division, and the chal-

Mohmadi undone again

Earlier in the day, Mohmadi – already a silver medalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics and two previous World Championships – was left longing for the first major gold medal of his career after suffering his fourth consecutive final defeat in as many years.

Bulgaria's Semen Novikov handed the 23-year-old Iranian his latest setback with a 4-0 victory in a repeat of the Paris Olympics final. After the first period ended with a lone passivity point for Novikov, the Bulgarian gained a step-out and a 2-0 lead when Mohmadi briefly lost his balance.

Novikov then clinched the victory with a spin-behind takedown, as the Iranian camp was left questioning the lack of a passivity call against the Bulgarian, which appeared warranted. "The Iranian guy is very, very strong and a good wrestler," Novikov said. "For four years in a row, he fought only in final matches and every year a silver medalist, but he's strong and very difficult to wrestle."

Following the Olympic final, Novikov and Mohmadi met again in February 2025 in the quarterfinals of the Tirana Ranking Series, where the Iranian came away with a 5-0 win. Tuesday's results followed Iran's medal-laden performances during the first

two days of the Greco-Roman competition, with Gholamreza Farrokhi, Daniaal Sohrabi and Fardin Hedayati triumphing in their respective weight classes.

After a series of below-par performances in the 87kg category on the continental stage in recent months, Farrokhi returned to his best in his familiar weight class, defending his 82kg world title with a 7-1 victory over Turkey's Yuksek Saricicek in the final on Day 2. Sohrabi defeated Hungary's Krisztian Vancza 4-0 in the 72kg final on Monday to add to the bronze he won at last year's edition in Zagreb, while superheavyweight sensation Hedayati was in a league of his own on his senior World Championships debut, wrapping up his 130kg campaign with a victory by technical superiority over Hungary's Darius Vitek just 42 seconds into the final.

Having beaten last year's world champion Amin Mirzazadeh in the national team trials to secure his place in Astana, Hedayati won four of his five matches by technical superiority, while the other ended in an injury default after just 11 seconds. He did not concede a single point throughout the tournament. His total time on the mat was 7:09, barely longer than a single match.

Elsewhere, young prodigies Payam Ahmadi and Ali Ahmadi-Vafa took silver in the 55kg and 60kg events, respectively, while Olympic champion Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) and Ali Oskou (77kg) added two bronzes to Iran's haul.

AFC Champions League Elite:

Esteghlal's perfect start ends with Shabab setback

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Premier League club Esteghlal had its perfect start to the new AFC Champions League Elite season ended after suffering a 2-0 loss to Shabab Al Ahli in Dubai on Tuesday.

Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun made his mark with two sublime assists, with substitutes Matheus Lima and Juan Alvina on target late in the game, as the home side made it three wins in three matches to move into second place in the West Zone's 16-team league table with nine points, trailing fellow Emirati top-flight side Al Ain on goal difference. Having beaten Qatari clubs Al Sadd (3-0) and Al Gharafa (2-1) in their first two games, Esteghlal dropped to fourth, level on points with fifth-placed Saudi powerhouse Al Hilal, which was stunned away from home by Qatar's Al Shamal, losing 3-1 later in the day. Shabab had an early chance

when Wout Faes sent a through ball to Mohammad Juma at the top of the area in the 10th minute, but the forward was muscled off the ball by the Esteghlal defense.

Kauan Santos then almost exposed Esteghlal's backline in the 14th minute when he sent Azmoun through on goal, but Esteghlal goalkeeper Habib Far Abbasi stood his ground and denied his compatriot.

Esteghlal had its first sight of goal in the 17th minute when Saleh Hardani drilled his free kick into the palms of Shabab goalkeeper Matheus Donelli, before Breno failed to connect with Santos' curling delivery moments later.

Another chance went begging for Shabab in the 24th minute, with Santos again the orchestrator as his set piece picked out Saeid Ezzatollahi, who volleyed over the bar.

Esteghlal was almost punished for sloppy defending on the half-hour mark when Azmoun pounced on a stray

pass and set up Breno, but the forward pulled his effort agonizingly wide of the right post.

Shabab started the second half on the front foot, with Azmoun slipping a through ball to Breno in the 51st minute, but the forward's effort from inside the box was repelled by Far Abbasi. The breakthrough came in the 69th minute when Azmoun split the Esteghlal defense open with a deep, looping ball into the box for Lima, who volleyed home past a rooted Far Abbasi.

Esteghlal desperately pushed for an equalizer but was left exposed on the counterattack with seven minutes remaining, as Azmoun laid the ball off for Alvina to score from the edge of the six-yard box and round off the victory.

The third round of fixtures in the continental club competition proved one to forget for Iranian clubs, as Tractor remained in search of its first victory in the league stage, losing



Esteghlal fullback Saleh Hardani (left) is seen in action against Shabab Al Ahli captain Saeid Ezzatollahi during an AFC Champions League Elite match in Dubai, UAE, on October 27, 2026.
● AFC

2-0 away to Al Ain on Monday. Esteghlal will look to get back to winning ways when it takes on Al Shamal at Bas-

ra International Stadium – serving as the Tehran Blues' home venue – on November 3, while Tractor, 13th in

the table on one point, will square off against Uzbekistan's PFC Neftchi in Muscat, Oman, a day earlier.

ICOMOS evaluator visits ancient ironworking sites in Masouleh

Iranica Desk

International expert visits Kohnh Masouleh and Khanbaji Sara to investigate archaeological evidence of iron extraction and ancient metalworking techniques.

On the second day of his visit to Masouleh, Gilan Province, Shaiful bin Shahidan, an evaluator for the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), visited archaeological sites associated with the extraction of raw iron ore and ancient metalworking in Kohnh Masouleh and Khanbaji Sara. The visit focused on examining heat-related structures uncovered during archaeological excavations

and assessing evidence of historical iron production and processing technologies in the region.

The second day's fieldwork centred on key metalworking sites across the historic cultural landscape. At the excavation sites, bin Shahidan examined evidence of how the thermal structures functioned, including metalworking furnaces and installations associated with the smelting and processing of raw iron ore. His assessment drew on field observations and archaeological stratigraphy.

This stage of the evaluation is particularly significant for the proposed Masouleh Cultural Landscape and Its Ancient Blacksmithing Sites World Heritage nomination.

Evidence of a continuous production chain, from the extraction of raw materials to iron processing and blacksmithing, could help demonstrate the longstanding relationship between people, nature, industry and architecture in the cultural landscape. Findings from the field assessment will also contribute to evaluating the nomination against UNESCO World Heritage criteria.

During the visits, the ICOMOS evaluator held discussions with archaeologists and members of the nomination team about the thermal mechanisms of the discovered structures, metal extraction techniques, and the links between these production systems and the local economy and

livelihoods of Masouleh's communities.

Bin Shahidan began the field evaluation of the proposed World Heritage site on Monday, following his arrival in the historic town of Masouleh. He is visiting Iran as part of an ICOMOS expert mission to assess the historical and cultural significance of the nominated sites and examine the evidence available on the ground.

Field evaluation is a key stage in the technical review of sites nominated for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Once completed, the evaluator's report will be submitted to ICOMOS for consideration in the subsequent stages of the assessment process.

During a meeting with the director-general of Gilan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization and the governor of Fuman, bin Shahidan thanked provincial officials for their hospitality and said it was his first visit to Iran.

Referring to his home city and its Iranian community, he said: "I come from Kuala Lumpur, a city where many Iranians live and where the people are very kind."

He added that he would be pleased to visit the sites, prepare the evaluation report and send it to Paris, expressing hope that the cultural landscape would ultimately be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Iranica Desk

Saffron harvest tourism in Khorasan Razavi Province could develop into a sustainable form of agritourism by linking agriculture with cultural heritage, the local economy and rural entrepreneurship, an associate professor in the Department of Geography at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad said, stressing that its success depends on meaningful community participation and the fair distribution of economic benefits.

Tahereh Sadeqlou told ISNA that the saffron harvest season offers visitors an opportunity to experience rural life, learn about indigenous knowledge and observe the production of one of Iran's most valuable agricultural products.

She said the appeal extends beyond the beauty of saffron fields and their purple autumn flowers to include observing the harvesting process, separating the stigmas, drying the saffron and learning about the factors that determine its quality.

Through these experiences, tourists can gain a better understanding of the relationship between human skill, environmental conditions and saffron's economic value, Sadeqlou said. Family cooperation, the division of labor and the transfer of knowledge between generations are also part of the living rural heritage that can offer visitors a distinctive cultural experience.

She added that saffron tourism could create opportunities for direct sales of the spice, the marketing of local food and handicrafts, and the provision of hospitality and tour-guiding services.

Connecting saffron farms with traditional village architecture, historical heritage, natural landscapes and local cuisine could also help create varied itineraries for pilgrims visiting Mashhad and other tourists.

Sadeqlou said Khorasan Razavi has favorable conditions for developing saffron tourism, including the proximity of saffron-growing villages to Mashhad and the region's established local knowledge of saffron cultivation. The limited harvest period, she noted, adds to the experience's appeal. However, tourism activities must be coordinated with farmers' actual working schedules and should not turn rural life into an artificial performance for visitors.

Emphasizing the need to improve tourism infrastructure and services in saffron-producing villages, Sadeqlou said visiting a farm is necessary but not sufficient to establish a tourism destination. A successful destination requires convenient access, basic amenities, complementary activities and professional management alongside its main attraction.

She identified better access roads, directional signs, public toilets, drinking water, rest areas and waste management as essential requirements. Such facilities should be developed in line with each village's capacity and environmental conditions, she said.

Designated visitor routes, limits on the number of tourists and clearly defined areas where visitors may enter farms are also important to prevent damage to crops and disruption of agricultural activities.

and cultural activities functioning as coordinated parts of a single trip rather than as disconnected attractions.

One possible approach would be to build an itinerary around the concept of "from farm to table and market," allowing visitors to learn about saffron's history and cultivation, harvesting techniques, culinary uses and marketing. Eco-lodges could play a role beyond providing accommodation by introducing visitors to traditional architecture, local cuisine and rural lifestyles,

address this challenge is to combine saffron-related attractions with other rural assets and develop itineraries that bring together multiple experiences.

Farm visits could be combined with trips to historical buildings, traditional village settlements, natural landscapes, handicraft workshops and centers producing local goods. Joint routes connecting several villages with complementary attractions could encourage longer stays and spread tourism

marketing skills, and a lack of coordinated services as major obstacles to its development.

Poorly managed visitor arrivals could conflict with harvesting requirements and disrupt farmers' work, she warned. Meanwhile, insufficient cooperation among farmers, tourism organizations, agricultural agencies and village authorities could lead to fragmented activities and unclear responsibilities. Other challenges include weak branding based on local identity, a lack of transparent systems for identifying saffron's origin and quality, limited investment and the risk that intermediaries or a small number of business owners could capture a disproportionate share of the revenue.

She also cautioned against the potential consequences of unbalanced tourism development, including increased waste, pressure on water resources, disruption of daily life and the excessive commercialization of rural culture. The central challenge, she said, is to transform a valuable attraction into a well-managed tourism system built on institutional coordination, local capacity-building, environmental protection and the equitable distribution of benefits.

Saffron tourism could strengthen rural household economies by enabling farmers to sell their products directly while highlighting their origin and production methods, Sadeqlou said. Farmers could also earn income by providing guided visits and educational activities and selling processed products, allowing them to benefit not only from agricultural production but also from the value of the tourism experience.

The sector could create employment opportunities for women in local food production, product processing, packaging, handicrafts and hospitality services.

Young people, meanwhile, could work as tour guides or in digital marketing, booking management, content creation and the design of travel packages. With appropriate training and access to markets, these jobs could strengthen rural entrepreneurship and encourage younger residents to remain in their communities, she said.

Women and young people must have direct access to tourism-generated income and a meaningful role in decision-making, Sadeqlou added.

The success of saffron tourism should therefore be measured through indicators such as farmers' direct income, spending at local businesses, sustainable employment for women and young people, and the proportion of tourism revenue retained within villages.

Khorasan Razavi sees potential in saffron tourism



● hotelato.ir

Training local guides to explain saffron production, village culture and the different stages of cultivation is another requirement, Sadeqlou said. Visitors should have opportunities not only to see the fields but also to learn about stigma separation, processing and packaging in suitable settings.

Accurate information about flowering periods, service costs, booking procedures and visiting conditions is equally important, she added, as weather conditions can affect the timing of the harvest.

Linking farms with eco-lodges, local cuisine and the sale of authentic products could turn a brief visit into a more comprehensive experience. The priority, however, should be to complete essential facilities and coordinate existing services rather than pursue extensive construction that conflicts with the rural environment.

Sadeqlou said saffron tourism should be designed as a coherent tourism product, with farms, accommodation, local food

she said.

Farmers' participation, she stressed, must be genuine, and their economic rights must be protected. Farmers should not simply become performers in a tourism show; they should have a say in explaining production methods, setting visiting conditions and receiving appropriate compensation for their involvement.

Sadeqlou called for a network linking farmers, accommodation providers, tour guides and local product vendors to coordinate services, establish pricing arrangements and distribute income. Clearly presented services, one-day and multi-day packages, and guarantees of product authenticity could help attract different groups of tourists, she said. Each village could also offer a distinctive experience based on its own cultural and environmental characteristics.

Relying on a harvest that lasts only a few weeks makes tourism income unstable, Sadeqlou said. One way to

benefits across a wider area.

Outside the harvest season, tourism providers could offer activities focused on saffron processing and quality assessment, local cooking workshops, handicrafts and other agricultural practices. Combining these programs with Mashhad's religious and cultural tourism could help attract urban visitors and pilgrims, she added.

Longer stays, however, also depend on suitable accommodation, food services, evening activities and reliable information about seasonal programs. The objective should be to increase the economic value of each trip and the share of tourist spending retained by local businesses, rather than focusing solely on visitor numbers, Sadeqlou said.

Sadeqlou identified the seasonal nature of saffron tourism, weather-dependent flowering times, inadequate basic infrastructure, limited hospitality and mar-



Iran seeks more UNESCO listings to elevate global heritage profile

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran aims to strengthen its global cultural standing by securing UNESCO recognition for more historic sites, the cultural heritage minister said on Tuesday.

Reza Salehi Amiri, minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, said about 1 million historical sites nationwide and 58 applications awaiting registration, IRNA reported.

He made the remarks at an event titled 'Iran' at the Bank Melli Iran Museum in downtown Tehran, where the book 'Thousands of Years of Iran', written by Herbert Karim Masihi, was unveiled. "43,000 sites were registered on Iran's national heritage list and 30 were on

UNESCO's World Heritage List," he added.

Salehi Amiri said UNESCO experts were in Masouleh, a historic village in northern Iran, as efforts continued to secure international recognition for the country's heritage.

He compared Iran to a cypress tree whose branches bend in storms but whose roots remain firm, saying the country had withstood threats over thousands of years.

He described shared culture and civilization as a force that unites Iranians, especially when the country faces threats.

The minister called for Iranian history and culture to be taught in schools and universities.



Iranian Cultural Heritage Minister Reza Salehi Amiri addresses an event in Tehran on October 27, 2026.

● IRNA

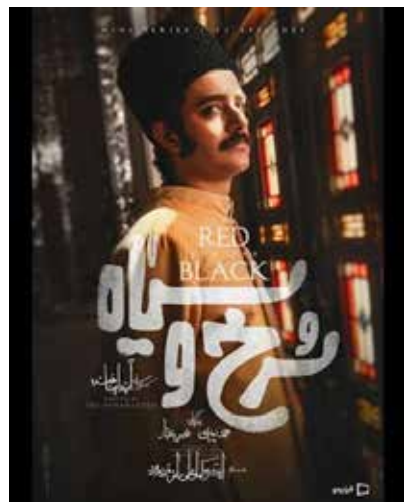
He said tourism routes connecting the tombs of prominent figures with destinations across the country could help bring Iran's cultural heritage into greater focus.

He also highlighted the role of corporate social responsibility in cultural preservation, praising what he called Bank Melli's valuable contribution.

Salehi Amiri expressed confidence that Iran would get through what he called a historic turning point and eventually celebrate victory.



Iranian series 'The Red and the Black' to hit screen at Geneva festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian historical drama 'The Red and the Black', directed by Ida Panahandeh, will be screened in the Highlights section of the 2026 Geneva International Film Festival.

The film will go on screen on November 1, following its world premiere in the competition section of Canneseries, the international television festival held in Cannes, southern France.

The Geneva International Film Festival (GIFF), held in Geneva, Switzerland, has featured television since its launch in 1995. It is now a major platform in

Switzerland for presenting new series and audiovisual works.

This year's Highlights lineup includes 'Look Back', directed by Japanese filmmaker Hirokazu Kore-eda, a Palme d'Or winner, and 'California Avenue', a new BBC series directed by Hugh Blake. 'The Red and the Black' will screen alongside other works featured at major international festivals.

The series tell the story of a gifted painter Nowruz, in mid-19th century Iran, who becomes consumed by his obsession with a Gypsy fortune teller. When her fearless defiance draws the wrath of the city's tyrant, their desperate flight through poverty and peril sets a tragic saga in motion that will echo across generations.

Its selection for the Highlights program offers another opportunity for the Iranian production to reach audiences outside its home market.

GIFF brings together film, television and other forms of audiovisual storytelling. Its Highlights section presents selected works from the international festival circuit, placing the Iranian series alongside productions by established filmmakers and broadcasters.

The screening date was announced by the series' streaming platform in a statement issued through its public relations office.

Iran seeks flexible terms in global plastics treaty

Social Desk

Iran says it is ready to help draft a global treaty to curb plastic pollution, provided the agreement respects countries' development rights, national circumstances and capacity to act.

Hamid Zohrabi, deputy head of Iran's Department of Environment for Natural Environment and Biodiversity, outlined Tehran's position at a meeting on the sidelines of the 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17) in Yerevan, Armenia, IRNA reported.

The meeting included the director general of the Foreign Ministry's Department of International Organizations, the chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution and the executive secretary of its secretariat



at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

According to the Department of Environment's public relations office, Iran's delegation emphasized the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and called for safeguards for countries' right to development.

It urged the treaty's negotiators to ensure adequate and predictable funding, technology transfer and capacity-building

support for developing countries. It also warned against imposing uniform or unrealistic obligations on countries with different economic conditions and infrastructure.

The delegation said the agreement should be practical and implementable, allowing each country to choose measures suited to its priorities and circumstances. Iran's position underscores a central challenge in international environmental negotiations:

balancing collective action against plastic pollution with differences in countries' resources, infrastructure and development needs.

COP17 is taking place in Yerevan from October 19 to 30. Countries are reviewing progress under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and discussing ways to accelerate conservation, mobilize financial resources and strengthen international cooperation.

Iran's 'A Fox under a Pink Moon' makes IDA shortlist



Arts & Culture Desk

The documentary 'A Fox Under a Pink Moon', co-directed by Iranian filmmaker Mehrdad Oskouei and Afghan artist Soraya Akhlaghi, has made the shortlist for best feature documentary at the 42nd IDA Documentary Awards.

The film follows Akhlaghi, a young Afghan artist who lived in Iran and sought to leave the country to reunite with her mother in Austria.

She filmed her daily life and attempts to reach her mother on a cellphone. She

and Oskouei developed the documentary through more than seven years of collaboration.

The film previously screened at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), where it won best film in the international competition.

It has also screened at festivals in Norway, Sweden, Japan, Belgium, Switzerland and the United States. The filmmakers say it has won more than 40 awards.

Other feature documentary selections include 'Birds of War', 'Nuestra Tierra' and 'Nuisance Bear'.

The International Documentary Association said the shortlists were selected from 650 submissions from 95 countries. Finalists for best feature and short documentary will be announced on November 17.

IDA members will choose the winners in those two categories. Other awards will be decided by juries comprising more than 200 documentary professionals from over 60 countries.

The 42nd IDA Documentary Awards ceremony will take place on December 4 in Los Angeles, the United States.