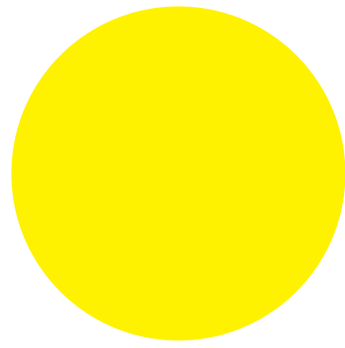


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SPECIAL ISSUE



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Iran's Interim President Mohammad Mokhber addresses the 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Astana, Kazakhstan, on July 4, 2024. ● IRNA



## China's oil imports from Iran hit eight-month high

China's independent refiners have increased their crude imports from Iran by 4.3 percent in June to an eight-month high of around 6.1 million metric tons.

S&P Global Commodity Insights reported the development, adding that Iranian crudes, which are much cheaper than Russian ESPO crudes, have gained more popularity among independent refineries in recent months.

Iranian Oil Ministry's press service, Shana, republished the report without commenting on the accuracy of the provided statistics.

The full text of the S&P Global Commodity Insights report is as follows:

China's independent refiners, mainly in eastern Shandong Province, increased their Iranian crude imports by 4.3% in June to an eight-month high of around 6.1 million mt to cut feedstock costs and combat weak refining margins, according to sources and S&P Global Commodity Insight data July 4.

The volume was the highest since October 2023, when it hit 6.22 million mt, the data showed.

Iranian crude accounted for about 65.7% of the total feedstock portfolio of small-sized independent refineries in Shandong in June, compared with 54.2% in May.

June's higher imports were mainly due to feedstock requirements of the independent refineries, which have been struggling with weak refining margins for most of 2024 so far, and are more selective with their feedstock, sources said.

Iranian crudes, which are much cheaper than Russian ESPO crudes, have gained more popularity among independent refineries in recent months.

"Other crudes are not [as cheap as] Iranian crudes," said a trader source.

Early deals for August-arrival ESPO sold to China were heard at discounts of around 60-80 cents/b to ICE Brent, according to trade sources.

In comparison, Iranian Heavy was at a discount of around \$9/b to ICE Brent on a DES Shandong basis, about \$3/b lower than that of \$5-\$6/b for Iranian Light crude on the same basis, making it more attractive, especially under the weak margins, sources said.

More Iranian Heavy crude cargoes have been arriving in the Shandong market than Iranian Light crude, due mainly to the relatively lower prices, sources said. Data from local energy information provider OilChem showed the monthly average margin at Shandong independent refineries, from processing imported crudes, fell 32.3% on the week to 83.5/mt July 4, amid high crude benchmarks coupled with lower oil product prices.

# Iran's economic growth rate highest in West Asia: *CBI chief*

The governor of the Central Bank of Iran said the Islamic Republic's economic growth rate is the highest among other countries in the West Asia region.

Speaking at the Bank of Russia's Financial Congress in the Russian port city of St. Petersburg on Thursday, Mohammad Reza Farzin noted that Iran registered a five-percent economic growth rate in 2023, which is higher than many countries, including neighboring and regional states, Press TV wrote.

He stressed that the figure puts Iran among the 10 countries in the world with the highest economic growth rate.

The Iranian central banker further noted that Iran managed to lower inflation by more than twofold last year, reducing it from 59% to 23%.

Farzin underlined that Iran is closely observing the international anti-money laundering law.

He also called for the creation of an intergovernmental organization within the framework of the BRICS group of emerging economies, similar to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), to



combat money laundering. Farzin proposed that the BRICS bloc of economies create an alternative payment system to the SWIFT financial-messaging

service. Furthermore, Iran's central bank governor called for more financial cooperation with Russia.

The high-ranking officials of Iran and Russia are determined to use the local currencies in bilateral transactions, he said, adding that if Iran uses ruble,

yuan, dirham and rial in transactions between Russia, Iran, China and other countries, a major barrier would be removed in bilateral trade.

## Iran export of non-oil products to OIC states up 15%



The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said the country's export of non-oil products to the 56 member states of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) registered a 15% growth.

Mohammad Rezvanifar said Iran exported more than 21.5 million tons of products, valued at \$8.6 billion, to the 56 member states of the OIC in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2023, to June 20, 2024), showing a 6 and 15 percent hike in volume and value

respectively compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported.

In this period, Iran imported about 5.2 million tons of products, valued at \$6.9 billion, registering a 20 and 7 percent growth in volume and value respectively compared to the same period last year, he added.

The total trade exchanges with the mentioned countries in the first three months of the current year reached 26.7 million tons, valued at \$15.5 billion, registering an 8 and 11 percent hike in weight and value respectively, he went on to say.

## Iran, Oman in talks over preferential trade

The head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said the first round of the talks on launching a preferential trade agreement (PTA) between Iran and the Sultanate of Oman has been held in Muscat.

The trade and economic relations between the two countries have been following an upward trajectory in recent years, and the conclusion of the PTA and establishment of close trade-economic relations between the two countries in all trade and economic fields are of paramount importance, Mehdi Zeyghami stated, Mehr News Agency reported.

The deputy industry minister described the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2024) as "unprecedented" and said the launch of the PTA is aimed at strength-



ening the trade-economic relations, increasing the volume of the trade exchanges, establishing a more safe environment for the sustainable growth of trade, facilitating the diversification of the exchanged products, encouraging more competition between the economic enterprises and also removing

the trade barriers facing the two countries.

Back in December 2023, the TPOI chief in a meeting with the director of trade, industry, and investment development of the Sultanate of Oman discussed joint investment, industrial and financial issues between the two countries.

## Iran opens dam to revitalize Lake Urmia

Iran opened a major water storage and transfer project as part of efforts to revive Lake Urmia, an endorheic salt lake in the northwest of the country which has shrunk in recent years due to the excessive use of water from rivers and underground water in surrounding regions.

The Iranian Energy Ministry said the Badinabad dam and

canal system were inaugurated in West Azerbaijan Province in a ceremony attended by Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian on Thursday, Press TV reported.

The Ministry said the dam will supply up to 180 million cubic meters per year of water to Lake Urmia.

It said water from Badinabad will be supplied via a 4.5-kilometer canal to the Kani Sib Dam, a nearby reservoir that was opened more than a year ago and is the main source of water supply to Lake Urmia. Repeated spells of drought, dam building on rivers and groundwater pumping has caused Lake Urmia to shrink in size and water supply in recent years. The issue has led to major en-

vironmental problems in Iran and in neighboring countries, including dust storms that have affected the quality of life in the region.

Reports published two years ago indicated that the surface area of the Lake had shrunk to reach 2,324 kilometers and its water had decreased to around 3 billion cubic meters. Experts believe the amount of water in Lake Urmia should reach over 5 billion cubic meters so that it can become stable again.

The Kani Sib water storage and transfer system, which was opened in February 2023, supplies 300 million cubic meters of water to Lake Urmia per year via nearly 36 kilometers of tunnels and 11 kilometers of canals.



# Visit Mahmudabad, where adventure, culture, and gastronomy await

*Mahmudabad is a picturesque city in Mazandaran Province of northern Iran, renowned for its stunning coastal scenery, lush greenery, and vibrant cultural life. Situated along the Caspian Sea, Mahmudabad serves as a perfect getaway for travelers seeking both relaxation and adventure. This city, with its rich history and welcoming locals, offers a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural experiences that make it a must-visit destination in Iran.*



## Geographical setting

Mahmudabad is located on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, the world's largest inland body of water. The city is part of the Mazandaran Province, which is known for its lush landscapes, fertile plains, and extensive coastline. The geographical setting of Mahmudabad provides it with a temperate climate, characterized by mild winters and warm summers, making it an ideal destination for year-round travel, *amazingiran*, media wrote. Mahmudabad is well-connected to major cities in Iran, making it easily accessible for both domestic and international travelers. Here are the primary ways to reach Mahmudabad:

## Natural beauties

Mahmudabad is blessed with some of the most beautiful beaches along the Caspian Sea. The golden sands and gentle waves create a perfect setting for beach activities and relaxation. The coastline stretches for several kilometers, providing ample space for sunbathing, swimming, and beach sports. The clear waters of the Caspian Sea are ideal for a refreshing dip, especially during the warm summer months. In addition to its beautiful beaches, Mahmudabad is surrounded by lush forests and green spaces. The city's proximity to the Alborz Mountains means that dense forests and rolling hills are just a short drive away. These forests are home to a variety of flora and fauna, making them a great destination for nature lovers and hikers. The forests provide a cool retreat from the heat of the coast and offer numerous trails for exploration.

## Cultural and historical significance

Mahmudabad is steeped in history, with several historical sites and landmarks that offer a glimpse into the region's rich past. Some notable

sites include:

**The old bazaar:** The traditional bazaar in Mahmudabad is a bustling market where locals buy and sell goods. It offers a fascinating insight into the daily life and culture of the city. Visitors can find a variety of goods, from fresh produce to handmade crafts.

**Historic mansions:** The city is home to several old mansions that showcase traditional Iranian architecture. These historic buildings, with their intricate designs



and beautiful courtyards, are a testament to the region's architectural heritage.

**Ancient cemeteries:** There are several ancient cemeteries in and around Mahmudabad, where visitors can see centuries-old tombstones and learn about the area's historical figures.

## Local traditions and festivals

Mahmudabad is a city that celebrates its cultural heritage through various traditions and festivals. The locals are known for their hospitality and love of festivities. Some of the notable cultural events include:

**Nowruz:** The Persian New Year, celebrated on the first day of spring, is a major festival in Mahmudabad. The city comes alive

with music and traditional ceremonies. It is a time for families to come together and celebrate the renewal of nature.

**Harvest festivals:** The agricultural heritage of Mahmudabad is celebrated through various harvest festivals. These events are marked by traditional music, and feasts, showcasing the region's agricultural produce.

**Local handicrafts:** Mahmudabad is known for its vibrant handicrafts, including pottery, weaving, and woodworking. Visitors can explore local workshops and purchase unique handmade items as souvenirs.

## Water sports and beach activities

The beaches of Mahmudabad are perfect for a variety of water sports and beach activities. Some popular activities include:

**Swimming:** The gentle waves and clear waters of the Caspian Sea make swimming a popular activity among visitors. Lifeguards are

present on most beaches to ensure safety.

**Jet skiing:** For thrill-seekers, jet skiing is a popular activity. Several rental shops along the beach offer jet skis and other water sports equipment.

**Beach volleyball:** The sandy beaches provide a perfect setting for beach volleyball. Visitors can join in on games or set up their nets for a fun and active day at the beach.

## Nature trails and hiking

The forests and hills surrounding Mahmudabad offer numerous trails for hiking and nature walks. Some popular trails include:

**Alborz Mountains trails:** The trails in the Alborz Mountains offer breathtaking views of the Caspi-

an Sea and the surrounding landscapes. Hikers can explore dense forests, alpine meadows, and mountain peaks.

**Forest trails:** The forests near Mahmudabad are crisscrossed with trails that are perfect for nature walks. These trails provide an opportunity to see local wildlife and enjoy the tranquility of the forest.

## Local markets and cuisine

Exploring the local markets and sampling the cuisine is a highlight of any visit to Mahmudabad. The city is known for its fresh seafood, thanks to its coastal location. Some must-try dishes include:

**Fish kebabs:** Grilled fish kebabs, marinated in local spices, are a popular dish in Mahmudabad. They are often served with rice and fresh herbs.

**Aash-e doogh:** A traditional yogurt soup, *aash-e doogh* is made with fresh herbs, rice, and sometimes meatballs. It is a refreshing and flavorful dish, perfect for a light meal.

**Local fruits and vegetables:** The fertile lands of Mazandaran Pro-

duce a variety of fresh fruits and

## Restaurants

Mahmudabad boasts a variety of dining options, ranging from traditional Iranian cuisine to international fare. Some popular restaurants and cafes include:

**Seaside restaurants:** Many restaurants along the coast offer fresh seafood dishes with stunning views of the Caspian Sea. These establishments are perfect for a relaxing meal by the water.

**Traditional Iranian restaurants:** For an authentic taste of Iranian cuisine, visitors can dine at local restaurants that serve traditional dishes, including kebabs, stews, and rice dishes.

**Cafes and tea houses:** Mahmudabad has several cozy cafes and tea houses where visitors can enjoy a cup of Persian tea or coffee. These spots are great for relaxing and socializing with friends.

## Best time to visit

The best time to visit Mahmudabad is during the spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November)



duce a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Visitors can sample local produce at the city's markets, including juicy pomegranates, crisp apples, and sweet grapes.

## Hotels and resorts

Mahmudabad offers a range of accommodation options to suit different budgets and preferences. Some popular choices include:

**Luxury resorts:** For those seeking a luxurious stay, several high-end resorts along the coast offer premium amenities, including private beaches, swimming pools, and spa services.

**Mid-range hotels:** Numerous mid-range hotels in Mahmudabad provide comfortable accommodations with modern amenities. These hotels are often located close to the beach and city center.

**Budget options:** Budget travelers can find affordable guesthouses and hostels in Mahmudabad. These options provide basic accommodations and are ideal for those looking to save on lodging

months. During these periods, the weather is mild and pleasant, making it ideal for outdoor activities and sightseeing. Summer (June to August) can be quite warm, but it is also a popular time for beach activities. Winter (December to February) is cooler and may see some rainfall, but it is still a good time to visit if you prefer a quieter atmosphere.

Mahmudabad, with its stunning beaches, lush forests, and vibrant cultural scene, is a destination that offers something for every traveler. Whether you are seeking adventure, relaxation, or a cultural experience, this coastal jewel in Mazandaran Province provides a perfect getaway. By exploring its natural landscapes, indulging in local cuisine, and immersing yourself in the rich cultural heritage, you can create unforgettable memories in Mahmudabad.

As you plan your visit, remember to travel responsibly and respect the environment and local customs. By doing so, you can help ensure that Mahmudabad remains a beautiful and welcoming destination for generations to come.





# BRICS: Shaping a multipolar world for global prosperity

By Shahid Hussain  
Founder, CEO of  
Green Proposition

## OPINION

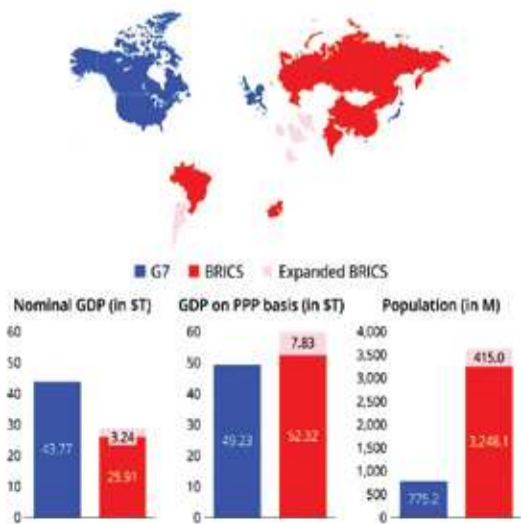
As BRICS embraces new members, discussions revolved around how this expansion could further enhance the association's influence on the global stage. The BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, convened in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, from June 10 to 11, served as a platform for participants to deliberate on various international issues and explore cooperation opportunities within the group. The agenda of the meeting, as indicated by the Russian Foreign Ministry, focused on key topics on the international agenda and practical collaboration among BRICS nations. Economic and geopolitical power is increasingly decentralized in a rapidly changing global landscape, and groups like BRICS cannot be overstated. With their combined influence spanning around 30 percent of the Earth's landmass, 45 percent of its population, and a remarkable 33 percent of global GDP, BRICS nations are emerging as critical players in shaping the future of international relations and global governance. As representatives convened for a pivotal meeting hosted by Russia, it's imperative to highlight the positive impact BRICS is poised to make on the world stage.



Delegates attend a meeting during the BRICS Summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, on August 24, 2023.  
● REUTERS

## Rise Of BRICS Bloc Continues Through Expansion

Comparison of the G7 and (expanded) BRICS country groups (as of August 2023)



This chart shows a comparison of the G7 and (expanded) BRICS country groups (as of August 2023).  
● STATISTA

Founded on principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, inclusiveness, consensus, and strengthened collaboration, BRICS stands out as a beacon of hope in a world of shifting power dynamics. Its expanding membership, which now includes Egypt, Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia, further underscores its distinctiveness as a platform open to diverse economic and political systems. The economic prowess of BRICS nations is not just a statistic but a result of their collective efforts. With a GDP surpassing the G7 countries, BRICS is a dominant player in the global economy. The growth of BRICS economies, as evidenced by data from the International Monetary Fund, is a testament to their resilience and potential to drive global growth. Initiatives like the New Development Bank (NDB), a tangible demonstration of BRICS's commitment to fostering sustainable development and infrastructure investment, further solidify its influence in global governance. One of the defining features of BRICS cooperation is its emphasis on South-South cooperation. By fostering closer ties among developing nations, BRICS unlocks new opportunities for shared growth and development. The upcoming NDB seminar in Egypt, the first of its kind outside the founding BRICS countries, underscores the group's commitment to extending the benefits of cooperation beyond its borders. Through ini-

tiatives like these, BRICS is paving the way for a more inclusive and interconnected world. When the world grapples with challenges ranging from climate change to geopolitical tensions, BRICS offers hope for a more inclusive and equitable world order. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's assertion that BRICS cooperation is open to all underscores the group's commitment to dialogue and collaboration. By championing multipolarity, BRICS nations are championing a new approach to create a more balanced distribution of power in international affairs. The agenda of the BRICS meeting was not just a list of topics but a reflection of the group's proactive approach to global issues. From conflict resolution to enhancing the role of developing countries in global governance, BRICS nations are at the forefront of finding pragmatic solutions to complex challenges. By leveraging their collective expertise and resources, BRICS members are not only shaping their destinies but also making a substantial contribution to the cause of global peace and prosperity. Amid the meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi convened to discuss the future trajectory of the group. Both ministers expressed optimism regarding the association's growth, noting the increasing number of countries seeking cooperation with BRICS and the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Simultaneously, preparations were underway in Kazan, Russia, for the BRICS Games, which were held from June 12 to 23. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko disclosed that an unprecedented 97 countries confirmed their participation up to that point, with over 4,000 foreign athletes expected to compete across 27 different sports. The BRICS Games aimed to attract 5,000 participants, with a significant portion hailing from nations outside the BRICS group. The comprehensive sports program, comprising 27 disciplines, underscored the event's inclusive nature. Notably, participation extended beyond BRICS nations, with over 50 countries, including Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Mexico, joining the games. With 380 sets of awards up for grabs, the BRICS Games promised to foster camaraderie and sportsmanship on a global scale. It's evident that the group's influence extends far beyond its member countries. With their combined economic might, commitment to multipolarity, and focus on addressing global challenges, BRICS nations are reshaping the contours of international relations. As the world navigates an uncertain future, BRICS offers a vision of cooperation and solidarity that transcends borders and fosters a more prosperous and harmonious world.

The article first appeared on CGTN.

With a GDP surpassing the G7 countries, BRICS is a dominant player in the global economy. Yet, one of the defining features of BRICS cooperation is its emphasis on South-South cooperation. By fostering closer ties among developing nations, BRICS unlocks new opportunities for shared growth and development.



## Resurgence of BRICS to take on US dollar hegemony

People walk by the venue of the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, on August 20, 2023.  
XINHUA



By Norris McDonald  
Economic Journalist

### PERSPECTIVE

Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, and Algeria are the newest members who will take a seat at the 16th BRICS Summit to be held in October in Russia. South Africa, Ethiopia, and Egypt are the other African countries that are already BRICS members.

Despite an abundance of wealth, Africa is trapped in poverty, debt, and underdevelopment. Africa's debt is estimated to be about \$1.2 trillion at the beginning of 2024. With such a huge debt burden, it is expected that over \$160 billion will have to be paid out to the International Monetary Fund for debt-service payments.

#### BRICS expansion

Although BRICS may not be a quick-fix solution, it obviously offers greater opportunities to change the historical poverty and debt burden trajectory that has undermined these black nations' economies.

Europe and America's wealth has long been based on the plunder of Africa. Meanwhile, the down-pressed black African nations and their people are kept in poverty and underdevelopment.

Over 90 countries will be attending the 16th BRICS Summit. Latin American and Caribbean nations Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, and Nicaragua are expected to also become BRICS members. This is clearly another major political development. Cuba has suffered over 60 years of American economic blockade. Russia and China have been key allies aiding Cuba. But, without a doubt, it was the Cuban people's political strength, resourcefulness, and determination that have helped them all these 60 years of America's harsh, illegal, and economic blockade.

Meanwhile, China is building 92 solar farms in Cuba that will provide 2,000 megawatts of electrical power and connect to the Cuban power grid. These solar farms are part of the Alliance for Energy of the Chinese Belt and Road project. Since 2013, China has embarked on major development projects in the Caribbean under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

BRICS is now a complement of China's BRI. It goes further than the traditional bilateral relations that nations have with

Africa is emerging as a powerhouse in the global confrontation between Russia and China versus America and its European partners. Several African countries are set to join the BRICS bloc.

BRICS membership by these African nations is clearly a recognition that an alternative solution must be found outside of the historical, exploitative, capitalist, and imperialist domain. This is definitely a positive step.

Russia and China. Cuba's membership in BRICS will therefore be a boon to further their economic development.

At the same time, Cuba has great expertise in medical and pharmacology technology, which they can share with other BRICS members. This will be mutually beneficial, in that Cuba can get new sources of investment from other BRICS members.

Meanwhile, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan are key countries that are also seeking BRICS membership. Quite surprisingly, Serbia has applied to join BRICS as well. With Türkiye and Serbia joining BRICS, this will certainly be a dagger in the Western nation's heart.

The BRICS-Plus 16 Summit will also feature a development dialogue with countries striving for greater economic independence.

#### US dollar hegemony

It is expected that BRICS may launch a new currency to compete with and break the American dollar hegemony. The use of national currencies is now a key feature of trade between BRICS members and other trading partners. The dumping of the US dollar in international trade is the latest development in a global trend.

China's yuan, Russia's rouble, and India's rupee are becoming globalised in trade settlements. This is because of the 'dump the dollar' push among many nations. The financial objective is to minimise and, over time, replace the American dollar's hegemony in global trade. Filip De Mott of Business Insider explains that with the "rising American dysfunction," a trend has emerged of many countries dumping the American dollar "to decrease the world's dependency" on its use.

BRICS has, therefore, emerged as a rising political economic powerhouse that may soon control well over two-thirds of world trade. It now offers new alternatives for nations that are seeking to break out of the Western neocolonial debt and poverty trap.

#### What about BRICS dropout, Argentina?

In a trend where many coun-

tries of the world are seeking to break out of the US dollar hegemony, Argentina's membership was approved but rejected by self-styled "anarcho-capitalist" President Javier Milei. Having rejected BRICS membership, Milei attempted to hustle China by using them to finance his extreme free-market policy. Milei turned his back on BRICS and cancelled several Chinese investment projects, thereby humiliating China.

In retaliation, China cut off the \$6.5 billion line of credit they had given to Argentina. This was definitely a miscalculation by Javier Milei.

Cheered on by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Milei has devalued the Argentina peso by over 50 percent since January 2024. China's assistance strategy — through the Belt and Road Initiative — and BRICS membership could perhaps have helped Argentina reduce its IMF financial burden.

Now, having looked back, poverty rates are soaring in Argentina. It is estimated that poverty rates have risen by over 50 percent since January.

The present inflation rate of over 300 percent will shock even the most rabid of capitalist supporters.

#### Prospects for change

Africa, Latin America, and Asia's prospects for change and economic development clearly lie in the shifting of political economic, and ideological loyalties from their traditional subservience to international capitalism. BRICS membership clearly is the only way out of the debt and dependency trap facing developing nations. This is because they will be able to expand the national and international markets through BRICS and find more consumers for the goods and services they produce.

At the same time, BRICS can open up low-interest loans, investment, and economic development assistance that do not require its member nations to prostrate and genuflect before an imperial master.

That is just "the bitta truth!"

The article first appeared on *The Gleaner*.

## Turkey's BRICS aspirations Balancing global alliances, economic opportunities



By Matanat Nasibova  
Columnist

### OPINION

*The Turkish government has expressed its desire to join BRICS. As reported by the South China Morning Post, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said during his visit to China. "Of course, we would like to become a member of BRICS. Let's see how things go this year," the minister told an event at the Center for China and Globalization held in Beijing.*

*It is not the first time Turkey's desire to become a BRICS member has been voiced. Back in 2018, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said so and even suggested renaming the association to BRICST. Turkish newspaper Hürriyet Daily News reported at the time that the Turkish president urged the leaders of BRICS (which included Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to let Turkey join the association. "I said if you take us into this platform, it will bear the name BRICST," Erdogan told reporters in Johannesburg on July 27, 2018, not failing to note the positive reaction of BRICS member countries to Ankara's proposal.*

Turkey was supported by China more than any other country at that time, which did not go unnoticed by the Turkish leader. "Especially China said that it is in favor of expansion. I saw that they are considering the participation of other countries on this platform. They are not against it," the Turkish president emphasized.

Last September, China's ambassador to Ankara openly stated that China would support Turkey's candidacy in BRICS if Ankara applied to join the organization.

Along with China, Ankara's BRICS initiative is also supported by Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, reiterating Moscow's positive stance, said Russia welcomes the Turkish authorities' interest in joining BRICS.

"We certainly all welcome the increased interest in BRICS from our neighbors, including such important partners as Turkey," Peskov said, noting that the Turkish initiative will be on the agenda of the upcoming BRICS summit. The BRICS summit at the level of heads of state will be held in October 2024 in Kazan, and a meeting of sherpas (trustees) and foreign ministers (in the BRICS+ format) was held in Nizhny Novgorod on June 10-11.

Most likely, Turkey has a real chance to join this organization, especially against the backdrop of Russia's and China's support. At the same time, it is appropriate to ask the question: why did one of the leading NATO countries decide to join the anti-Western BRICS? To begin with, the Turkish authorities call Turkey's accession to BRICS a good alternative to the EU, for which Turkey has been a candidate since 1999.

Last September, President Erdogan said that Turkey's decision to join the EU would be welcomed, but Turkey considers itself a self-sufficient country and does not need help or support from Europe. "We have always been a self-sufficient country. We have never needed and do not need any help or support from the EU," the Turkish president emphasized, putting it as a reproach to Brussels that Ankara has been standing at the door of the European community for so many years.

Earlier this year, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said that Ankara was not going to wait to be admitted to the European Union and would look for other "historical paths". In other words, Ankara has made it clear to Europe

that it does not intend to "wait by the sea for the weather" for the next decades, but will give preference to other international formats.

It seems that Turkey's current activity around joining the BRICS suggests that Ankara is ready to start the practical realization of the stated goal. This is one possible answer to the question of why Turkey decided to become part of BRICS. Ankara makes it clear to Europe that it is not Turkey, but the European Union that loses by closing its doors to it. This is first of all.

Secondly, there is no doubt that Turkey's entry into BRICS will further increase the already significant international authority of the Turkish state in regional politics and in the system of international relations in general.

Thirdly, full participation in BRICS is beneficial not only for Turkey but also for the organization itself, as it raises the status of this format and can significantly strengthen the organization at the global level. Fourthly, Turkey and all BRICS countries benefit economically from joining BRICS by expanding trade ties. Bloomberg estimates that BRICS countries made a comparable contribution to global economic growth in 2020. As a consequence, by 2028, the BRICS countries will account for 35 percent of the global economy.

This is also logical, as BRICS are large and capacious markets, where Turkish agricultural products, construction materials, and textiles will flow in large volumes if Turkey joins the association. According to economists, this promises Turkey increased investment and access to new markets.

However, along with the economic bonuses of joining BRICS, Turkey risks fac-

ing negative reactions from the United States and NATO, which could increase tensions between Ankara and its allies. However, given the flexible policy of the Turkish state, it is possible that Ankara will be able to use its position to strengthen its own influence, including within the North Atlantic Alliance.

Talking to Caliber.Az, Turkish political scientist and historian Mehmet Perinçek said that Turkey's accession to BRICS is necessary for the following reasons.

"Firstly, Turkey has serious political problems with the Western world. The US and NATO countries support the PKK terrorist organization, train, and arm terrorists. Therefore, BRICS is an opportunity for Turkey to balance the threats from the West. At the same time, the country's accession to BRICS should not be an instrument of trade with the West, but a strategic decision of the state.

Secondly, the hegemony of the dollar is a serious problem for the Turkish national economy, which enables Washington to conduct destructive financial operations and blackmail policies against Ankara. Therefore, only in cooperation with Eurasian countries can Turkey minimize the threats to the Turkish economy.

The real platform for this can be not only the BRICS but also the SCO, as well as the OTS, which are considered international structures of the new world order. And since the center of the world economy is shifting from the West to the East, where large amounts of energy resources are concentrated, by joining BRICS, Ankara will be able to ensure its economic security and cope with the crisis," Perinçek noted.

The article first appeared on *Caliber.Az*.



Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (front-L) shakes the hand of his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, during the BRICS Foreign Ministers Meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on June 11, 2024.  
AA



# Lautaro, Thuram late?

## Inter ready to use Taremi as new No. 9

Inter's first-choice strikers Lautaro Martinez and Marcus Thuram will take advantage of the 21 days granted by the club to all players involved in Copa America and the European Championship.

In the event of a double finals - Lautaro on July 15 in Miami to try for the third trophy in a row with Argentina, Frenchman Thuram on July 14 in Berlin to make up for the World Cup loss to his teammate - the two's vacation would come close to the official start of the season: Lautaro and Marcus would return to Appiano no earlier than August 5-6, about 10 days before the start of the Serie A season, on the 17th. Regardless of when they arrive, Mahdi Taremi will be there to welcome them: When Inter starts working on July 13, he will be there. And he will have a mission to complete: To use the entire preseason available to convince head coach Simone Inzaghi to focus on him immediately.

The timing with which they moved on Viale della Liberazione gave him the first assist, and Taremi col-



● FFIRI

lected it as he does in the penalty area. He started studying Italian to speed up the settling in process,

he passed through Milan on more than one occasion to look for a house (mission accomplished), above all he had

the opportunity to meet Inzaghi.

"The coach and I spoke," said the former Porto cen-

ter forward, adding: "Working with him will be exciting. Watching Inter on TV I had the impression of a

strong, compact team, with a good feeling between the group and the coach."

Inzaghi and his staff also got ahead with the work: Taremi was studied remotely and the video analyses confirmed that the insertion could materialize without too many difficulties. Because Mahdi can play as a pure center forward or as a second striker, he can provide depth or act as a reference in the area, he scores and makes others score. In other words, everything that Lautaro and Thuram pumped into Inter's engine during the Scudetto race.

And they will continue to pump up next season, of course. Because the starters in the attack will remain them, even when things start to get serious: Even if they start last (in the event of a double final in the national team), Lautaro and Thuram will have the legs, experience and tactical knowledge to help Inter get off to a good start.

Taremi, however, is the luxury option that Inzaghi couldn't afford last year: Neither Arnautovic nor

Sanchez offered enough guarantees to promote real rotations up front.

Taremi's hiring was born from this need: Simone expects to work with an extra starter in the department. And it is precisely for this reason that the Nerazzurri managers moved a year in advance: The operation turned out to be a deal from an economic point of view (the Iranian arrived without any transfer fees) and it could also become one from a technical point of view.

Provided that the former Porto player maintains his old habits: Always in double figures since he played in Europe, a goal every 185 minutes in the Champions League (better than Lautaro and Thuram, respectively a goal every 259 and 353 minutes).

"Other clubs in Italy, the Premier League and Spain approached me, but I immediately said yes to Inter," said Taremi. Inter now expects the Iranian to be just as quick on the pitch: Ready right away, goal right away.

*This article was originally published on La Gazzetta dello Sport.*

**REUTERS** - England's happiness at being on what is perceived to be the easier side of the knockout draw at Euro 2024 has been tested by Slovakia but what awaits them in the quarter-final today will be an even sterner examination. Opponents Switzerland have been beaten only once in their 18 matches since the World Cup, a dead rubber European Championship qualifier in Romania, and have lost outright in one of their last 14 games at the Euros dating back to 2008. Germany midfielder Toni Kroos was full of praise for the Swiss after the hosts needed a 92nd-minute equaliser in their final pool match to draw 1-1 while Italy's Bryan Cristante was candid after their 2-0 last-16 defeat. "They beat us physically and in terms of organisation," he said. For an England side that has found opening up opponents difficult in Germany, that presents another tactical challenge for manager Gareth Southgate. The Swiss have a settled back-

four but coach Murat Yakin is not afraid to make changes in the forward positions, and with several options across the front three, it makes it hard to plan for them. Switzerland's seven goals at Euro 2024 have come from different players, they are not reliant on an individual who can be contained, but spread the workload across the team, whether in attack or defence. They also work incredibly hard. Midfielder Rubin Vargas praised his side for how they suffocated Italy when out of possession. "We didn't give them time to breathe," he said. The Swiss are second bottom for number of tackles made (36) at the finals, but have conceded only three goals, which shows how they use their organisation and press to subdue opponents.

In fact, goalkeeper Yann Sommer has been forced to make only six saves in more than six hours of football, so well has he been protected by his defence.

No gloveman has been less busy at Euro 2024.

The Swiss are one of four teams at the tournament to have scored two goals from outside the box, along with Germany, Turkey and Romania. They have had more shots on target (18) than off target (15) at these finals, a claim only a handful of sides can make, and don't mind not having the ball with 48% possession spread across their games.

They do not use width much and are last of the 24 teams for crosses completed with five in four games, keeping their play compact in central positions. "When we put on our pressing, we won't let them (England) play. That's our job," Yakin told reporters. "We played well against Germany, we played well against Italy, so why shouldn't we beat England?"

➔ *Swiss players celebrate their last-16 victory over Italy in Euro 2024 in Berlin, Germany, on June 29, 2024.*  
● EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

## Swiss precision and press provide England with tactical challenge



➔ *Andy Murray reacts after defeat in the men's doubles first round in Wimbledon in London, Britain, on July 4, 2024.*  
● PAUL CHILDS/REUTERS

## Murray admits time is right to end tennis career

**THE GUARDIAN** - Andy Murray says the time has come to shut the door on his illustrious career after he and his brother, Jamie, were defeated in the first round of the men's doubles at his final Wimbledon.

"I'm ready to finish playing because I can't play to the level that I would want to any more," he said. "That's something that I guess is a bit out of my control. If I knew my body was going to be able to do it, I would play - there's nothing about the sport that I hate and I'm like, I don't want to do it any more for this reason. I like the travelling. I love the competition,

practising, trying to get better, all those things. Yeah, I know that it's time now. I'm ready for that."

On Thursday evening, Andy and Jamie Murray were defeated 7-6 (6), 6-4 on Centre Court by the Australians Rinky Hijikata and John Peers in what will be one of Andy's final matches of his career. Twelve days earlier, Andy had back surgery to remove a spinal cyst. Although the 37-year-old had been unable to recover in time to compete in the singles draw, Murray returned to play doubles.

After a 19-year career that has included three grand slam triumphs, Andy plans to retire from professional tennis at the end of

this summer. After this defeat, the All England Club held a presentation to commemorate his career. Numerous former champions and current players stood by the court to recognise Andy, including Novak Djokovic, Tim Henman, Iga Swiatek, John McEnroe and Martina Navratilova.

Andy will play for the final time at Wimbledon in the mixed doubles competition, in which he will partner Emma Raducanu. Andy, a two-time Olympic gold medallist, will then compete at the Paris Olympics, his fifth Olympic games, before retiring. Asked what he feels his legacy is, he said he is most proud of his enduring effort and discipline.

"I think the thing that I did a really good job of during my career was that, regardless of the highs and lows, whether it was winning tournaments, having difficult losses, an operation, a setback, that I was able to treat the next day like I always came into work with the same dedication, work ethic and passion, as I had the day before, regardless of the highs and lows that the sport kind of has thrown at me," said Murray. "I certainly didn't always get it right. Like on the match days, I was not perfect by any stretch, but I did always come into work and put in a good day. I gave my best effort. That's what I'm proud of."





# Reformist faces Conservative as Iran votes in presidential runoff



Masoud Pezeshkian

TASNIM



Saeed Jalili

ISNA

## National Desk

Iranians cast their votes on Friday in the second round of the country's presidential election to pick the successor for the late president Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a tragic helicopter crash on May 19. Opinion polls conducted before the runoff election predicted higher turnout than the first round during which 40% of 61 million eligible voters participated - the lowest turnout in any presidential election since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Friday's race was between Reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian and the Conservative Saeed Jalili, both of whom failed to secure an outright majority in the first round of the election on June 28.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei cast his ballot when polling stations opened nationwide in the morning.

"I heard that the enthusiasm and interest of the people is more than before, praise to God that it will be like this, and if it is like this, it will be gratifying," he said.

"At this stage, people should be more motivated to finish the job and have our president tomorrow," he said. "May God help the nation succeed and prosper the country and make all those who are struggling in this way subject to his grace and mercy."

In last week's first round, Pezeshkian, who was the only Reformist permitted to stand, won the largest number of votes, around 42 percent, while Jalili came second with 39 percent, according to figures from Iran's elections authority. Pezeshkian and Jalili have held two televised debates during which they discussed a range of issues from Iran's economic woes, international relations and internet restrictions.

The candidacy of Pezeshkian, a relatively unknown until recently, has revived cautious hopes for Iran's Reformist wing after years of dominance by the conservative camps. Pezeshkian has called for efforts to salvage the nuclear agreement and lift crippling economic sanctions. The 69-year-old heart surgeon has advocated for "constructive relations" with the world in order to "get Iran out of its isolation".

A member of parliament representing the northwestern city of Tabriz since 2008, he has earned the support of Iran's Reformists, with former presidents Mohammad Khatami and Hassan Rouhani backing his bid. Casting his ballot on Friday, Khatami urged Iranians to vote "for the future and good of the country."

While campaigning, the 58-year-old Jalili criticized moderates for having signed the 2015 deal which promised

Iran sanctions relief in return for curbs on its nuclear program. Jalili, the former nuclear negotiator, said the accord, which the United States withdrew from in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump, "did not benefit Iran at all."

Both Jalili and Pezeshkian voted in southern Tehran, home to many poor neighborhoods, in a bid to boost turnout. Though Pezeshkian came out on top in the first round of voting on June 28, Jalili has been trying to secure the votes of people who supported Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who came in third and later endorsed the former negotiator.

Mohsen Eslami, the election headquarters spokesperson, said on Thursday that there are 58,640 polling stations, the same as before. He also said that early results could be announced by Saturday morning.

## SCO capacities should be used to promote member states' welfare: *Iran*

### Mokhber proposes establishment of SCO joint bank

Iran's Interim President Mohammad Mokhber said that there are many capacities in the realm of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states that should be used for the benefit of the welfare of nations.

Mokhber made the remarks on Thursday in an address to the 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Astana, Kazakhstan.

He called on the SCO members to enhance their transit, commercial and banking relations and move towards ditching the US dollar in their economic transactions.

"There are many opportunities and capacities in the territory of the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the field of trade, production, energy, transportation, agriculture,

customs, telecommunications, as well as the development of technology in the field of artificial intelligence, for interaction, which should be used for the benefit of the welfare of nations and consolidation of sustainable peace and inclusive development in the Shanghai region and around the world," Mokhber said.

He also underlined that the activation of transit corridors plays a key role in facilitating trade and economic development.

All the SCO members, he added, can trade with other countries faster and cheaper than before through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the southern Iranian ports.

The interim president also offered the creation of a joint network of free zones, as well as preferential and free trade agreements within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. He emphasized that Iran supports the use of national currencies in multilateral transactions with the aim of reducing reliance on the US dollar or ditching it. The establishment of an SCO joint bank can improve the level of financial and economic cooperation among the organization's member states, Mokhber added.

The SCO is one of the world's largest regional organizations, accounting for around one-third of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), roughly 40 percent of the world's population, and nearly two-thirds of the entire Eurasian landmass.

#### Mokhber meets with Xi, Putin

The Iranian interim president also held separate talks with several heads of states participating in the conference. During his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Mokhber said relations between Iran and China are built on the principles of common interests and mutual respect. He underscored that Iranian and Chinese officials are determined to further expand mutual cooperation in economic, commercial and energy spheres.

Xi, for his part, said the relations between Beijing and Tehran were strategic, emphasizing that China's policy to enhance relations with the Islamic Republic is not influenced by external factors. The Iranian interim president also held a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, during which Mokhber said strategic relations between Iran and Russia have changed the world's power equations and challenged the unjust order based on unilateralism. He said Iran and Russia enjoy deep-rooted, strategic and unchangeable relations which influence the ongoing developments in the world.

## Tories expelled from Downing Street after historic defeat

Labour leader Starmer becomes UK prime minister



Britain's Labour Party leader Keir Starmer delivers a speech during a victory rally at the Tate Modern in London early on July 5, 2024.

JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP

Keir Starmer has become the UK's first Labour prime minister since 2010 after his party's landslide general election victory.

Labour is returning to power with a huge parliamentary majority of 174, following a collapse in support for the Conservatives, BBC reported.

Keir has been formally appointed by the King at Buckingham Palace, replacing Tory leader Rishi Sunak.

"We did it!" Starmer said in his victory speech. "Change begins now."

Outgoing Prime Minister Sunak concedes defeat, says he will step down as leader of the Conservative Party.

In a short farewell speech, Sunak apologized to unsuccessful Tory candidates and told the public: "I have heard your anger, your disappointment."

Labour's victory has come largely as a result of a dramatic 20 point drop in Tory support, with the party down 250 seats to 121, a historic low.

It marks a dramatic turnaround in fortunes for Keir's party, which suffered its worst result in terms of seats - 202 - at the last election in 2019 under Keir's predecessor Jeremy Corbyn.

Despite only increasing its share of the national vote by around 2%, the party has won 412 seats with just two seats yet to declare, delivering a result just short of the historic 179 majority won by Tony Blair in 1997.

Its vote share increase came entirely as a result of a 17-point increase in support in Scotland, where it regained its status as the largest party as the SNP slumped from 48 to just nine seats.

On a good night for smaller parties, the Liberal Democrats won 71 seats, the party's best result in a century, whilst Nigel Farage will become one of four MPs for Reform UK, following a breakthrough night for the fledgling party. Keir fought a cautious campaign in which Labour made very few new policy pledges, but managed to largely retain the large polling lead over the Tories it began with when outgoing Tory PM Rishi Sunak called the election in May.

This polling lead had remained steady since the disastrous premiership of Liz Truss, who lost her previously safe seat of South West Norfolk.

Despite its resounding overall victory, Labour lost a number of former strongholds to independent candidates campaigning on pro-Gaza platforms.

In one of the biggest shocks of the night, shadow minister Jonathan Ashworth lost his Leicester South seat, which had a majority of more than 22,000.

Shadow culture secretary Thangam Debbonaire lost in Bristol Central to the Greens, who celebrated their most successful election night ever after winning four seats, up from the one they held in the last Parliament.

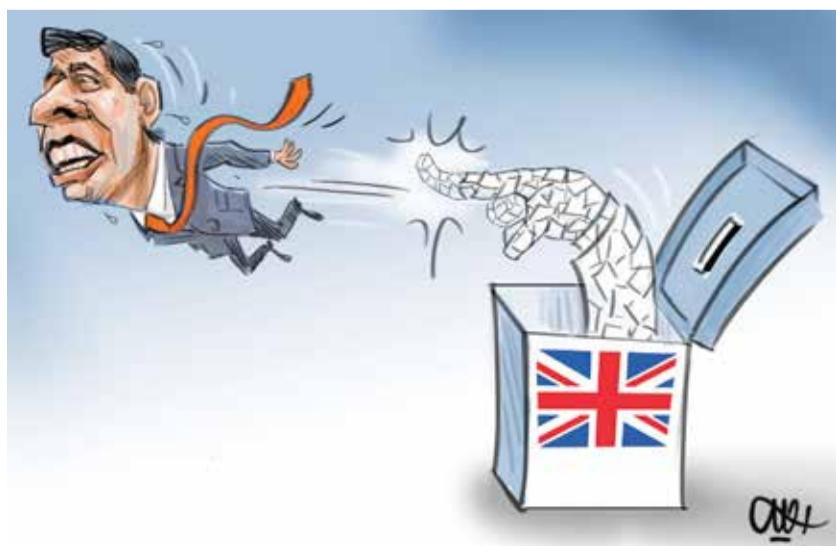
And shadow health secretary Wes Streeting - one of Labour's most high-profile figures during the campaign - saw his majority in Ilford North slashed from more than 9,000 to just 528.

Labour fought its campaign on a manifesto centered around boosting the UK's sluggish rate of economic growth in recent years.

It pledged to do this largely through changes to the planning system, and by making the country more attractive to inward investment. But against a difficult economic backdrop, party figures have admitted they face a challenge amid challenges to the public finances.

The party has also promised to overhaul UK employment law, renationalize nearly all passenger rail and set up a state-owned energy investment and generation company, along with boosting green investment.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist





# Iran, Indonesia strengthen tourism ties



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Indonesia have taken steps to strengthen their tourism ties, launching Tourism Roadshow Southeast Asia 2024 in Indonesian capital of Jakarta highlighting the potential for collaboration in this sector. The Iranian Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, and Handicrafts, Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, led the delegation, which included public and private sector representatives. Shalbafian and Iran's ambassa-

dor to Indonesia, Mohammad Boroujerdi, attended a meeting of the Association of Indonesian Tour and Travel Agencies (ASITA) at the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Shalbafian also held talks with the Indonesian Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, to discuss mutual interests. In a separate meeting, the Iranian delegation met with Martini M. Paham, the Indonesian Deputy Minister for Human Resources and Institutions at the same ministry.

The Iranian deputy minister highlighted the importance of the Iran-Indonesia tourism conference in boosting cooperation between the two countries. He also emphasized the potential for collaboration in the areas of health, nature, historical, and religious tourism. Minister Uno echoed the sentiment, noting the existing opportunities for cooperation and suggesting that museum collaborations could further strengthen tourism ties between the two countries.



*Iranian Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, speaks at Tourism Roadshow Southeast Asia 2024 held at Indonesian capital of Jakarta on July 4, 2024.*

● CHTN

As a result of the productive discussions, a memorandum of understanding on tourism cooperation was signed between the trade unions of both countries. This was followed by individual negotiations among tourism institution managers, marking a first for Indonesia. The meetings and agreements signal a promising future for tourism collaboration between Indonesia and Iran, with potential benefits for both countries' economies and cultural exchanges.

# Iran ready to help Turkey establish genetic bank



## Social Desk

Iran is prepared to assist Turkey in establishing a genetic data bank, according to the head of Iran's Legal Medicine Organization. Abbas Masjedi, during a meeting with Hizir Asliyukse, head of Turkey's Legal Medicine, highlighted Iran's successful experience with its own genetic data bank. "Iran has valuable expertise in genetic data banks and is ready to collaborate with Turkey," Masjedi stated, ISNA wrote. The Iranian genetic bank, which is currently operational, stores the genetic profiles of repeat offenders and is working on including profiles of high-risk professionals such

as journalists, firefighters, and pilots. Masjedi noted that Iran's genetic bank efforts accelerated after developing domestic genetic kits and software. He emphasized that the organization operates independently under the judiciary, focusing on both scientific and service-oriented tasks. He also mentioned Iran's advances in forensic science, particularly in uncovering fraudulent accidents, which have significantly aided insurance companies. The Turkish official expressed enthusiasm about potential collaborations, proposing that Iran's forensic research achievements be showcased at an upcoming international congress in Turkey.

# Iranians flock to polls for presidential election



Qom

● MIZAN



Abadan

● MIZAN



Mashhad

● TASNIM



Bojnourd

● MIZAN



Tehran

● ISNA



Yazd

● TASNIM