

Araghchi: Iran-China partnership 'strong foundation' for enhancing ties

International Desk

Iran's foreign minister said Tehran considers a 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership between Iran and China as a "strong foundation" for enhancing bilateral relations.

Abbas Araghchi made the remarks in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in the capital Beijing on Saturday.

Referring to the long-standing and robust relationship between Iran and China as two ancient civilizations in Asia, Araghchi said the Islamic Republic will do its utmost to take advantage of high capacities of the collaboration with China.

Tehran and Beijing signed the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement in 2021 to reinforce their long-standing economic and political alliance. China is Iran's largest trade partner. Both states are subject to different levels of illegal sanctions imposed by the United States.

During their meeting on Saturday, both sides reviewed the current status of their relations in areas such as economy, trade, investment, energy, and transportation, discussing ways to enhance bilateral relations and ex-

pand cooperation within the framework of the comprehensive cooperation plan.

The Chinese foreign minister, for his part, said that boost in cooperation between China and Iran not only benefits the peoples of both countries, but will also contribute to promoting regional and global peace, stability, and development, according to a statement released by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Saturday.

Historic relations

China and Iran established a comprehensive strategic partnership and are important members of the Global South. The relationship between the two countries has a long history, rooted in the strong and deep traditional friendship between their peoples, mutual trust and support since the establishment of diplomatic relations more than half a century ago, the Chinese top diplomat said.

Wang emphasized that both countries should closely coordinate within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), jointly promote the Shanghai Spirit, facilitate more cooperative projects, and build closer SCO community with a shared future.

He added that Iran and China should also work together to enhance BRICS cooperation, cultivate new areas of cooperation, further strengthen BRICS, and better safeguard the common interests of the Global South, Wang said. Wang also emphasized that, in the face of today's world of instability and uncertainty, "We must strengthen unity and cooperation, oppose hegemonic and bullying actions, and jointly advocate and practice true multilateralism, working to build a more just and reasonable global governance system."

Iran nuclear issue

The two top diplomats also exchanged their views on the Iranian nuclear issue.

Wang emphasized that China has always advocated for addressing the Iranian nuclear issue through political dialogue and upholding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. China opposes the frequent use of sanctions and pressure and firmly supports Iran in safeguarding its legitimate rights and interests.

The Iranian foreign minister told reporters that 2025 will be an important year for Iran's nuclear issue. A nuclear agreement signed between



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (3rd L) and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi (3rd R) meet in Beijing on December 28, 2024.
Iran's Foreign Ministry

Iran and world powers in 2015, from which the US unilaterally withdrew in 2018, expires on October 25, 2025. The US withdrawal put the agreement in limbo.

Middle East developments

The two sides also had an in-depth exchange of views on the current situation in the Middle East. The top diplomats of China and Iran agreed that West Asia is "not a battleground for the big powers" and should not be an arena of geopolitical competition

between countries outside the region. They agreed that "the international community should respect the sovereignty, security, stability, unity and territorial integrity of Middle East countries," according to a readout from Beijing's Foreign Ministry.

The two major trading partners reiterated calls for a cease-fire in Gaza, the proper implementation of the cease-fire in Lebanon, and the "integrated promotion of counter-terrorism, reconciliation and humanitarian processes in Syria," according to the readout.

Regional countries pillory Israel's burning of Gaza hospital

International Desk

Israel's burning of the only operating hospital in the northern Gaza Strip and forcing patients and medical staff to evacuate the health facility has drawn condemnations from regional countries, which called the move a serious crime and a flagrant violation of international law.

The hospital in northern Gaza was forcibly evacuated by the Israeli military on Friday after dozens of people were reportedly killed in Israeli strikes targeting the area.

Medical staff, including the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital, have also been detained. Gaza health officials said on Saturday.

Hussam Abu Safiya, the hospital director, was among the first to report that about 50 people had been killed in Israeli air strikes targeting the vicinity of the hospital on Friday.

The Israeli military claimed it was carrying out an operation in the area, alleging the hospital was a Hamas stronghold.

On Friday, patients at the hospital were forcibly moved to the nearby

Indonesian Hospital which doctors warn is damaged and unsuitable due to a lack of power generators and water.

Seriously ill patients were moved to the nearby Indonesian Hospital, itself evacuated earlier in the week, which medics have described as non-functional.

"You can't call it a hospital, it's more of a shelter. It's not equipped for patients," Gaza's deputy minister of health, Abu-Al Rish, said on Friday. Sabbah, from Kamal Adwan Hospital, said, "It's dangerous because patients in the ICU department are in a coma and in need of ventilation machines and moving them will put them in danger."

The World Health Organization said the raid "has put this last major health facility in north Gaza out of service."

"Initial reports indicate that some key departments were severely burnt and destroyed during the raid," it posted on X on Friday.

Kamal Adwan hospital in Beit Lahia has been under a tightening Israeli blockade imposed on parts of north-



ern Gaza since October, when the military said it had launched an offensive to stop Hamas from regrouping there. The UN has said the area is under a "near-total siege" as the Israeli military heavily restricts access of aid deliveries to an area where an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 people remain. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly condemned the Israel's attack on the hospital, saying that it is part of Israel's ongoing war crimes and genocide against the Palestinian people.

Many regional countries including Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar as well as the Palestinian presidency strongly condemned the Israel's attack on the hospital.

IRGC chief: Yemenis will ultimately emerge victorious

The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) praised the Yemeni nation for courageously and valorously defending the Palestinian nation amid the bloody Israeli onslaught in Gaza, stating that the people will ultimately emerge triumphant. Major General Hossein Salami made the remarks in an interview with Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television channel on Saturday, as reported by Press TV.

"The Yemenis, as they have resisted with dignity and honor up until today, will continue their resistance by the grace of God and will ultimately emerge victorious."

He added, "The Resistance Front has not weakened, and everyone is witnessing how Yemenis are competently defending Palestine and staging marches every Friday in support of Gaza."

The Yemeni Armed Forces announced on Friday that they launched a "hypersonic ballistic missile" targeting Israel's Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, asserting it had hit its target.

Military spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Saree said in a televised statement that the strike caused casualties



and disrupted air traffic at the airport. "The missile succeeded in reaching its target despite the enemy's secrecy. The operation resulted in casualties and the suspension of air traffic at the airport," Saree noted.

Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement has been also targeting ships linked to Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom to force an end to the Tel Aviv regime's genocidal war on Gaza.

The Yemeni military forces have said they will not stop their operations until Israel's ground and aerial offensives in Gaza end.

So far, Israel has killed at least 45,3436 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured another 108,038 individuals in Gaza.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Past approaches unable ...

First, discussions for cooperation should be started. For example, these countries should initiate periodic dialogues in their capitals to identify pathways to mutual understanding. Approaches must also change; you cannot expect others to come to the table with past approaches and tell them to think like Iran, especially when prior methods have not yielded results. Iran should not think like them either, but the expectation that they think like Iran is unrealistic.

Regional countries need to define a set of common interests and adjust their approaches to steer toward comprehensive cooperation. Dialogue is the first step; if an agreement is reached, they can then advance toward economic and cultural cooperation. These partnerships are much more attractive and

sustainable. When countries' interests are intertwined, they are less likely to create crises for each other, as doing so would directly harm their own partners. Once economic and cultural cooperation is established, the focus can shift to political and security collaborations, which, in my view, has often been the reverse of what should happen. Unfortunately, discussions often begin with security cooperation, which is a mistake; security collaboration is a high-level partnership. However, this cooperation must be genuine and not merely contractual, as a simple security agreement alone will not resolve issues. Building such cooperation is not easy, but it can start with regional dialogue before progressing to security and political collaboration.

If we are to speak realistically, there are

serious obstacles to such cooperation, with the United States being one of the most crucial. Iran's allied countries maintain extensive relations with the US, and these collaborations must be structured in a way that does not pose a threat to American interests. If Washington feels threatened or perceives that its interests are at risk, it will do its utmost to prevent such cooperation from materializing. Given its hegemony in the region, the US is a major obstacle. Therefore, cooperation must be transparent, precise, and agreeable to all parties, taking US interests into account, ensuring they are not jeopardized. In rhetoric, Iran can claim to have no business with the US and to pursue its own agenda, but in practice, cooperation must be shaped so that Iran does not overtly position itself against American interests.