

# Iran, Russia to Unite for 25-Year Treaty, Shaping New Geopolitical Landscape

## PERSPECTIVE

### International Desk

Iran and Russia are set to forge a 25-year "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty," beginning an unprecedented era of collaboration. This agreement, which is expected to redefine the geopolitical contours of the Middle East and Eastern Europe, marks a significant shift in the balance of international diplomacy. As the two nations navigate through a web of sanctions imposed by Western powers, their united front promises not only to bolster bilateral ties across defense, energy, and economic sectors but also to challenge the status quo on the world stage.

The signing of a "comprehensive" strategic treaty with Russia, one of Iran's key allies on the international stage, highlights Moscow's distinct role within the balanced diplomatic framework of the Iranian government. From this viewpoint, the agreement requires a detailed and comprehensive analysis of all its clauses.

As the date for signing the 25-year agreement approaches, an analysis of this deal reveals that getting dragged into peripheral issues and external pressures from third parties could overshadow its benefits for both sides. Therefore, both countries must exercise utmost vigilance in establishing the necessary implementation frameworks and ensuring its preservation.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin are set to sign the "Com-

prehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty" in Moscow on January 17.

These neighboring countries have a long road ahead in terms of cooperation across three critical areas: Bilateral relations, regional interactions, and international engagement. Energy, modern technologies, the economy, and military and defense industries are the primary focus areas of the bilateral relationship. Given their vast natural gas resources and the necessity to utilize nuclear technologies to meet their needs, both countries can redefine a new pole of power together.

Iran has achieved notable advancements in various modern technologies over four decades of technological sanctions. Russia's collaboration in enhancing or utilizing these technologies could open up a unique horizon for the relationship between the two countries.

Organizing the interactions between the two countries requires a comprehensive agreement, the necessity of which has been recognized by the governments in Moscow and Tehran since 2001. Over the past two decades, various documents with different clauses have been drafted and completed to address this necessity. It appears that the agreement set to be signed on January 17 is the most comprehensive version, encompassing broader political, economic, and cultural dimensions. This agreement has been characterized by Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, as an "unprecedented upswing" in the bilateral ties.

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## ICT minister outlines plan for 10% digital economy share in GDP

Minister of Information and Communications Technology Sattar Hashemi announced plans to expand the digital economy to achieve a 10% share of Iran's gross domestic product (GDP).

Speaking on Friday, Hashemi highlighted ongoing efforts to support startups and new technology-based firms (NTBFs) while focusing on digital economy initiatives tailored to the country's needs.

### Addressing energy, communication challenges

Hashemi noted that energy shortages have caused disruptions in communication networks and payment infrastructures, negatively impacting businesses and daily lives.

"To address this, the Ministry of ICT has finalized projects aimed at smart energy consumption, which have been submitted to the president," he said.

### Pursuing tech diplomacy, global engagement

The minister emphasized the importance of technological diplomacy, particularly in regions such as West Asia, Latin America and East Africa.

He stated that Iran's technological advancements now allow it to have international participation and offer services on a global scale.

"This progress boosts motivation among young talents, generates forex revenues, prevents brain drain, and encourages elites to remain in the country and contribute to its development," Hashemi said.

### Satellite connectivity for remote areas

Hashemi revealed plans to establish telecommunications satellites in geostationary orbit at 35,000 kilometers above Earth.

"This initiative will facilitate connectivity in remote and hard-to-reach areas and ensure communication access for villages where terrestrial infrastructure is not feasible," he explained.

The minister projected that these efforts would be realized by the end of the current administration (August 2028).

### Advancing e-government services

Despite progress in developing e-government and smart governance, Hashemi acknowledged that such advancements have yet to significantly integrate into people's daily lives.

"Our goal in the current administration is to leverage the country's smart infrastructure to deliver services to the public with minimal effort or physical presence in offices," Hashemi emphasized.

# Iran seeking greater cooperation with China in renewables

The head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) announced plans to deepen the country's collaboration with China to expand renewable energy projects, emphasizing the critical role of advanced technologies in achieving such goals.

Speaking at the 14th International Iran Renewable Energy and Energy Saving Expo, Mohsen Tarzatab told ISNA that Iran has initiated cooperation with China — a global leader in solar and wind energy technologies.

"China holds cutting-edge expertise in renewable energy, and by increasing cooperation with Chinese manufacturers and private companies, we can benefit from their knowledge and technology," the official said.

### Int'l tenders on renewable energy projects

Tarzatab also highlighted ongoing preparations for international tenders to attract foreign investment in Iran's renewable energy sector, which have already drawn interest from several countries.

"Under a law on electricity industry facilitation, investors in renewable energy can export 10% of their generated power, creating additional incentives," Tarzatab noted, adding that the current administration has planned 5,000 megawatts of wind power generation, with projects already underway in wind-rich regions such as Khaf

and Sistan and Baluchestan.

"We plan to launch 2,500 megawatts of wind farms in these areas soon, offering incentives to investors, including the ability to export 10% of their installed capacity through existing transmission lines," he said.

Tarzatab also added that the \$5-billion credit by the National Development Fund for the development of renewable energy is being paid.

### Clean energy capacity to quadruple

Iran's current renewable energy capacity stands at 1,400 megawatts which is expected to rise to 1,800 megawatts by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20). Tarzatab projected further increases to 3,500 megawatts by next summer and 4,800 megawatts by March 2026.

He added that construction permits for nearly 17,000 megawatts of renewable projects have been issued.

### Policies on private sector collaboration

Tarzatab emphasized the need for public-private partnerships and a regulatory framework to ensure sustainable growth in renewable energy.

"With support from domestic and foreign investors, along with close cooperation with the private sector, we aim to enhance renewable capacity and improve energy efficiency," he said.

The official also pointed to man-



IRNA

datory energy standards for domestic appliances and industrial processes as part of broader energy management reforms.

The launch of the Energy Saving Certificate Exchange Market in the Iran Energy Exchange is expected to accelerate these efforts, potentially reducing electricity demand by 10,000 megawatts in the long term.

### Call for cross-sectoral support

Achieving the ministry's target of 30,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity over the next four years will require

coordinated support from Parliament, the government, and financial institutions, Tarzatab said.

He called on entities such as the Central Bank of Iran, the National Development Fund, and ministries to assist in overcoming challenges.

"Direct public funding alone cannot resolve the energy shortages," Tarzatab said, advocating for domestic and foreign investment.

"If we fail to act, the lack of electricity access in the coming years could severely harm GDP, industries, and public welfare."

### Green power output up 23%

Meanwhile, Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani announced a 23% increase in renewable electricity production of Iran since the start of the current administration.

In a post on the social media platform X, she wrote, "The installed renewable energy capacity in Iran, which was 1,231 megawatts at the start of the administration (August 2024), rose by 289 megawatts to 1,520 megawatts by the end of Azar (the ninth month of Iranian calendar year)—indicative of a 23% increase in less than five months."

## Paknejad: Oil Ministry prioritizes safe, transparent environment for investors



SHANA

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad announced his ministry's readiness to collaborate with the private sector and chambers of commerce to create a "safe and transparent environment" with the aim of achieving the country's overarching economic goals.

"Creating a safe and transparent environment for investors is a top priority for the Oil Ministry," Paknejad said, according to Shana.

On Friday, during a meeting with members of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and private sector representatives, Paknejad presented a report on the country's energy production and consumption.

He emphasized the need for constructive engagement with the private sector and significant investment in the oil and petrochemical industries and stated that the private sector could play a key role in helping reduce the country's energy shortages.

Highlighting Iran's vast oil and gas potential, Paknejad noted, "As one of the world's largest energy producers, Iran enjoys substantial opportunities for international cooperation. Developing this industry requires sustainable investment and strengthened economic relations with other countries, which

can lead to economic growth and job creation."

He urged ICCIMA members to take a more active role in encouraging domestic and foreign investors to engage in production and refining sectors.

"Collaboration with the private sector in the oil industry can serve as a strategic opportunity for sustainable national development," the minister said.

Paknejad also reaffirmed the ministry's comprehensive support for private sector and Chamber of Commerce partnerships to achieve economic objectives.

### Chamber of Commerce calls for supportive policies

During the meeting, ICCIMA members stressed the importance of structural reforms and removing barriers to facilitate cooperation.

They called for supportive policies to strengthen the capacity and effective presence of the private sector in oil-related activities.

Key topics discussed included energy management, leveraging private sector capabilities in bunkering, easing private participation in oil and gas field development, and establishing financial engineering frameworks within the Oil Ministry.

Paknejad issued directives to implement some of the private sector's proposals promptly and emphasized the continuation of such meetings.

The session aimed to foster synergy between the government and private sector for the development of the oil industry as initial agreements were made to pursue joint projects.

## Pipeline supplying Bandar Abbas refinery officially inaugurated



SHANA

The pipeline supplying crude oil to Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery, an offshoot of the Goreh-Jask crude oil pipeline with a daily capacity of 300,000 barrels, was officially inaugurated on Thursday. The project aims to enhance production stability and develop the country's strategic infrastructure, Shana reported.

The inauguration ceremony attended by Mohammad Sadeq-Azimir, CEO of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC); Mohammad Meshkinfam, CEO of the National Iranian Oil Engineering and Construction Company; Ahmad

Hashemi, CEO of Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery; Mousa Ahmadi, head of the parliamentary Energy Committee; and Mohammad Ashouri Taziani, governor general of Hormuzgan Province. Completion and operation of the 30-inch pipeline, spanning 37 kilometers and branching from the Goreh-Jask line, now provide the Bandar Abbas refinery with a stable crude oil supply of 300,000 barrels per day.

The cost savings achieved by reducing crude transportation expenses are estimated at \$80 million annually. With an investment of approximately €32 mil-

lion, the project was funded by the National Iranian Oil Company as the National Iranian Oil Engineering and Construction Company oversaw execution, while Maroun Mechanic served as the main contractor.

The first crude oil transfer to the refinery's storage tanks occurred on December 25, 2024.

In addition to ensuring a stable crude supply, the pipeline addresses issues related to maritime transportation and adverse weather conditions. Crude oil will now be delivered via an onshore pipeline, reducing costs and improving supply reliability.

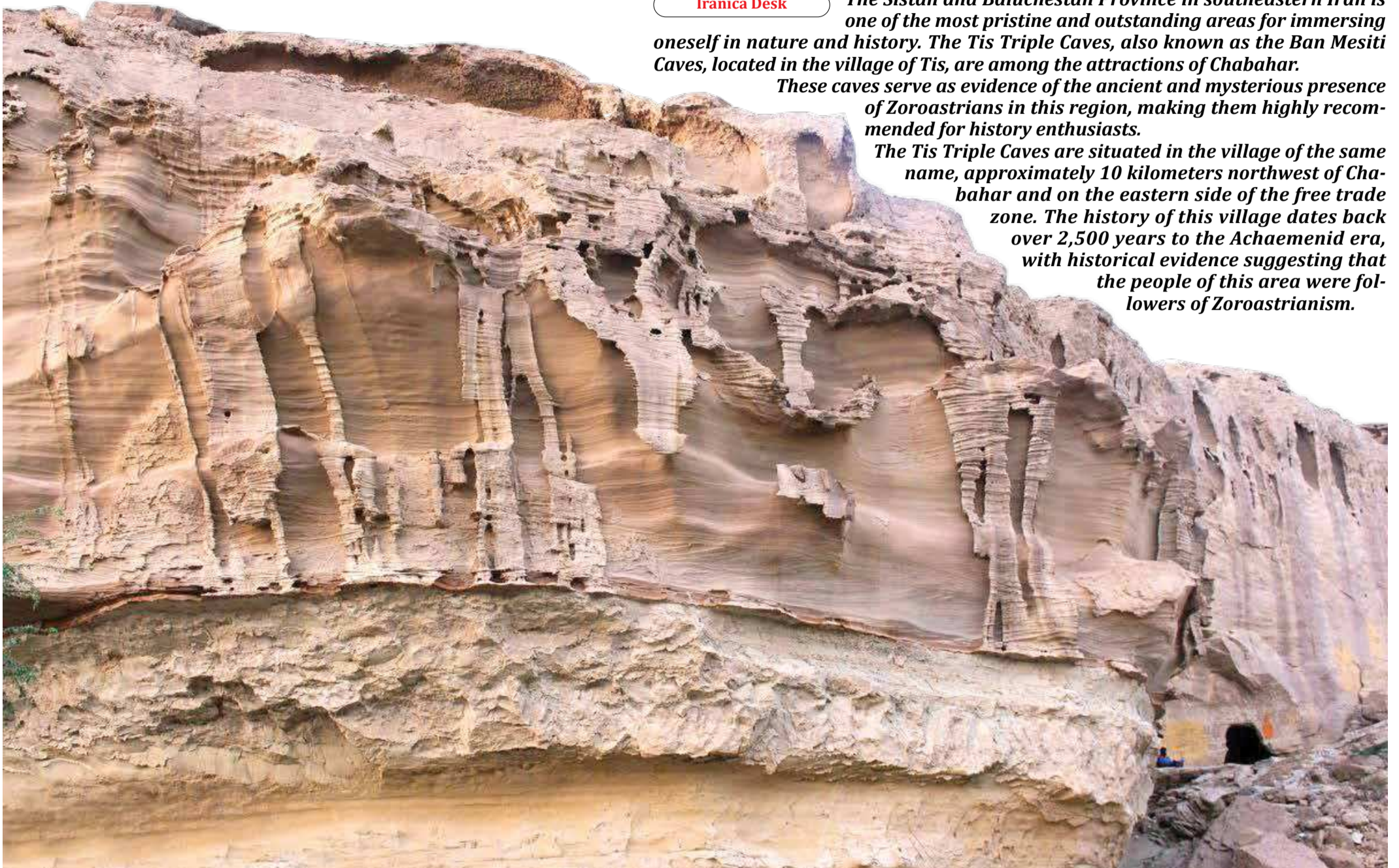
# Unearthing the past at Tis Triple Caves

Iranica Desk

*The Sistan and Baluchestan Province in southeastern Iran is one of the most pristine and outstanding areas for immersing oneself in nature and history. The Tis Triple Caves, also known as the Ban Mesiti Caves, located in the village of Tis, are among the attractions of Chabahar.*

*These caves serve as evidence of the ancient and mysterious presence of Zoroastrians in this region, making them highly recommended for history enthusiasts.*

*The Tis Triple Caves are situated in the village of the same name, approximately 10 kilometers northwest of Chabahar and on the eastern side of the free trade zone. The history of this village dates back over 2,500 years to the Achaemenid era, with historical evidence suggesting that the people of this area were followers of Zoroastrianism.*



● hameghlim.com

Historically, this village was known as Tis Port and was considered one of the important commercial ports of the Sea of Oman. The ruins of this ancient port can still be seen around the village, and the remaining graves on the heights of Tis indicate the settlement of sedentary and pastoral tribes in the caves of this region.

Despite the efforts of experts and archaeologists over the years, caves remain some of the most mysterious places that captivate the human mind. Generally, caves have historically been used as stopping places for livestock during nomadic migrations or as shelters for settled tribes. Limestone caves undergo fracturing and cracking in their internal crust due to erosion and the action of internal forces, and geologists determine their age by counting these lines. The Tis Triple Caves are located at the foothills of Mount Shahbaz, about 10 kilometers northwest of the port city of Chabahar. Due to their size and branching structure, these caves continue to be a source of stories and legends for the local people.

Some locals believe that these caves were the home and place of worship for a pure, righteous, and respected woman named Lady Masiti, claiming that her tomb is located in one of the caves; however, there is no evidence on the grave to support this story. The Tis Caves are situated about 25 meters above the road on the northern side of the village of Tis, at the foothills of the mountain. These caves are

quite interesting in terms of their structure and use. The central and eastern caves are accessible for visiting, while the western cave is blocked due to a rockfall and is not accessible. The caves include two artificial or manmade caves and one natural cave.

Existing evidence suggests that the Tis Triple Caves, or the shrine of Lady Masiti, were places of worship or sacrifice, with the entire front section of all three caves featuring platforms for performing religious or ritualistic practices. It appears that the first cave was used for burial, while the western cave served for pilgrimage and worship.

The first cave of the Tis Triple Caves is natural and semi-circular in shape; however, it has been expanded through the carving of the mountain's wall, both inside and at its entrance. Within this cave, there is a tomb with white, plastered walls structured in two horizontal levels stacked upon each other. This tomb lacks inscriptions, tablets, or any writing and is located one meter below the cave's surface.

On the tomb, there is a cubic structure made of stone and plaster, which forms the foundation of a small dome. The entrance of the tomb is parallel to the cave's entrance and faces the Tis valley. One notable feature is the lines and symbols seen on the walls of three sides of the dome, written in red and purple ink in Gujarati and Hindi scripts. The end of this cave is closed off.

The second cave of the Tis Triple Caves is artificial and man-

made. It is located seven steps away from the first cave, and the signs of carving and chiseling on the walls of the cave are easily recognizable. The entrance to the second cave is 80 centimeters wide, and its ceiling is low; for this reason, one must bend down to enter, and it is impossible to stand upright inside the cave.

The end of the second cave has gradually become closed over time; however, archaeologists believe that this cave had access to sea wells. According to evidence, it is said that the residents of the area would throw their dead bodies from the well and the outgoing path of this cave into the underground waters, and these wells were considered burial sites in ancient times. They did not bury their dead in the ground but instead cast them into the underground waters to serve as food for sea creatures. It is worth mentioning that the underground waters in Tis village flow toward the sea.

The ancient residents of the village of Tis believed that they should throw their dead into the underground waters so that they would appear in another part of the ocean and become food for marine life. This practice was once considered very sacred and was essentially a way to seek forgiveness for the deceased and to show gratitude to the sea for providing sustenance to the residents of the area.

The third cave of the Tis Triple Caves is located on the left side, 50 meters from the main cave. This cave is manmade and features an entrance with

an arch length of 20 meters, a cavity, and a large chamber. It is believed that the third cave is connected to a place deep within the mountain. On the walls of this cave, sentences are written in red and purple ink in Gujarati script. Chabahar literally means "land of eternal spring" and has a mild, humid climate. Generally, the best time to visit the south of the country is from the second half of the year until early spring. Night visits to the Tis Caves are possible, which would be an interesting experience; however, a guide is required for this.

Accessing the Tis Triple Caves is not very difficult, and no special equipment is needed, as the path has been improved for easy access for visitors. Considering that these caves are located at the foothills of Mount Shahbaz, it is advisable to wear proper walking shoes. Bringing a camera, sunglasses, sunscreen, and a sun hat is also recommended.

The local souvenirs of Tis Village include wickerwork, embroidery, and taxidermied aquatic animals. Purchasing souvenirs from the locals can greatly contribute to the area's economy. Enjoying delicious dishes such as fish stew, pakora, and shrimp rice in the village of Tis will be a delightful experience.

Given that Sistan and Baluchestan Province has pristine and unparalleled nature, protecting it is an important aspect of travel. Respecting the culture and beliefs of the local residents is a key factor in any visit.



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## Experts weigh in on launch of TRT Farsi

# Making entertainment or political programs?

**INTERVIEW** The launch of the TRT Farsi (TRT Farsi) television channel has raised many questions regarding the hidden motivations of this event and what goes on behind the scenes. Some say that such a media move by the northwestern neighbor of Iran is not particularly strange; however, from another perspective, it should be viewed with skepticism and caution.

In today's world, where media outlets are seen as a government's arms for furthering its soft power, it is not unusual for a country to launch a new outlet or channel in another language. On December 17, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) launched the Farsi-language TRT Farsi channel. According to the directors of this new media outlet, TRT Farsi has been launched to provide accurate, comprehensive, and unbiased content for over 130 million Farsi speakers worldwide. Prior to this, the Turkish state television network TRT and the Turkish state news agency Anadolu had Farsi-language programs.

TRT operates channels in various languages, including TRT World (in English), TRT Arabi, and TRT Kurdî. According to TRT's website, TRT Farsi is the 12th foreign language platform of this network and its ninth digital news channel. According to claims of TRT's directors, the network has managed to achieve 11 billion views and eight billion video views online and attract 60 million followers through 11 non-Turkish languages.

The network has promised that with the launch of its Farsi-language channel, it will provide a fresh perspective on history, culture, and art to the world of Farsi-speaking media.

Although more details about the channel's activities have not yet been announced, from the perspective of political-media analysis, some experts say that the network's activity may be aimed at influencing Iranian Azeri speakers — specifically those who consider themselves Turkish speakers. Others, however, dismiss this notion and believe that the Turkish state television, through the launch of a Farsi-language service, can contribute to goals such as boosting tourism in Turkey.



Musicians play a tune in the launch ceremony of Turkey's new Farsi-language channel, TRT Farsi, aired on December 17, 2024.

The first expert whom IRNA interviewed on this topic is Hamid Ziaiyarvar, an experienced journalist. What follows is the full interview translated by Iran Daily into English.



Hamid Ziaiyarvar

### Alien concept to those losing ground in media

According to Ziaiyarvar, in today's world, alongside political and military confrontation, a form of media confrontation can be seen as well. Countries strengthen their media to use them as an arm of soft power. Therefore, it is natural for a country like Turkey, which plays an important role in regional equations and political geography, to take the initiative to establish a presence in the media sphere and launch Farsi-language versions of its channels and media.

Recalling a memory, he says that in 1996, he was a field reporter at the inauguration of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajik railway, which was held in Mashhad and attended by the presidents of regional coun-

tries. When the plane of Turgut Özal, the then-president of Turkey, was about to land in Mashhad, we were told that three planes were coming from Turkey; two planes were specifically for Turkish reporters and the third was carrying the Turkish president. It was really surprising and astonishing to all of us that Turkey had so many media outlets and reporters that two planes were coming to Iran. I remember that at that time, Iranian reporters and other news agencies were lost among the Turkish reporters. If Turkey had such a media presence back then, it's clear that there was a good understanding of the importance of media there.

"These days, just one Turkish TV station has around 700 sat-

ellite channels that produce programs on various topics, including sports, politics, social affairs, and news. A country that reaches media maturity would launch a television channel for every language. I don't know the exact number of their channels in other languages now, but I know they have channels in different languages."

He added, "Because we are weak in our media efforts, we think Turkey is doing strange things, while such a move is somewhat customary. Of course, I also know that the soft power of countries, one of which is media, might be used by Turkey later, but at first glance, they are trying to display their power and benefit from it. We also have an international broadcasting depart-

ment at the IRIB, which produces programs in languages such as French, English, Urdu, Turkish, and so on. Therefore, one cannot view the launch of this channel too skeptically."

The media expert, noting that he doubts this channel will gain popularity and audience in the formal media sphere, maintained that TRT Farsi will likely focus on entertainment programs and shows that appeal to a specific Iranian class to attract an audience and, ultimately, through this, attract more Iranian tourists to Turkey. "For example, it will focus on the tourist attractions of Turkey," he added.

Since TRT is Turkey's state television broadcaster, Ziaiyarvar believes that it will follow the positions of the Turkish government in times of

crises, ranging from challenges related to the Republic of Azerbaijan to border and political disputes, and will serve as an amplifier for the voice of the Turkish government in Farsi.

Claiming that the Turks are trying to speak directly to the Iranian people through this network, he pointed out, however, that ordinary Iranians know Turkey through entertainment channels and TV series. "So, I doubt that the Iranian people will have much interest in the news section of TRT Farsi."

"I believe the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation is not very popular among the Iranian people when it comes to news. Even if they try their hand in this direction, which I find unlikely, they will not succeed in the end," he concluded.

### Dangers of staying on surface layer

Salar Seyfoddini, who holds a Ph.D. in Political Geography and Geopolitics from Tarbiat Modares University, also gave his two cents on the issue. Seyfoddini explains that while scholars of information science might see the launch of channels in different languages as a natural occurrence, we should be a bit skeptical about it.

"Governments do not invest in any sector without a reason. Perhaps the initial and surface-level goal of this event would be to boost Turkish tourism by showcasing Turkish tourist attractions to Iranians, but we must see that this trend will continue. Media is the soft power of governments, but we should not view this soft power too optimistically. For example, we should consider when and for what issues TRT Arabi was established and what the final outcome was. A simple review will reveal many points. How did the war in Syria start 10 years ago? How did the government of Bashar al-Assad



Fahrettin Altun, head of media and communications in the Turkish presidency, speaks at the launch ceremony of Turkey's new Farsi-language channel, TRT Farsi.

TABNAK

fall? We need to look at these issues more closely."

The expert predicts that Turkey will not use TRT Farsi only for tourism purposes or to broadcast TV series and films and will, in the near future, after at-

tracting an audience, use it as a power game. Seyfoddini cites the presence of specific guests at the TRT Farsi launch ceremony as one reason for this prediction, asking: Why should pan-Turkists and separatists be present at the

launch of this channel?

He notes that Iran had had the Sahar TV which broadcasted in Azeri and Turkish, but the country pulled the plug on it. "Given Turkey's recent actions, I think it is necessary for us to revive the

Sahar TV in Turkish or launch a new Turkish-language channel," he maintained.

The scholar further explained his position, "TRT Farsi may initially attract an audience by broadcasting entertainment programs and Turkish TV series, which I think media experts see as the first level of this event. However, this soft power will eventually evolve into a level of influence and become a real issue. Once the media finds an audience, it programs for its supporters and works in the interest of its target society, sometimes even influencing our country's officials to the point where they might say, for example, that a certain Turkish channel is right. This is not pessimism but a reality with a long history."

Seyfoddini anticipates that Turkey will soon take actions affecting Iran's national interests, for example, in northern Iraq, inside Iran, or in the South Caucasus. "Ankara will certainly need a platform to activate such operations, and at that time, TRT Farsi will be a useful tool."



Salar Seyfoddini

**Nothing certain about TRT Farsi yet**

In an effort to uncover the media agenda of TRT Farsi, IRNA's reporter sought out those who were shown in the teaser

of the channel's launch and sought their opinions. They believed that nothing definitive has been decided about the managers and reporters of this channel, and their own

collaboration has only been at the level of this teaser because TRT Farsi has not yet received a license to operate in Iran. According to some of those involved with this channel, the

guests invited to the launch ceremony and their positions have not been approved by the Turkish government, and they have been warned to adjust their approach and activities regarding Iran.

The TRT's Turkish director said, "We will not abandon Iran." But it seems we must wait and see whether this new Farsi-language channel will adopt a mischievous approach or decide to adhere to

at least some media professionalism for the common interests of the two neighboring countries.

*The article first appeared in Farsi on IRNA.*

## TRT Farsi advances plots of Zionists, allies: Former IRI official

**QUESTION: What is your take on the launch of Turkey's TRT Farsi channel?**

**FARSIJANI:** Considering Iran's very important role in the region, it seems that, as the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution has pointed out, the enemy is trying to isolate and reduce the country's impact through a soft war. For this reason, several similar efforts have been made so far by regional countries, including Saudi Arabia's actions, which launched the MBC Persia channel and set out to attract Farsi-speaking audiences.

Today, Turkey intends to complete this process with TRT Farsi, and it is clear that Iran's enemies have a detailed plan to attract and guide the public opinion of Iranians. In my view, the launch of this channel is noteworthy because we should not be passive in the face of such actions, and we need to have a specific plan. Iran's National Virtual Space Center, the Supreme National Security Council, and related institutions have certainly come to the conclusion that we must put aside passivity to achieve our country's goals and that we need to predict and deal more actively and qualitatively with the media moves of countries in the field of soft war. Now that Turkey has made such a move, raising awareness among the Iranian people is an important media task that various visual, auditory, and, above all, state media should prioritize.

The goals of these Farsi-language channels are clear. Previously, channels like Manoto, BBC Farsi, GEM, and so on have tried to build their desired culture among Iranian audiences. My concern is that our visual media, such as the IRI, video-on-demand (VOD) services, and even our cinema, cannot attract audiences, and as a result, these newly established channels can replace our country's media outlets. Turkish-language channels have a higher chance of success in this regard because, in recent years, they have gained many audiences among Iranians and can more easily exert their desired negative influence on Iranians.

**What are the features of the kind of destructive culture building that such movements are pursuing?**

In recent years, we have clearly seen that Turkey is promoting pan-Turkism and, through its alliance with Azerbaijan, is seeking to have a more profound impact on our Turk-

ish-speaking ethnicities, which is a warning to all our people and officials to find a real solution for this issue.

We certainly need better communication with the Iranian audience. Along with paying attention to this important issue, our media should operate with specific rules and regulations, and we should design a framework and rules in our country that the Iranian Parliament, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, or the National Virtual Space Center can determine so that these channels — just like Instagram, Telegram, and other social media — are controlled and operate under the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran; otherwise, necessary warnings should be given, and, if necessary, appropriate measures should be taken.

**The decrease in the audience of state media in recent years is an issue that almost all intellectual factions of the country emphasize. The reduction in audience indicates significant weaknesses in the performance of state media. What weaknesses do you see, and what action should be taken to address them?**

The existence of rival media in our country is a very old issue. Since the Islamic Revolution succeeded, these media have been active and trying. However, for a time, state media and media managers made such smart moves that rivals were always behind us, and their impact was very small and insignificant. However, due to our recent poor performance, lack of good recognition of rivals and their tactics, and lack of quantitative and qualitative preparedness in producing superb programs, unfortunately, we have fallen far behind our rivals, and they are now ahead of us.

This is a worrying development. Our state media does not use its capacities well; today, state media has neither employed professional individuals nor efficient, capable, and informed managers who can help guide state media in a good direction with our experience of the past 40 years. Unfortunately, state media is moving forward with trial and error, and we have not only made no progress but are also witnessing steps backward. We are witnessing programs that we experienced in the past and recognized their good and bad aspects, but we do not use these experiences.

Given the good growth that our audience, especially the youth, has had and the expectations that young people have from state media, it is necessary to have a strong backing of media and intellectual elites for state media's works and productions. Unfortunately, today there is no sign of these elites anywhere, and in some cases, we are witnessing a step backward. We must keep in mind that today's media audience is very different from the audience 10 or 20 years ago. Yet, we are still producing very old content and are lagging behind our rivals.

Another point is that we do not see the signs of any specific and documented manifesto or strategy in the performance of state media. It seems that current managers are making efforts, but their efforts are not in line with what they should be. The Leader's remarks about the enemy's successful and intelligent performance in the soft war and cognitive war are very important. We are responding to their good performance, which is in line with their goals, with poor, weak, and passive performance of our own. We need to find new solutions to be able to relate to today's generation and other audiences; otherwise, we will remain passive and continue to lose our audience and cannot have a successful performance.

**Given the existing conditions, what is your prediction for the success or failure of channels like TRT Farsi in building their intended culture?**

It seems that the United States and Zionists, with the help of their allies in the region, such

**INTERVIEW** In recent days, the launch of Turkey's TRT Farsi TV channel has been one of the topics of interest in Iranian media. Naturally, the launch of such a channel by a Turkish-speaking country for Farsi-speaking audiences indicates a political approach that our northwestern neighbor is pursuing. That is why understanding their political approach and taking countermeasures to counter their goals are among the needs that are felt by the country's media outlets, especially in our state media. On the occasion of the launch of TRT Farsi, ILNA conducted an interview with Parviz Farsijani, the former director-general of the Iranian Organization of Cinema and former middle manager of the state media, to discuss this new TV channel. What follows is the full interview translated by Iran Daily into English.



Mehmet Zahid Sobaci, the general director of Turkey's state broadcaster TRT, speaks at the launch ceremony of the new Farsi-language channel, TRT Farsi.



Parviz Farsijani

as Turkey and its friends, have many plans that they want to implement in the region. Some of their plans — for example, the attack on Syria — have been undeniably implemented, and I believe that the launch of TRT Farsi is part of these actions.

There are certainly other plans for the future. Unfortunately, Turkey is one of the most attractive countries in the region for Iranian tourists. Iranians have even spent billions of dollars buying property and land in Turkey in recent years. All of this is a warning that the enemy is intelligently using their existing capacities to attract the Iranian audience in line with the goals they are pursuing. These actions are an attempt to change the culture and taste of the Iranian audience, and if we do not find a solution, we will certainly face great problems in the field of

culture and, in fact, in the soft war front, which will be very difficult to compensate for in the future. Our seminaries and universities must help the relevant authorities not only to neutralize these actions but also to help us launch an attack against these movements. Being passive and making wrong decisions will cause them to move forward step by step and put us in a more passive position where we are only spectators and ultimately regret the actions we should have taken but did not. I think we need a good design and a plan and an effective strategy in the relevant councils, including the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, to follow so that, instead of constantly falling back, we can even attack the enemy.

*The article first appeared in Farsi on ILNA.*



## Persian Gulf Pro League roundup:

## Tractor back on top; Esteghlal, Sepahan share the spoils

## Sports Desk

Tractor moved back atop the Persian Gulf Pro League table ahead of the midseason break thanks to an emphatic 3-0 victory over Esteghlal Khuzestan in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium on Thursday.

Mahdi Shiri smashed the ball into the top corner to put Tractor in front late in the first half, before Mohammad Naderi doubled the home side's lead with a superb strike right after the break, curling home with the outside of his left foot from the edge of the box.

Croatian striker Tomislav Strkalj found the net two minutes from normal time to secure only a third home victory of the campaign for Tractor, which overtook Sepahan in the table on goal difference at the halfway stage of the Iranian top-flight season.

In Tehran's Shahe-e Qods Stadium, prolific winger Mahdi Limouchi scored his seventh goal of the season – joining Persepolis's Ali Alipour as the leading marksmen in the league – in the 74th minute to cancel out Masoud Juma's first-half strike – Kenyan striker's first goal in the Esteghlal colors since joining the Tehran Blues in November.

The visitors finished the game with 10 men after skipper Mo-

hammad Karimi was shown a second yellow card with five minutes left on the clock.

A fourth successive draw in the league saw Pitso Mosimane's Esteghlal finish the first half of the season in the 10th place with 18 points – 14 points adrift of the top two. Elsewhere, Malavan goalkeeper Habib Farabasi's howler in chesting the ball led to a Abolfazl Zadeh-Attar's 91st-minute winner as Foolad Khuzestan defeated Malavan 2-1 at home. Mohammadali Kazemi's stunning bicycle-kick gave the host a fourth-minute lead before Abolfazl Safarzadeh drew the visitors level in the 65th minute.

The victory left Foolad in the fourth place with 28 points. In the battle of the bottom-half strugglers, Maysam Taymouri and Saeid Vasei scored in each half to help Mes Rafsanjan come from behind for a massive 2-1 win away to Khaybar, which had taken the lead through Faraz Emamali's 28th-minute opener.

The result saw Mes move up to 12th with 16 points – one point above Nassaji Mazandaran, which played to a goalless stalemate at Zob Ahan earlier in the day.

Khaybar, meanwhile, remained on the 13-point mark – only standing out of the rele-

gation zone thanks to a better goal difference over Shams Azar.

Shams Azar fell to a third defeat in four league outings, suffering a 3-0 away loss to Iralco, courtesy of goals from Milad Badraqueh, Mehran Mousavi, and Rahman Jafari. Thursday's results came after Persepolis thrashed bottom-side 5-0 at home on the preceding night – a second win in as many games for Karim Baqeri as the interim coach.

Alipour bagged a hat-trick to take his tally to five goals in three outings, with Issa Aleksir and Oston Urunov also on the scoresheet, as the defending champion remained third points behind Tractor and Sepahan.

In Sirjan, second-half goals from Arman Akvan and Brazilian Gustavo Vagenin led Golgozar to a 2-0 home win against Chadormalou, lifting Mahdi Tartar's side to the fifth place with 21 points.



Tractor players celebrate their second goal during a 3-0 victory over Esteghlal Khuzestan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium, Tabriz, Iran, on Jan. 2, 2025.

● FFIRI



## Freestyle Wrestling National Championships: Goleij back in national team fray with 97kg title

## Sports Desk

Mojtaba Goleij made his case for a place in the national team squad by winning the 97kg title at the Freestyle Wrestling National Championships – the opening phase of the Iranian trials for September's World Championships – on Thursday.

A world bronze winner in 2021, Goleij defeated reigning Asian under-20 champion Abolfazl Babalou 6-0 in the final showpiece to throw down the gauntlet to Olympic bronze medalist Amirali Azarpira and two-time world

92kg champion Kamran Qassem-pour, who is keen on competing in an Olympic weight class ahead of the Los Angeles Games in three years' time.

Hadi Rezaei looked to be the favorite for the 57kg title after a massive 7-3 victory over former world silver medalist Alireza Sarlak in the semifinals, but ultimately found it tough against 20-year-old Milad Valizadeh, suffering a 7-1 defeat.

Yassin Rezaei capped off his dominant 65kg campaign with a 13-2 win against Dariush Hazratqolizadeh in the final – a fifth victory by technical superiority for the 2023

Asian bronze winner in as many bouts.

Hossein Abouzari finished atop the podium in the 74kg class, thanks to a 7-2 win against Hossein Mohammad-Aqaei in the final, while the 86kg showdown saw Omidreza Soheili come out victorious (10-2) against Mohammad-Hossein Norouziyan.



Mojtaba Goleij (red) is seen in action against Abolfazl Babalou in the 97kg final at the Freestyle Wrestling National Championships in Gorgan, Iran, on January 2, 2025.

● IAWF

## Liverpool's Slot insists Man Utd 'much better' than league table shows

AFP – Arne Slot says crisis-hit Manchester United are "much, much better" than their shocking position in the Premier League suggests as he prepares his Liverpool team for a clash against their fierce rivals on Sunday.

Liverpool are six points clear at the top of the Premier League table – and are hot favourites to land a 20th English top-flight crown, which would pull them level with record-holders United. Liverpool, by contrast, are 14th

in the table after five defeats in their past six league games under new manager Ruben Amorim.

But Slot, also in his first campaign in England, is adamant he will not take his opponents lightly at Anfield, when asked if he might rest players at Friday's pre-match press conference.

"No, of course I'm not going to plan to rest any player because it's a big game and I think it's for me I said it before the first fixture (a 3-0 win at Old Trafford) and

I can say it one more time, that they have much better players in my opinion than maybe the league table shows at the moment.

"I think it's going to take a while maybe for Ruben Amorim to bring this out of the players... but they will definitely go up and they are much, much, much better than the league table shows at the moment."

Slot was asked whether he could categorically state that Liverpool would not let Trent

Alexander-Arnold leave in the January transfer window, with the defender heavily linked with a move to Real Madrid. Slot said Alexander-Arnold was "fully committed" to Liverpool and would be playing on Sunday.

"Hopefully he brings the same performances as he brought in for the last half-year, because I think everybody saw how great a first half of the season he had, how much he is here, how much he wants to win here," said Slot.



● REUTERS

# Outrage over Iranian flight disruption at Beirut airport

An Iranian commercial plane underwent rigorous security checks at Beirut airport on Thursday night after it was suspected of transporting money to Hezbollah resistance group, causing uproar among passengers.

Authorities at Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport had told the Mahan Air flight that it would need to undergo inspection or it would not be allowed to land.

The measure followed a report earlier in the day by the Saudi Al-Hadath channel, citing Western sources, claiming that Iran "intended to transfer millions of dollars to Hezbollah via a Mahan Air flight."

Lebanese caretaker Interior Minister Bassam al-Mawlawi confirmed during a talk show on Thursday night that the plane was being searched.

The airport's security requested to search the diplomats' bags to check whether they were carrying cash. The diplomats initially rejected the request, resulting in long delays in disembarking

passengers from the plane. Tensions gradually escalated as people on board grew frustrated over the wait, prompting Lebanese army forces to intervene and restore order.

The plane was eventually given the greenlight in the late hours of Thursday after the diplomats' bags were searched, finding that they did not contain anything undeclared.

"An Iranian diplomat refused to have his bags searched upon landing in Lebanon tonight. After a long dispute, Tehran sent a cable to Beirut saying two bags had documents and cash to pay operating expenses at the Iranian Embassy in the country. They were let go per Vienna Convention," Washington-based Lebanese journalist Joseph Haboush wrote on X.

Lebanon's Foreign Ministry said Friday that it received a written letter from the Iranian Embassy in Beirut clarifying that two diplomatic bags which initially had not been allowed to pass contained documents and cash for embassy opera-



tional expenses only. The incident led to small protests mainly by Hezbollah supporters outside the airport and across Beirut's southern suburbs.

The airport has seen stringent security measures in recent months in the wake of the Hezbollah-Israel war which ended in late November. Iranian planes had not been allowed to land at

Beirut airport during the war as Israel claimed they could be transporting weapons to Hezbollah. Under the US-brokered ceasefire agreement which ended

the war in late November, the Lebanese government must gradually disarm Hezbollah and all other armed factions and take full control of the country's borders.

## Iran calls on Afghanistan not to impede flow of Hari River

### International Desk

The Iranian Foreign Ministry called on Afghanistan on Friday not to disrupt the flow of water to the country by building dams on the border rivers, stressing that maintaining relations between the two sides requires respect for mutual interests and avoiding harmful actions.

The ministry's spokesman Esmail Baghaei emphasized the importance of bilateral agreements, principles of international rights and the rights of the people downstream of shared rivers, as well as the principle of good neighborliness in the two nations' fair exploitation of the water resources from rivers that have flowed from Afghanistan to Iran for centuries due to the natural geography of the region.

Baghaei said that Iran's Foreign Ministry has expressed its strong protest to the Afghan officials over the disproportionate curtailment of the waters entering Iran or the diversion of the natural course of rivers as the Islamic republic expects the eastern neighbor to take appropriate decisions in this regard. Afghanistan has constructed a new



A general view of Pashdan Dam on the Hari River (Harirud) in the western part of Afghanistan

dam on the Hari River (Harirud) – a move that could significantly reduce the flow of water to Iran's eastern province of Khorasan Razavi, where over two million residents depend on the river for drinking water.

On Tuesday, the spokesman for Iran's water industry Isa Bozorgzadeh said Afghanistan's construction of a dam on the Harirud would affect the supply of drinking water for several million peo-

ple and would lead to widespread damage to the downstream environment.

Bozorgzadeh said the construction of Pashdan Dam on the Harirud would lead to a decrease in the volume of water entering Iran – a move that would cause problems in supplying drinking water to Iran's northeastern city of Mashhad.

The Iranian official said Tehran has repeatedly expressed its official protest against the consequences of the construction of a dam by the Afghan side on the Hari River and has called for joint cooperation to minimize the effects of such measures and choosing "sustainable development instead of destructive development."

Iran and Afghanistan have been locked in a protracted water dispute which has been escalated after Taliban's takeover of the country in 2021.

At the heart of the dispute is the Hilmand River, which originates in the Hindu Kush Mountains near Kabul and flows 700 miles (1,126 kilometers) south before flowing into Hamoun wetlands, located in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

The two countries signed a water-sharing accord on the Hilmand River in 1973, under which Afghanistan pledged to deliver an average of 820 million cubic meters of water per annum to Iran.

Iran has repeatedly criticized Afghanistan for failing to honor the agreement in letter and spirit.

## Iran summons Italian envoy over 'illegal' detention of own national



Cecilia Sala



Mohammad Abedini

### International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned Italian Ambassador to Tehran Paola Amadei over "illegal" detention of Iranian national Mohammad Abedini in the European country.

Director General of the Western Europe Department at the Iran's Foreign Ministry Majid Nili Ahmadabadi called Abedini's arrest an illegal act that was made at the behest of the US government and in line with its hostile intentions to take Iranian citizens hostage all over the world.

Nili Ahmadabadi said the arrest of Abedini not only damages the long-standing relations between Iran and Italy, but also contradicts the principles of the international law.

He called on Italy to the immediately release the Iranian national to prevent harm to Tehran-Rome ties. The Foreign Ministry's move came a day after Italy's Foreign Ministry summoned the Iranian ambassador to demand the release of reporter Cecilia Sala, who was arrested in Tehran in December 19 for "violating the laws of the Islamic Republic."

The Italian ministry said in a statement it had relayed "serious concern" over Sala's detention and stressed the need for humane treatment and respect for her human rights.

The Iranian Embassy in Rome

also said Ambassador Mohammad Reza Sabouri exchanged views with Italy's Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Riccardo Guariglia about the cases of detained nationals in Iran and Italy.

The embassy said Sala was being given all the humanitarian care necessary, and linked her case to that of Iranian national Mohammad Abedini, who was arrested last month in Milan at the request of the United States.

The embassy said that while Sala was being afforded all the necessary support as well as access to Italian consular staff, it expected reciprocal treatment for Abedini.

This included a speeded-up release for him as well as "welfare assistance".

IRNA reported on Monday that Sala had been arrested for "violating the laws of the Islamic Republic."

Sala was detained three days after Abedini was arrested at Milan's Malpensa Airport on a US warrant for allegedly supplying drone parts that Washington says were used in a 2023 attack that killed three US service members in Jordan.

Iran has denied involvement in the attack, and its foreign ministry has said Abedini's arrest violated international law.

Abedini is currently being held in prison and a court is due to decide later this month whether to grant him house arrest while judges consider the US extradition request.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



# 43rd Fajr Film Festival to celebrate regional talents, strengthen private sector partnership

## Arts & Culture Desk

The 43rd Fajr Film Festival is set to distinguish itself from previous editions through the increased participation of regional filmmakers, said Manouchehr Shahsavari, the festival's secretary, during the second meeting of the festival's policy council held on Friday. The meeting gathered key figures from the Iranian cinema landscape, including Raed Faridzadeh, head of the Cinema Organization of Iran, and nine council members, to discuss the festival's progress and unique features for this year, IRNA reported. Shahsavari highlighted that, "The presence of young filmmakers and first-time directors from outside Tehran is one of the most significant aspects that set this

year's festival apart from its predecessors." This focus on regional talent not only promises to enrich the festival's offerings but also aims to showcase diverse storytelling from various parts of the country. The festival is characterized by its thematic diversity, which is expected to resonate with a broad audience. Shahsavari also noted the "substantial participation of the private sector," which is playing a crucial role in the festival's organization and promotion, reflecting a growing collaboration between governmental and private entities in Iranian cinema. The policy council meeting also addressed the creation of a unified visual identity across festival cinemas, further enhancing the event's professional presentation.



## Book chronicles five centuries of diplomatic ties between Iran, Turkey



### Arts & Culture Desk

A comprehensive book "Treaties of Iran and Turkey from Ottoman Era to Present (1555-2021)," showcasing five centuries of diplomatic relations between Iran and Turkey through treaties and historical documents was

published by the Turkish National Archives in Istanbul. Ahmad Mohammadi, the Iranian Consul General in Istanbul, met with officials from the Turkish National Archives and the Ottoman Archives Treasury on January 2. During the meeting, a copy of the book was gifted to the Iranian diplomat, IRNA wrote. The book is a treasure trove, containing images of treaties and documents between the two countries over the past five centuries, accompanied by explanations in both Turkish and English. It offers a unique glimpse into the diplomatic history of Iran and Turkey. During his meeting with Sebahattin Bayram, the Deputy Director of the Turkish National Archives in Istanbul, Mohammadi emphasized the im-

portance of cooperation between the two countries in the field of archives and documentation, especially with the designation of 2025 as the year of cultural exchange between Iran and Turkey. Bayram agreed, highlighting the extensive opportunities for collaboration between the two nations in the field of archives and documentation. He welcomed the idea of exchanging expertise and visits between relevant delegations from both countries. The publication of this book is not only of interest to historians and researchers but also to the general public. It showcases how these two nations have interacted over the centuries, and can serve as a symbol of the enduring friendship and cooperation between them.

## Isfahan handcraft exports reach \$7.6m in 9 months

Iran's Isfahan Province reported a total of \$7.6 million in handcraft exports within the last nine months of the current Iranian calendar year. According to Nourullah Abdollahi, the official responsible for handcraft affairs in Isfahan, the province managed to export \$15 million worth of handcraft products in the previous Iranian calendar year. The figures reflect the growing prominence of Isfahan's handcraft industry both domestically and internationally, IRNA reported. Of the 602 handcrafts identified worldwide, 299 are found in Iran, with 200 of those being located in the historically significant and artistic province of Isfahan. This makes the province a strong player in the global handcraft market, as it has been able to establish a flourishing presence in other countries. Recently, a memorandum of understanding was signed between



Isfahan Province and Tehran Customs to streamline the process of exporting handcrafts. Additionally, a specialized center has been established in Isfahan to facilitate the export of these products, which are renowned for their historical and artistic value. Moreover, Isfahan Province has a vibrant community of 700 artisans, who are actively engaged in producing and exporting handcrafts. During the past four years, 40 of these artisans have received certification for their products, further enhancing the reputation of the province's handcraft industry.

## Iran, Russia to ...

According to Zakharova and other Russian officials, this agreement includes collaborations in energy, transportation, industry, agriculture, and culture, potentially marking a turning point in the relations between the two countries. It will also include bilateral cooperation in media, education, space exploration, and a joint banking payment system—areas where both countries are currently under pressure and sanctions. Amidst all these aspects, however, Russia's investment in Iran's energy and transportation sectors will be the most crucial element of this strategic agreement. In the transportation sector, although Iran and Russia have both open and closed corridor files, the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is the most significant among them. This corridor was established through an

agreement signed in September 2000, aimed at creating a commercial and strategic route between India and Europe, with the cooperation of both Russia and Iran. According to Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, the details of this corridor's implementation will be signed alongside the comprehensive agreement and several other documents during the upcoming presidential visit. The roadmap that Iran and Russia have laid out for their future cooperation has drawn significant political curiosity from third parties more than any other agreement. As the signing date approaches, speculation about its content has become a focal point of news analysis and media coverage. The reality is that this agreement, like many high-level documents, is influenced by various external parameters and variables, each carrying different weights and impacts, necessi-

tating careful consideration by the parties involved regarding these weights and impacts. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has recently said, "Such a comprehensive document also encompasses an international dimension. Among other aspects, this agreement pays special attention to strengthening interactions in alignment with peace and security interests at both regional and global levels, expressing Moscow and Tehran's willingness to cooperate more closely in areas of security, defense, counter-terrorism, and addressing various shared challenges and threats." This undeniable principle, which has expedited the Russian side's signature on this agreement, is strategically and tactically defined. However, an excessive focus on certain clauses could play into the hands of those third parties that are

attempting to link the entire agreement to military and security concerns, thereby escalating tensions. The reality is that emphasizing specific clauses of the agreement, given the current global situation, serves neither Russia's nor Iran's interests. Following the onset of the Ukraine war, Russia, whether intentionally or not, heightened its media narrative surrounding the capabilities of Iranian drones, as well as its passivity in the face of European accusations regarding Iran's assistance to Russia in acquiring military equipment for this conflict. This situation has inadvertently drawn Tehran into the war as a partner, despite the fact that neither Iran's interests nor its military-diplomatic doctrine favored such a partnership. Tehran has repeatedly emphasized that a) the supply of drones to Russia predates the Ukraine war, and

it has not delivered missiles to Moscow; and b) Iran does not regard war as a solution to any crisis and has expressed its readiness several times to facilitate an end to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Nonetheless, Moscow's delay in directly and explicitly affirming Iran's positions has paved the way for increased sanctions, tensions, and pressures from the European Union against Tehran. For Tehran, defense cooperation with all independent nations is a priority. However, at this juncture, Iran's primary focus is on attracting economic investments across various sectors rather than forging agreements with any particular country or government. The Russian side, understanding this important point, will come to the negotiating table to finalize a significant agreement with Iran, as described by Lavrov.