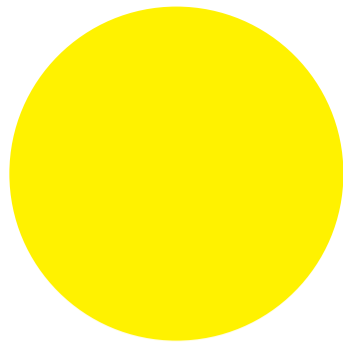


Envoy says Japan aims to help Iran bolster global interactions



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Iran-Russia partnership deal:

Commitment to building more prosperous future

By Grant Gevorgyan
Analyst, MGIMO University

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The signing of the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran represents a significant milestone in the relationship between the two nations. This agreement not only underscores the growing political and economic ties between Moscow and Tehran but also symbolizes the shared will of their peoples to foster mutual cooperation in an increasingly complex global environment. Russia and Iran, two ancient civilizations, share a long and intricate history of interaction. From cultural exchanges along the Silk Road to diplomatic and economic relations in the modern era, the peoples of these nations have often found common ground. Despite historical conflicts and periods of tension, the overarching narrative is one of mutual respect and collaboration.

A key factor uniting the Russian and Iranian peoples is their shared perspective on sovereignty and resistance to external domination. Both nations have faced foreign interventions and attempts to undermine their autonomy, shaping a collective memory that values independence and resilience. This historical experience has fostered a common worldview that prioritizes multipolarity, regional stability, and the rejection of western unilateralism in international relations.

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) presents a trophy to a farmer during a ceremony in Tehran, Iran on January 18, 2025. president.ir

Two senior judges assassinated in Tehran; shooter takes own life



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Pezeshkian urges agricultural reform for 'greater self-sufficiency'

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the need for a shift in agricultural policies, stating that measures must be taken to prevent the waste of agricultural products and ensure that farmers' hard work is not lost due to a lack of market demand. He stressed that deft management and planning are essential to steer the country's agriculture toward growth and sustainability.

Speaking on Saturday at the 38th national ceremony honoring outstanding figures in agriculture, Pezeshkian also described farmers as the nation's invaluable assets.

The president said the government is ready to work alongside farmers to implement such changes, supporting civil organizations and fostering collaboration to create better conditions for the agricultural sector. "Our goal is to achieve greater self-sufficiency and ensure future generations can sustainably benefit from these resources," he said.

Pezeshkian highlighted the im-

portance of managing water and soil resources, warning that the future of the country is at risk if a balance between resources and consumption is not achieved.

"Without water, we will lose our lands and be forced to leave this soil," he said.

Pezeshkian praised innovative efforts, such as those in the restoration of qanats (underground water supply systems) and irrigation led by women and youth, as examples of how proper planning and hard work can effectively utilize vital resources. However, he cautioned that this is only the beginning, and serious thought must be given to preserving these resources for the long term.

The president called for detailed planning in agriculture and resource management, urging both the government and local authorities to determine what crops should be grown, in what quantity, and with what quality in each region.

He also emphasized the need for efficient distribution of products to meet the country's needs and explore trade opportunities with

neighboring nations.

"Our products must meet international standards to remain competitive in global markets," he said.

Pezeshkian expressed concern over the current state of the agricultural market, noting that middlemen often reap the most profit, while farmers who work tirelessly receive little.

"This unfair situation must change," he said, calling for strengthened market management mechanisms to prevent such injustices.

Pezeshkian recalled the role of agricultural cooperatives in the past and urged farmers to collaborate on solutions that ensure fair compensation for their efforts.

Earlier in the ceremony, Gholamreza Nouri-Qezelgeh, the minister of agriculture, outlined the challenges facing the sector, including drought, declining water resources, and climate change.

He stressed the need to transition from traditional farming to technology-based and market-oriented agriculture, leveraging modern technology and innovation to boost productivity.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at the 38th national ceremony honoring outstanding figures in agriculture in Tehran, Iran on January 18, 2025.

president.ir



The minister highlighted the significant achievements in various agricultural sectors, including crops, horticulture, fisheries, and livestock, which have contributed to sustainable production and added value.

He reiterated the ministry's

commitment to facilitating the private sector's involvement in agricultural development through streamlined processes and transparency.

The minister also expressed gratitude for the president's support for farmers and produc-

ers, pledging to ensure the country's food security by relying on the capabilities of farmers and their colleagues.

The ceremony concluded with the president honoring national awardees in the agricultural sector from across the country.

Iran-Russia monetary deal implemented: CBI chief Hemmati says Tehran welcomes foreign investors



Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammadreza Farzin, who accompanied President Masoud Pezeshkian during his visit to Moscow, announced that the monetary agreement between Iran and Russia had become operational.

"The monetary agreement between Iran and Russia has been implemented, and the national currencies of the two countries, i.e. ruble and rial, have been used as the basis for the settlement based on the agreed rate on the commercial foreign exchange market," Farzin said.

He also announced the connection of Russia's Mir CARD Network system to Iran's SHETAB banking network.

Iran-Russia oil deal near finalization

Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said that he and his team have had detailed negotiations with energy officials on the Russian side, and the relevant clauses of the Iran-Russia contract are in the final stages. Paknejad noted that Russian companies are currently executing contracts worth more than \$7.5 billion in several Iranian oil and gas fields. Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati, who also accompanied Pezeshkian, said that foreign investors are welcome to work in his country.

Hemmati made the remark in a meeting with Russian economic activists late on Friday, expressing Iran's readiness for issuing guarantees for exporters.

The Organization for Investment Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran is also ready to attract foreign capital, he noted.

Meanwhile, Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd referred to the 20-year strategic pact between Tehran and Moscow and said the document indicates the will of two sides for the development of bilateral ties.

The 20-year treaty signed on Friday by the presidents of Iran and Russia aims to facilitate joint investments, optimize banking relations and bilateral payments in national currencies, expand cooperation in transportation and energy, and establish a streamlined customs corridor.

The agreement is seen as a significant economic milestone, particularly in light of regional and international conditions.

The deepening economic ties between Iran and Russia, bolstered by their membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, further underscore the importance of this treaty.

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement between the

Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation consists of an introduction and 47 articles covering a wide range of sectors.

Direct economic ties between provinces

Article 16 of the treaty emphasizes the development of inter-provincial cooperation, recognizing its importance for expanding bilateral relations.

The treaty commits both parties to creating favorable conditions for direct economic ties between Iranian and Russian provinces.

This will be facilitated through trade missions, exhibitions, fairs, and other joint events aimed at mutual economic and investment opportunities.

Both parties will support commercial and economic cooperation in areas of mutual interest, coordinated through the Iran-Russia Joint Economic Commission.

Facilitating joint investments

Article 18 outlines the commitment to developing trade, economic, and industrial cooperation, including joint investments, infrastructure financing, and facilitating trade mechanisms. The treaty also promotes cooperation in banking, mutual supply of goods, services, and intellectual property rights. The parties may explore joint investments in third countries through specialized multilateral mechanisms, leveraging their respective investment capacities.

Bilateral payments in national currencies

Article 20 focuses on increasing bilateral trade by developing cooperation between financial institutions, using international legal frameworks to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

The treaty encourages the use of

national currencies for bilateral payments, strengthens direct interbank cooperation, and promotes national financial products. The agreement also supports trade and investment in special economic zones, with both parties assisting in the establishment of joint ventures and industrial zones.

Expanding transportation cooperation

Article 21 highlights close cooperation in transportation, aiming to develop partnerships based on mutual benefit.

The treaty commits to facilitating transport operations, improving infrastructure, and increasing passenger and cargo volumes using all modes of transport.

Both parties will collaborate on road, rail, air, sea, and combined transport, as well as training specialists in the field. They will also actively develop international transport corridors, particularly the International North-South Transport Corridor, which passes through Iran and Russia.

The treaty promotes the use of digital transport systems and supports coordination in international transport organizations.

Energy cooperation

Article 22 focuses on expanding cooperation in oil and gas based on principles of equality and mutual benefit. The treaty aims to enhance energy security through optimal use of fuel and energy resources.

Key areas of cooperation include scientific and technical collaboration, technology exchange, and investment in oil and gas field development. The treaty also encourages infrastructure projects to enhance global and regional energy security and supports coordinated policies in international energy forums like the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) and OPEC+.

VP: Iranian gov't pursuing ratification of FATF bills



Iran's vice president for executive affairs said the administration was seriously pursuing the ratification of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) bills as required by the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

In an interview with IRNA, Mohammad-Jafar Qaempanah discussed the prospects of the FATF bills, pointing out that the bills cannot be put to vote in the Parliament again as Iranian lawmakers have already approved them.

Members of the Parliament have the right to object, he said, referring to criticisms leveled by some lawmakers against renewed attempts to ratify the bills.

However, he added, the administration is persistent and the fate of the FATF bills will be decided in the Expediency Council, an advisory board that settles disputes between the Parliament and Guardian Council over legislation.

Asked how hopeful the administration is about the approval of FATF by the Expediency Council, Qaempanah said, "We do not have a precise assessment of the status of the council's review." He added, however, that the administration believes some of the pressure of sanctions "will definitely be removed after FATF is accepted."

Late last month, President Masoud Pezeshkian announced that the Expediency Council would re-examine the bills so that the FATF restrictions on Iran's banking system would be lifted.

Established in 1989, the FATF is an inter-governmental body aimed at setting standards and promoting effective implementation of legal, regulatory, and operational measures to combat money laundering, terrorism financing, and other threats to the international financial system. The FATF describes itself as a "policy-making body" that generates the necessary political will to effect national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.

Distinctive customs of Baghleq village and its cemetery



Iranica Desk

Villages have always been at the heart of human life. In Iran, there are over 45,000 villages, and some stand out due to their unique and remarkable features. The village of Baghleq, situated in North Khorasan Province, is home to one of the most distinctive cemeteries we have ever encountered. The people of this Turkmen village observe specific customs and traditions when it comes to burying the deceased. The Baghleq Cemetery is located in a village of the same name, which is a small community in the central district of Raz and Jargalan in northwest North Khorasan Province. The Baghleq Cemetery is regarded as one of the oldest and most unique cemeteries in both the province and the entire country. It is a noteworthy tourist attraction in North Khorasan Province. Unlike typical cemeteries, Baghleq Cemetery has no grave-stones; instead, the details of the deceased are written on wooden plaques. This distinctive feature creates the impression of a garden with its trees cut down at first glance.



Located just outside the village on a clay hill, the cemetery was constructed away from residential areas due to the local belief that the dead deserve respect and that no one should walk over their eternal resting place. The Turkmen community sees participating in funeral ceremonies and offering prayers for the deceased as their duty, so they attend these ceremonies regardless of whether they knew the deceased or not. Visiting the Baghleq Cemetery is completely free. For a more peaceful and comfortable experi-



ence, it's best to choose a specific day for your visit. A thorough exploration of the cemetery will take about an hour. The village of Baghleq is situated in a mountainous area, so you should expect slightly different weather conditions compared to Bojnord. Consequently, the cold of autumn and winter can make traveling to the village and visiting the cemetery challenging. Spring is a great time to visit, but be prepared for the possibility of scattered showers or downpours. Therefore, summer is generally considered the best

time to visit the Baghleq Cemetery in North Khorasan Province. Besh Qardash Park is located 10 kilometers from Bojnord along the Bojnord-Esfarayin road. The water from the park's springs is known for its numerous healing properties and is used to treat gastrointestinal, liver, gallbladder, and urinary system disorders. This recreation area features beautiful pools and grounds, and due to its historical significance, it is one of the most popular tourist destinations. Besh Qardash Park has been registered as a national heritage site in Iran.

Baba Aman Park is one of the oldest and most beautiful tourist parks in Iran, recognized as a key attraction in North Khorasan Province. Each year, it serves as a resting and recreational spot for millions of tourists and pilgrims visiting Mashhad. Spanning 250 hectares of lush vegetation and featuring pools filled with spring water, this park has become one of the prominent sights in Bojnord, North Khorasan Province. Notable attractions in the area include the Baba Aman Spring, the Baba Aman Shrine, the local wildlife, and the nearby Atrak River.

Role of chigh in Iranian nomadic life

Iranica Desk

The history of anthropology shows that since the time of early humans, people have utilized resources from their environment — such as tree branches, foliage, goat and sheep wool, wood, and animal hides — to protect themselves from cold, heat, wind, rain, and other elements while maintaining clean and organized living spaces. Sajjad Nazari, a cultural heritage expert, wrote that Iran, with its rich ancient culture, is no exception. "Today, we see the construction and production of handcrafted tools rooted in the distant past.

One such tool, still produced today and with various applications, is *chigh*. Its ongoing traditional production from unchanged raw materials highlights its significance and versatility. Nowadays, we even observe its mass production in certain areas." Chigh is used to cover the walls of nomadic black tents and is made from reeds that grow wild in the nomads' living areas, along with goat hair. It prevents the entry of heat, cold, wind, rain, and dust into the tent. The hollow reeds act as thermal insulators, and when it rains, increased humidity causes the reeds to expand and bind together, resisting water infiltration.

Additionally, the fatty layer in goat hair helps prevent water from penetrating. Chigh is a handcrafted item made by nomads, used both individually and as a barrier around black tents. It also serves as a partition within the tent. The finest examples of this weaving are crafted in vibrant colors featuring authentic and traditional patterns by some nomadic tribes in the province. Due to its beautiful color composition and high-quality weaving, chigh has been installed as the entrance display at the national handicraft exhibition. The main materials used in its

production are reeds, goat hair, and sheep wool, which can be found near rivers and streams in certain areas of Ilam province's watersheds. These materials are harvested using sickles. Goat hair and sheep wool are readily available since the livelihood of nomadic people relies on herding. Regarding the reeds, one of the key raw materials used, they are cut from the reed beds and transported to the workplace to dry. Once dried, the reeds are cut into specific sizes based on the intended use of the chigh. For example, if the chigh is required for a location that demands greater strength, whole reeds are

used. The size of the reeds is determined by the intended application and the height of the chigh. If the chigh is primarily decorative or designed for transportation, lighter reeds are preferred for easier handling. Typically, the reeds are halved lengthwise, and this splitting process is performed with sharp tools like knives to minimize the risk of breaking. Regarding the processing and preparation of other raw materials used in chigh weaving, such as goat hair and sheep wool, this work is also carried out by nomads and villagers. If the chigh is intended for practical use, both goat hair and sheep wool are uti-

lized. The harvesting methods for these raw materials are quite similar. Goat hair, after being sheared, is used to bind the reeds together. In contrast, after shearing the sheep's fleece, the wool undergoes dyeing processes. After preparing the wool fibers, the dyeing process begins. Dyeing involves applying color substances to specific fibers or woven goods under controlled conditions of temperature and time. It is crucial to use natural fibers, such as wool, which are classified as animal fibers. When selecting a color, factors such as absorption capability, uniformity, durability, and stability are also considered.



Comprehensive deal signals Iran-Russia 'strategic alliance'

Russian philosopher: Moscow statements on Iranian islands very strange

INTERVIEW

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visited Russia on Friday, January 17, and met with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, to sign the long-awaited Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement. The signing was expected to be the most important item on the President's agenda during the trip to Moscow, and it indeed became one of the top headlines of the day.

To explore why the deal is so important, IRNA spoke with Aleksandr Dugin, a Russian philosopher who is considered one of the most important advisors to Putin. In 2014, the American magazine *Foreign Policy* even introduced him as one of the top 100 global thinkers of the contemporary era. What follows is our translation of this interview from Farsi into English.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (l) and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin hold documents after signing a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025. [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)

IRNA: Presidents Masoud Pezeshkian and Vladimir Putin of Iran and Russia, respectively, met on Friday in Moscow to sign a comprehensive agreement between the two countries. Iran and Russia believe that this 25-year agreement, titled "The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement," can significantly strengthen their bilateral relations. How do you assess this agreement and its importance?

DUGIN: This is a very important event and an agreement based on the strategic alliance between Russia and Iran, an agreement that we just had to legally formalize. Over the past decade, Russia and Iran's relations have been on a very positive path, and our economic, political, and strategic relations have improved. We have reached an unprecedented level in the relations between the two countries.

I think that finalizing a deep political and geostrategic alliance, in the form of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement, is a great idea. We needed something like this because the global system is changing and we must consider new realities, challenges, and conditions.

If we always act together and measure our steps, we can achieve great results. Imagine a joint strategic security system; Take, for example, the benefits of setting up Russian military bases in southern Iran and allowing Iran's presence in the Arctic from an economic and military point of view. We can create an invincible structure alongside Iran, and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement is a very important and decisive

step in this direction. Iran and Russia have a long way to go in cooperating in three main areas: bilateral relations, regional interactions, and international interactions. Each area can be divided into sub-areas; For example, cooperation in energy, new technologies, economy, military industries, and vital defense are the most critical sub-areas in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Do you agree with this assessment?

Certainly. We must strengthen relations in all these areas so that our bilateral cooperation is defined as a unique security system, and neither Iran poses a threat to us nor Russia to Iran. This should become an important principle in the future relations between the two countries, that neither of the two countries

is a threat to each other. We must help each other to make our security system inseparable. Therefore, I think that bilateral relations should introduce the Tehran-Moscow alliance as a unique strategic entity in Eurasia, based on their traditional values and rejection of any kind of hegemony.

The key to Russia's total political sovereignty and the key to Iran's total geopolitical sovereignty depend precisely on these bilateral relations. The same applies to the economy and military industries. We must consider each other as part of a unique Eurasian region. Understanding this system is essential not only for Russia but also for Iran because together we can overcome almost all existing strategic problems. Our cooperation in Syria and, on a



Aleksander Dugin

smaller scale, in Ukraine are examples of how Russia and Iran can achieve their goals by cooperating with each other.

The truly comprehensive agreement covers broader po-

litical, economic, and cultural dimensions than previous agreements. Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, has described this agreement as great and unprecedented. Why does Moscow describe this agreement with such lofty phrases?

Well, this agreement is very important for Russia, and that's why Maria Zakharova called it a great and unprecedented agreement. It's time to lay solid foundations for a multipolar world order. Imagine that Iran and Russia conclude a kind of strategic alliance; they can then become superpowers together, much more powerful than any other pole. I think that with Iran's help, Russia can become the superior pole in the world, and Russia can also help Iran defend its sovereignty forever. Therefore, if we are together, we can potentially realize a lot of our common interests.

According to Russian officials, the agreement includes cooperation in the fields of energy, transportation, industry, agriculture, and culture, which can serve as a turning point in the relations between the two countries. Moreover, it apparently also includes joint investments in media cooperation, education, space programs, and joint banking payment systems, areas where both countries are under pressure due to Western sanctions. To what extent can this agreement neutralize Western sanctions against both countries?

This agreement will create many

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The two countries must respect each other's total sovereignty and, at the same time, be in agreement with each other to be able to use each other's capacities.

instances to establish a new geo-political institution, around which we should develop all other technical aspects of our cooperation in industry, finance, culture, media, and services. This is because we have the same enemies and challenges and we are not going to create any stress or challenge for each other. Therefore, our cooperation must be multi-faceted and very deep, a kind of strategic integration with both participants preserving and strengthening their cultural, strategic, and political identities more and more. The two countries must respect each other's total sovereignty and, at the same time, be in agreement with each other to be able to use each other's capacities.

Cooperation between the two countries is very important, especially regarding the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Kazem Jalali, the Iranian ambassador to Russia, had said earlier that cooperation on this corridor, along with details about its implementation, was to be included in the comprehensive agreement. Why is the INSTC so important and what fruits can it yield for Iran and Russia after its complete realization?

The North-South Corridor project is a very important geo-political issue, so I completely agree with Mr. Jalali that this corridor is of vital importance for both countries. I must again draw attention to the fact that Iran and Russia are both suffering from Western sanctions. We must break down this wall of sanctions, and the North-South Corridor can greatly help with



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian arrives in Moscow to finalize a 25-year deal with Russia on January 17, 2025. [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)

this problem; for example, Russia can access the open waters through Bandar Abbas and other Iranian ports. Iran can also access the northern world and the Arctic through this corridor. Therefore, it can create great opportunities for both countries. I think that we can readjust the geo-economic balance in Eurasia, and by doing so, the interests of Iran and Russia will be fulfilled and then some. We

in Russia have made a lot of efforts to reach an agreement with Iran on the INSTC, which, of course, I cannot explain in detail, but there was a lot of tension inside Russia about this corridor, but we finally got our wish.

In recent months, some media outlets have addressed issues that highlight the different views between the two

countries. Are there serious disagreements between the two countries? What is the solution to resolve these disagreements?

If we can imagine what great power will be realized by the two countries after the joint strategic partnership agreement, then we can easily understand that there are people in the world who do not like this development at all and will even

try to destroy it in the future. For example, sometimes very strange statements are made by our Foreign Ministry regarding the islands belonging to Iran, and on the other hand, anti-Russian statements are sometimes made in Iran. Not to mention actions taken outside the two countries that try to prevent the unity of the two. First and foremost, there are Western countries that hate this

project. We must understand that the enemy has already built networks within and without our society and is trying to destroy this agreement. We in Russia still have a strong liberal lobby, and I am quite sure that something similar exists in Iran. They use various arguments, sometimes religious and sometimes nationalist, to weaken the relations between the two countries.

But the fact that this agreement is signed is evidence that we have been able to overcome the obstacles. There are no problems between Russia and Iran, but if our enemies hope that they can create discord between us and put Iran and Russia against each other, it will be a great detriment to both countries. The presidents of the two countries understand this very well.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) gestures toward Iran's top-ranking delegation before engaging in bilateral negotiations in the Kremlin on January 17, 2025.
● president.ir



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) smiles before leading his top-ranking delegations in bilateral negotiations with the Russian side in the Kremlin on January 17, 2025.
● president.ir

Iran-Europe ties independent of Iran-Russia ties



By Mohsen Pakaein
Iran's ex-ambassador to Azerbaijan

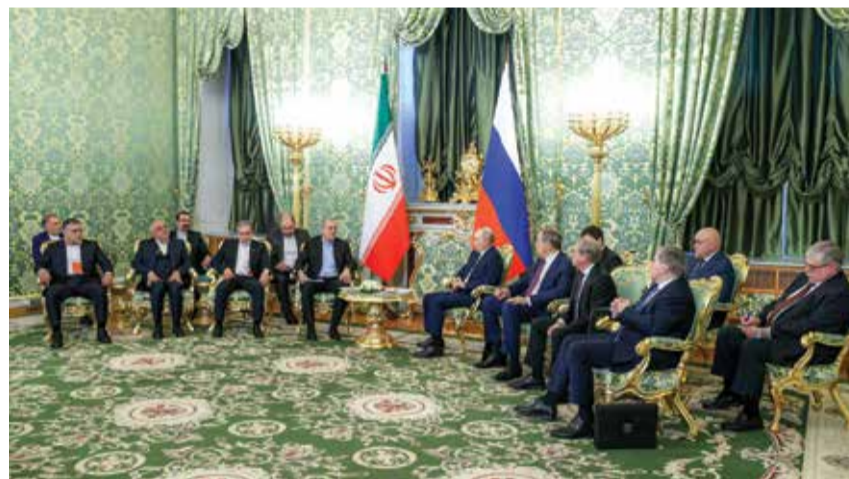
OPINION

The bilateral agreement between Iran and Russia indicates a strategic and long-term approach, pointing out that relations between the two countries are on a strategic path. This also shows a high level of trust between the two countries, as a strategic agreement typically covers various fields, including security, defense, and intelligence, and is long-term.

The comprehensive strategic agreement between Iran and Russia is a 20-year cooperation plan consisting of 47 articles and outlines various projects in fields such as trade, transit, energy, agriculture, tourism, as well as security, defense, and cultural issues. After the agreement is signed, it will be sent to the parliaments of both countries for approval, and once approved, it will be turned into a bill and sent to the Iranian Parliament by the Pezeshkian government. The Parliament will then discuss and provide feedback on the articles, and after the Guardian Council's approval, the implementation process will begin. Each Iranian ministry responsible for a particular task under the agreement will work with its counterpart in Russia to carry out the agreement.

This agreement is highly important for several reasons, one of which is its strategic outlook on relations. Some-

times Iran's relations with other countries are short-term, and agreements need to be renewed after a while. However, this agreement is different. It is also worth noting that the nature of this agreement is mostly economic. This shows that the two countries, which are currently facing unfair sanctions, are determined to make their economies resilient and are seeking strategic cooperation to achieve this goal, which is a positive point for the economies of both countries. Regarding the impact of developments in West Asia, particularly in Syria, on the signing of this agreement and the continuation of defense and security cooperation between Iran and Russia, it should be stated that the defense and security fields are very broad and not limited to one country or region. The developments in Syria were rapid and unpredictable, even for countries like Turkey, which were involved in



Iranian and Russian top-ranking delegations, led by their respective presidents, meet in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025.
● president.ir

designing the situation. However, Iran and Russia have been acting in harmony in West Asia, making decisions based on their interests, and there have been no particular issues between them in this regard. Therefore, the recent developments in Syria will not hinder the formation of military, defense, and security cooperation between Iran and Russia.

Iran's relations with Europe are independent of its relations with Russia, and there is no obstacle to holding negotiations with Europe to secure Iran's interests. Iran will continue

its relations with Russia and China while also negotiating with Europe, and these two issues are separate. Just as Iran has established close, friendly, and strategic relations with Russia and China, if Europe sets aside its negative approaches towards Iran, Iran can also have close relations and constructive dialogue with Europe. Therefore, Iran's relations with Russia should be defined independently of its relations with Europe.

The article first appeared in Farsi on ILNA.

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Just as Iran has established close, friendly, and strategic relations with Russia and China, if Europe sets aside its negative approaches towards Iran, Iran can also have close relations and constructive dialogue with Europe.

Commitment to building ...

The Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership Agreement is more than a diplomatic document; it is a testament to the will of the Russian and Iranian peoples to work together in pursuit of common goals. By formalizing cooperation in key areas such as trade, energy, security, and infrastructure, the agreement reflects a shared commitment to building a more interconnected and prosperous future. For the peoples of Russia and Iran,

this partnership is a source of pride and optimism. It demonstrates their nations' ability to overcome historical challenges and forge a path of mutual benefit. The agreement also sends a powerful message to the international community: that nations with shared values and interests can come together to address global challenges and promote a fairer and more balanced world order. By working together, the two nations are setting an example of how shared

history, values, and aspirations can serve as a foundation for meaningful and enduring partnerships. It is worth noting that editorial work on the document began two and a half years ago, in January 2022, during the presidency of Ebrahim Raisi, who passed away in May. Initially, the agreement was developed with the goal of elevating the status of Russian-Iranian relations. Both sides repeatedly announced that the final version of the agreement

was "ready for signing in the near future," but the signing was consistently postponed. This indicates that the level of detail and the scope of the agreements are unique within the framework of bilateral relations. Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized the importance of this partnership during a recent address, stating, "This agreement is a reflection of the trust and mutual understanding that has developed between our nations. It opens new opportuni-

ties for cooperation that will benefit not only our countries but also the broader region." The Kremlin also highlighted the economic benefits of the agreement, particularly in light of ongoing Western sanctions against both nations. By expanding trade and developing joint infrastructure projects, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Russia and Iran aim to create a more self-reliant and interconnected economic network.

Sepahan wins Iranian Clasico to lift Super Cup trophy



Sepahan players celebrate lifting the Iranian Super Cup trophy after a 1-0 victory over Persepolis at the Imam Khomeini Stadium, Arak, Iran, on January 17, 2025.

Sports Desk

Steven Nzonzi's early strike saw Sepahan edge Persepolis 1-0 in Arak's Imam Khomeini Stadium to win a maiden Iranian Super Cup title on Friday.

Former France international headed home an Arya Yousefi's long throw two minutes into the game as the Hazfi Cup champion lifted a first trophy under French head coach Patrice Carteron. Persepolis dominated the ball possession in both halves but was again wasteful in front of the goal, with Sepahan keeper Payam Niazmand denying the Tehran Reds on several occasions, as Karim Baqeri suffered a first defeat in three outings as the interim coach.

An assistant to his Spanish predecessor Juan Carlos Garrido, Baqeri went on to confirm in the post-match press conference that this was his last game in the caretaker role, urging the club hierarchy to hire the new manager ahead of a hectic fixtures list. Chasing an eighth domestic league crown in nine years, Persepolis will visit Zob Ahan on return to top-flight action on Tuesday, before taking on title rivals Tractor and Sepahan in the league and cup, as well as Saudi giants Al Hilal and Al Nassr in the AFC Champions League Elite, during a seven-game schedule over the next 30 days.

"We had more of the ball throughout the game but failed to capitalize on our chances and an error in marking in the early stages eventually cost us," Baqeri said after the game.

When asked about his future on the Reds bench, Baqeri said: "I already said yesterday that I wouldn't be the head coach under any circumstances after the Super Cup game. The club is working hard on it and I just hope the new manager is unveiled as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, Carteron was thrilled by the "morale-boosting" victory for his men in the quest to end their decade-long drought in the Iranian top division.

"The result will definitely have a positive impact on our campaign. Our team has had a better head-to-head record against Persepolis over the past 10 years, but they have won more trophies. So, we will just have to build on the confidence to continue with the right mindset and make sure we won't lose much points in the future league games," said the Frenchman, whose team has been unbeaten in seven games, winning five, since he took over from Portuguese Jose Morais in November. Sepahan is second to Tractor in the table on goal difference – three points clear of Persepolis in third – at the halfway point of league, resuming the competition at Chadormalou on Tuesday.

Iran confirms lineup for Karate 1-Premier League event in Paris

Sports Desk

Tokyo Olympic champion Sajjad Ganjzadeh will headline the Iranian squad in the upcoming 2025 Karate 1-Premier League season opener – starting Friday in Paris. Ganjzadeh will be joined by former Asian champion Saleh Abazari and Mahdi A'ashouri in the men's kumite +84kg contests, with Ali Meskini – an Asian silver and bronze medalist – and Amirreza Borzouei taking part in the -60kg and -67kg events respectively. Bahman Asgari – world champion in 2018 – will be among the favorites

for the ultimate prize in the -75kg weight class, and two-time world gold medalist Mahdi Khodabakhshi will represent the country in the -84kg competitions.

In the women's draw, Fatemeh Sadeqi will be chasing a second individual kata gold in two weeks, having stood atop the podium in the Karate 1-Series A event in Tbilisi earlier in January.

Ma'soumeh Mohsenian will be the Iranian girl in the kumite -50kg contests, while Taravat Khaksar (-55kg), Atousa Golshadnejad (-61kg), and Mobina Heidari (-68kg) will be looking to build on their bronze-win-

ning campaigns in last September's Asian Championships when making a first international appearance of the year.

Some 400 karatekas from 70 countries, including all 12 grand winners of last season's competitions, will vie for success in the French capital. The event comes after Iranians bagged 12 medals – including six golds through Sadeqi, Sara Bahmanyar, Mehrnegar Ahmadi, Vahab Shamir, Mahmoud Ne'mati, and Morteza Karimi in different men's and women's categories – to finish atop the table in the first Karate 1-Series A event in 2025.



Tokyo Olympic champion Sajjad Ganjzadeh (R) will represent Iran in the men's kumite +84kg contests at the Karate 1-Premier League event in Paris.

Sinner swats aside Giron to reach Australian Open fourth round

Italy's Jannik Sinner is in action during his Australian Open third-round match against American Marcos Giron in Melbourne, Australia, on January 18, 2025.

● KIM KYUNG-HOON/REUTERS



REUTERS – Defending champion Jannik Sinner was not at his fluent best but still had too much firepower for unseeded American Marcos Giron as he sealed a 6-3 6-4 6-2 win and reached the fourth round of the Australian Open on Saturday. Sinner came into the contest on Rod Laver Arena having won all 13 of his previous Grand Slam meetings against players from the United States and the Italian made a quick

start and never looked back as Giron's hopes faded with the setting sun.

"Every match has its own difficulties," said Sinner, who produced 35 winners but also had 37 unforced errors in a little over two hours of action.

"I struggled to return the first serve. I have room to improve but every win is great in these conditions. I'm happy to be in the next round." The top seed saved a late break

point and then served an ace to take the first set in only 34 minutes, before shrugging off a series of uncharacteristic errors on his forehand in the next to extend his lead in the match with a rasping winner. World number 46 Giron pulled back a break early in the next set but a foot injury left him unable to move freely and Sinner got his nose in front again and closed out a comfortable victory on serve.

PSG sign Napoli forward Kvaratskhelia until 2029

Paris St-Germain have signed Napoli forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia until June 2029.

The Georgia international, who was linked with Liverpool and Chelsea, asked to leave Serie A leaders Napoli last week after failing to agree a contract extension.

While no details of the transfer fee have been disclosed, reports say French champions PSG have paid 70m euros (£59m) plus add-ons for Kvaratskhelia.

"It's a dream to be here," said the 23-year-old winger. "I've heard so many positive things about PSG."

"I feel immense pride in joining this great club and I'm really looking forward to wearing my new colours."

Kvaratskhelia – who was part of the Georgia side that reached the last 16 at Euro 2024 – was dubbed 'Kvaradona' by supporters during Napoli's title-winning campaign, after the club's iconic player Diego Maradona.

He joined Napoli in 2022 for £9m from Georgian club Dinamo Batumi and has claimed a

combined 54 goals and assists in 107 appearances.

Kvaratskhelia is PSG's first signing of the January transfer window and becomes the first Georgian player in the club's history. "Khvicha is one of the most exciting players in world football – a fantastic talent, but also a

player who has courage and fights for the team above all else," the club said.

PSG are seven points clear of Marseille at the top of Ligue 1 and visit Lens on Saturday, before hosting Manchester City in the Champions League on Wednesday.



Two senior judges assassinated in Tehran; shooter takes own life

National Desk

Two high-profile Iranian judges were killed in a shooting attack on Saturday at the Supreme Court building in the capital Tehran.

A statement issued by the Judiciary identified the judges as Ali Razini, 71, and Mohammad Moghiseh, 68, saying that they worked on cases fighting crimes against national security, espionage and terrorism.

"This morning, a gunman infiltrated the Supreme Court in a planned act of assassination of two brave and experienced judges. The two judges were martyred in the act," Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir said.

Jahangir said the assailant "killed himself" after the shootings, adding that a bodyguard of the judges was also injured in the attack.

The motive behind their killing were not immediately clear. Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident. "We hope to be able to quickly publish the results of the follow-ups to arrest those involved" in the incident, Jahangir said.

According to the preliminary investigation, the attacker was not involved in any cases before the Supreme Court.

Razini, 71, held several important positions in Iran's judiciary and was previously targeted in an assassination attempt by

assailants "who planted a magnetic bomb in his vehicle," according to Mizan news agency. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in a statement extended condolences to the families of the judges over the "cowardly and inhumane terrorist act" and called for quick investigation into the shooting attack.

Iran's Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei also in a statement extended condolences over the deaths of the judges.

Ejei praised the two judges, saying that they were constantly at the forefront of achieving justice and securing the rights of the oppressed during their tenures.



Mohammad Moghiseh

Ali Razini

Envoy says Japan aims to help Iran bolster global interactions



Tsukada Tamaki
ISNA

International Desk

The Japanese ambassador to Iran Tsukada Tamaki said 2025 will be an important year in the world and Japan is trying to play an important role in strengthening Iran's interactions with the international community.

"Given the existing capacities in Iran and Japan, and considering the new approach of the Iranian government in interacting with the international community and its desire to attract foreign investment, it is expected that cooperation between the two countries will increase (in the future)," Tamaki made the comments in an interview with ISNA in the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi.

Tamaki also emphasized the need to expand cooperation between the private sectors of the two countries.

He said that the private sector in Japan avoids facing a crisis, but if sanctions imposed on Iran are lifted, Japan is willing to invest in various sectors in Iran and improve cooperation between the two countries' private and public

sectors. Therefore, facilitating interaction between the private sectors of the two countries can help the expansion of economic relations between Tehran and Tokyo, the Japanese ambassador said.

He also noted that Japan and Iran will celebrate 100 years of diplomatic relations in 2029.

"This is a very good opportunity to hold an important event, especially for cultural exchanges between the two countries. In addition to paying attention to the history of Iran-Japan relations, we can also focus on the future of bilateral relations."

Referring to Iran's industrial sectors that have high potential for investment, Tamaki said, "We are moving towards decarbonization, and in this transitional period, working on some energy areas is a good business opportunity."

Tamaki pointed to green ammonia technology and its use in the energy market and said it will have a very good market in the transition to decarbonization.

Gaza cease-fire takes effect today



A boy runs with a Palestinian flag past tents at a camp for people displaced by conflict in the central Gaza Strip on January 17, 2025.

EYAD BABA/AFP



A cease-fire in the Gaza war will begin on Sunday morning, Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesperson announced in a post on X.

"As coordinated by the parties to the agreement and the mediators, the cease-fire in the Gaza Strip will begin at 8:30 am (0630 GMT) on Sunday," Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said on Saturday.

The deal was approved after more than 460 days of war in which Israeli forces have killed more than 46,788 Palestinians and wounded 110,453. It would see the release of 33 captives held in Gaza over the next six weeks, in exchange for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The remainder, including male soldiers, are to be released in a second phase that will be negotiated during the first.

Hamas has said it will not release the remaining captives without a lasting cease-fire and a full Israeli

withdrawal.

Israel's justice ministry said 737 Palestinian prisoners and detainees would be freed as part of the deal's first phase -- none before 4:00 pm (1400 GMT) on Sunday.

In more than 15 months of war Israel's war on Gaza, there has been only one previous truce, for one week, in November 2023. That deal also saw the release of hostages held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

The office of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed the deal "supports achieving the objectives of the war" after the cabinet approved the deal.

But Hamas said Israel had "failed to achieve its aggressive goals" and "only succeeded in committing war crimes that disgrace the dignity of humanity".

Leader of the Lebanese group Hezbollah, Naim Qassem, congratulated the Palestinians for reaching

the deal, saying it proved the "persistence of resistance" against Israel. "This deal, which was unchanged from what was proposed in May 2024, proves the persistence of resistance groups, which took what they wanted while Israel was not able to take what it sought," he said. Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas said the Palestinian Authority, which has partial administrative control in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has completed preparations "to assume full responsibility in Gaza" after the war.

In Gaza, meanwhile, Israeli forces kept up heavy attacks.

Nearly 120 Palestinians killed by Israeli bombardment since Wednesday when the cease-fire announced by mediators.

On Saturday, Gaza's civil defense rescue agency said at least five members of a family were killed when a strike hit their tent in Khan Yunis, in southern Gaza.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



'Far from reality': Armed Forces debunk new speculations on Raisi's death

National Desk

Iran's Armed Forces in a statement on Saturday dismissed new speculations on the death of former Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi after he was killed in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran in May last year. The statement said that an extensive investigation conducted by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran had concluded that "merely complicated weather and geographical conditions of the region" had caused the crash in a mountainous area in Iran's northwest.

It dismissed as "far from reality" any speculations about technical failures,

sabotage, terrorist attacks, explosions, or electronic warfare.

The statement said that the unfounded claims in the social media on the death of Raisi arise from ignorance, lack of knowledge, or are made for specific purposes. The Armed Forces' reaction came after Mojtaba Mousavi, brother of the head of Raisi's security team, Mehdi Mousavi, in an interview said that his brother had been opposed to the trip to Azerbaijan border "but at the insistence of the president's office, he finally fulfilled his inherent duty."

Other less known officials also recently claimed that "electronic warfare and cyberattacks" might have played a role in



the tragic incident.

Late president Raisi along with Mehdi Mousavi, foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other dignitaries lost their lives after their helicopter crashed into the mountains in East Azerbaijan Province on May 19.

Iranian students shine at South Korea Olympiad with three medals

Social Desk

Young Iranian inventors received two gold medals and one silver medal at the 7th International Creative Papers Conferences and Olympics (ICPC) in South Korea.

Mehdi Rashidi-Jahan, the head of the Iranian student teams, expressed pride in their success, stating, "The young Iranian inventors have excelled in this international competition."

Hosted by the Korea University Invention Association, the competition was held from January 16 to 17, attracting participants from 13 countries including the US, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China, IRNA reported.

Rashidi-Jahan noted that the competition encompassed a wide range of fields, including mechatronics, artificial intelligence, programming, electronics, chemistry and nanotechnology, biotechnology, cognitive sci-

ences, renewable energies, physics, and astronomy.

Highlighting the achievements of the Iranian teams, Rashidi-Jahan announced that the duo of Alireza Jafarnejad and Mehran Rajabi won a gold medal in the mechatronics category, while the team of Moayyed Rajabi and Helena Rajabi secured another gold in artificial intelligence.

"These two golds are a significant accomplishment for Iran at the International Research and Inventions Olympiad," he remarked.

Additionally, Rashidi-Jahan revealed that the research papers of the winning teams would be published in reputable South Korean journals.

He also mentioned that the team comprising Taha Kanani and Mohammad Hossein Rahmani earned a silver medal in the chemistry and nanotechnology category, further showcasing the talent of Iranian students on an international stage.



Iranian photographer picked as juror for Russia's 35AWARDS



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian photographer Mehdi Mohebi Pour was selected as a juror for the 35 International Photography Awards (35AWARDS) in Russia.

He who was picked as the 2022 Environmental Photographer of the Year for his

single photo "The Bitter Death of Birds", is part of a distinguished panel of 50 judges selected from 50 different countries for this year's competition, IRNA reported.

According to the official website of the event, the 35AWARDS is an interna-

tional photography competition established in 2015 by the creators of the professional photography community 35 (35photo.pro).

The inaugural edition of the awards attracted 36,000 participants from 110 countries, while the seventh edition saw participation from over 124,000 entrants across 174 countries, with more than 470,000 photographs submitted for consideration.

The awards emphasize a rigorous three-stage voting system, where the criteria for selection become increasingly stringent at each stage. The objective of the competition is to identify the top 100 works of the year across various categories. Since 2017, the awards have recognized the top 100 photographers annually based on their three best works.

Iraq eager to utilize Iran's experiences to develop scientific, technological infrastructure: Minister



Arts & Culture Desk

Iraq is eager to utilize Iran's valuable experiences to develop its scientific and technological infrastructure, said Iraq's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Naeem al-Aboudi in a recent meeting with the Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei Saraf. Both officials emphasized the importance of enhancing academic collaboration between their countries, IRNA reported.

Simaei Saraf expressed Iran's readiness to share its expertise in establishing science and technology parks and promoting the exchange of students and professors.

During their discussions in Baghdad, the two ministers highlighted the necessity of creating

joint educational programs tailored to meet Iraq's scientific and research needs.

Al-Aboudi reiterated the call for increased exchanges, stating that fostering relationships between universities would benefit both nations.

He identified the development of science and technology parks as a key priority for Iraq, recognizing Iran's achievements in this area as a model to follow.

The meeting underscores the significant role that Iraqi graduates from Iranian universities play in bolstering scientific and cultural ties, with Al-Aboudi referring to them as "ambassadors of science and culture."

The discussions took place ahead of the Second Iran-Iraq Science Week, which is being held at the University of Karbala from January 18 to 20.

Iran ranks third worldwide in clinical trials for traditional medicine

Social Desk

Iran is now ranked third in the world for the registration of clinical trials in traditional and complementary medicine, according to a health official.

Arman Zargaran, the international consultant at the Iranian Traditional and Complementary Medicine Office of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education stated, "This achievement indicates that Iran is on the path to becoming a global leader in traditional and complementary medicine research."

Zargaran emphasized that Iran

is currently among the top three countries globally in terms of clinical trial registrations in this field, ILNA reported.

He credited this success to the dedication and efforts of Iranian researchers who, despite facing various challenges, have made significant strides in producing reliable scientific evidence.

"Approximately 3% of all registered clinical trials in the country pertain to traditional and complementary medicine," he noted, highlighting that only 0.3% of the ministry's academic staff are specialists in these areas.

This statistic underscores the

potential of Iranian researchers to advance evidence-based medicine.

Plus, Zargaran pointed out that these accomplishments not only enhance Iran's standing in the global arena of traditional medicine research but also serve as a model for other countries interested in developing evidence-based practices in this domain. However, he stressed the need for increased support from scientific and research institutions to sustain this progress and effectively utilize the potential available in this field.

Zargaran remarked, "These



achievements demonstrate that Iran is on the path to becoming one of the world leaders in traditional and complementary medicine research," adding that this trajectory could play a crucial role in improving community health and advancing evidence-based medical practices.

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