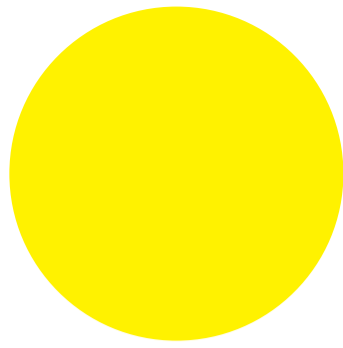


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Pezeschkian hails mass inauguration of Road Ministry projects



President Masoud Pezeschkian (R) and Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd are briefed on infrastructure and civil projects during an inauguration ceremony in the capital Tehran on February 4, 2025. president.ir

Iran welcomes domestic, foreign investment in gas fields

OPINION EXCLUSIVE



By Mohammad Bahrami
Deputy chair of Parliament's Energy Committee

Investment in the development of Iran's gas fields, particularly in boosting pressure in the shared South Pars field, is a top priority for the nation. Neglecting such a crucial issue could lead to reservoir pressure decline and reduced production. Therefore, the government warmly welcomes both domestic and foreign investment in the development of gas fields. One particularly promising avenue is harnessing domestic capabilities for gas production at South Pars, which would substantially ramp up the country's gas output. Given the current situation, where Iran faces sanctions, the country faces limitations in collaborating with major foreign companies. Thus, leveraging the capacity of domestic firms will undoubtedly be beneficial. The government is eager to partner with domestic companies that possess the necessary capabilities and the Parliament will take action to introduce them to the Oil Ministry, providing necessary support. [Page 7 >](#)

Intersection of Japanese art, architecture at Tehran's Silk Road exhibition



EXCLUSIVE The 'Art and the Space in Between; Iran-Japan' exhibition, running from January 7 to February 7 at the Kamalolmolk Gallery in Tehran, showcases the works of prominent Japanese artists, including three Pritzker Prize winners. Organized by the University of Tehran's Faculty of Architecture and supported by the Japanese Embassy, the exhibition features the intricate concepts of space and time—encapsulated in the Japanese term "Ma"—while celebrating the artistic legacy of Arata Isozaki and fostering intercultural dialogue along the historic Silk Road. The exhibition features a collection of installations focusing on space, thresholds, and comparative studies of the Silk Road. The exhibition, subtitled 'Journey Along the Silk Road,' features key concepts of Japanese art and aims to enhance intercultural studies, facilitating the exchange of ideas and artistic expressions along the Silk Road. It includes works from three acclaimed Pritzker Prize-winning Japanese architects: Arata Isozaki, Shigeru Ban, and Ryue Nishizawa. [See page 8 >](#)



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Iran-Russia cooperation in energy industry

Opportunities, challenges and global implications

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

The relationship between Iran and Russia in the energy sector has always fluctuated between cooperation and competition. From when they were empires to this day, this relationship has been influenced by geopolitical variables, economic developments, and international pressures. At times, shared needs and external pressures have brought the two countries closer, while at other times, differences in national interests and political approaches have created uncertainties in their cooperation. At a time when the global energy market faces challenges such as economic sanctions, regional crises, the decline of traditional energy resources, and increasing interest in alternative energy sources, global policies have also shifted toward fundamental changes. In recent years, many developed countries have witnessed a rise in nationalist and right-wing tendencies, prioritizing protectionist policies and reducing dependency on foreign markets. This shift has impacted the global economic order and cast a shadow over international energy relations. [See page 4 >](#)

Pezeshkian hails mass inauguration of Road Ministry projects

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian highlighted the inauguration of 82,590 urban and rural housing units valued at over 74 trillion tomans (\$925 million), 2,296 transportation projects worth more than 52 trillion tomans (\$650 million), and 85 meteorology projects with a budget of 200 billion tomans (\$2.5 million).

He stated that the scale of these inaugurations demonstrates the serious and determined efforts of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

Speaking at a ceremony for the inauguration and operation of over 120 trillion tomans (\$1.5 billion) worth of projects by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development on Tuesday, Pezeshkian expressed gratitude to all attendees and noted that a significant achievement had been made.

The president also thanked previous administrations for initiating these projects and acknowledged all those involved in their construction.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Min-

ister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd, emphasized the massive scale of the projects being inaugurated.

She noted that some of these projects had been in progress for decades, with the public eagerly awaiting their completion, which has now been realized.

The minister also outlined the current administration's plans for land provision and housing construction, stressing the careful selection of suitable land for urban development and housing.

She announced the unveiling of 10 comprehensive urban plans in the first five months of the administration (since August 2024) and the addition of 4,400 hectares of carefully evaluated land to urban areas for housing construction.

Additionally, she detailed the government's programs to improve accident-prone areas on the country's roads. While the road accident fatality rate remains high, the minister noted that fatalities on intercity roads had been reduced from over 13,000 last Iranian year to around 11,000.



CBI tasked with regulating cryptocurrency market

Economy Desk

In a letter to the governor of the Central Bank of Iran on Tuesday, President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that the CBI is the sole entity authorized to oversee, regulate, and issue guidelines for the cryptocurrency market.

He emphasized that all individuals and businesses operating in the cryptocurrency sector are subject to the CBI's supervision and must obtain the required licenses from the bank to establish and operate, according to president.ir.

Pezeshkian, in his letter to CBI governor Mohammadreza Farzin, clarified that based on the law ratified on June 20, 2023 by the Parliament, the CBI is the exclusive authority for organizing the cryptocurrency market.

"This includes determining permissible holdings and exchanges, as well as being the sole body responsible for licensing, regulation, supervision, and issuing necessary instructions for both global and stablecoin cryptocurrencies."

All natural and legal persons and businesses active in the cryptocurrency sector are considered under the supervision of the CBI as their establishment and operations are contingent upon obtaining a license from the bank, Pezeshkian added in his letter.

The CBI will have direct and primary access to all data, statistics, information, and documents of entities operating in the cryptocurrency sector.



Veep: Gov't not to allow rivalry between state companies, private firms



Economy Desk

Vice President Mohammadreza Aref emphasized that the government would not permit any state-owned companies to compete with private firms under any circumstances during the current administration.

"We are committed to creating a favorable environment for strong private companies," he stated.

During a meeting with members of the Association of Exporters of Techno-Engineering Services, Aref praised Iranian engineers working both domestically and abroad, calling them a "source of pride" for Iran.

He highlighted their skill and ethical standards, recounting a conversation with a neighboring country's official who expressed full trust in Iranian engineers, technicians, and workers for their quality of work and adherence to ethical principles.

Aref acknowledged the challenges faced by Iranian engineers and contractors in securing contracts with foreign countries, despite their strong interest in doing so.

He noted that even within Iran, many are owed significant sums to the government, yet they continue to work diligently and with motivation for the country. The VP also commended the engineers for their contributions to major domestic projects, such as highway construction, dam building, and housing development and stressed that addressing their challenges is a priority for the government, particularly given the difficulties posed by international pressure and sanctions.

Key to achieving Seventh Development Plan goals

Aref stated that reaching the growth targets outlined in the Seventh Development Plan (2024-28) would be difficult without the contributions of technical and engineering service exporters. He urged exporters to take their work more seriously than ever, emphasizing the importance of deepening ties with the Eurasian Economic Union.

He encouraged companies to explore opportunities in

countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia, which share cultural ties and a strong interest in cooperation with Iran. He also called on experienced members of the association to mentor younger professionals, advising them to focus on long-term goals rather than quick profits. Aref emphasized the importance of offering competitive pricing and superior quality to attract foreign partners and leave a positive legacy for Iran.

Avoiding internal competition

Aref reiterated that Iranian companies should not compete against each other, especially in international projects. He assured that the government would prioritize private companies over state-owned entities in such cases, pledging strong support for the private sector to enhance its activity.

He also highlighted the upcoming implementation of a free trade agreement with EAEU countries, urging Iranian companies to prepare for stronger engagement in

the region.

Government guarantees for exporters

During the meeting, members of the association raised concerns about the impact of sanctions on their ability to secure bank guarantees, which has hindered their operations.

They estimated that resolving these issues could boost exports of technical and engineering services to at least \$6 billion in the first year.

Aref ordered a comprehensive review of the challenges related to issuing government guarantees for Iranian companies affected by sanctions. He instructed the ministries of industry, mine and trade, economy, and foreign affairs, along with other relevant bodies, to propose solutions to address these issues.

The association members also identified resolving FATF-related issues as a critical step for increasing exports and securing projects in target countries. They proposed restoring export incentives as another measure to support the sector.

Iran, Lufthansa in talks to resume flights: Deputy minister

Iranian Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Amirani said that Iran and German aviation group Lufthansa are in talks to resume flights.

Amirani, who is also the acting chairman of Iran's Airports and Air Navigation Company, said on Monday that Lufthansa and the company will hold their final meeting "within the next 24 hours," IRNA reported.

"We will soon witness flights carried out by this aviation group in our country," he said, without giving an exact date and details on the planned flights.

Amirani also said that the number of transit flights over Iranian airspace has increased as a security advisory by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) expired last Friday.



The Iranian official said that EASA had issued its advisory on November 29, 2024, asking air operators to monitor airspace developments in Iran and other parts of West Asia amid tensions in the region.

Iranian skies have enjoyed full security, with more than 700 transit flights taking place on a daily basis, he added.

On January 13, Head of the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAOI) Hossein Pourfarzaneh announced that the Islamic Republic would resume flights to Europe in February.

Flights between Iran and Europe were suspended in mid-October 2024 after the EU imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic over allegations that it had sent drones to Russia for use in the Ukraine war. Iran vehemently denied the allegations.

Discovering magic of winter in Iran's scenic villages

Iranica Desk

Several villages in Iran are renowned for their exceptional winters, offering a unique and pure experience for tourists during the winter season as well as in spring and summer. The snowy villages of Iran invite you to embark on a winter journey. When planning your trip to these picturesque villages, be sure to check access routes beforehand and bring safety equipment such as tire chains.

Masuleh

The stunning view of Masuleh village in Gilan Province with its traditional windows, unique terraced houses, and beautiful trees dotting every corner, captivates all who see it. Masuleh is one of those attractions that will have you returning multiple times. Be sure to plan at least one of your visits to the enchanting site in winter so you don't miss the breathtaking winter scenery. In 1975, Masuleh was registered on Iran's National Heritage List and is now recognized as one of the smallest cities in Iran. This charming attraction resembles a painting in winter, offering extraordinary scenery for photography enthusiasts, according to IRNA.

On snowy days, locals begin shoveling snow off the roofs and yards of their houses, while fog and cold blanket the alleys. If you dress warmly enough, the cold can be delightful, especially when accompanied by a warm drink. Masuleh is one of those attractions that becomes quiet in winter, allowing you to find accommodations to escape pollution and enjoy the serene winter nature, spending dreamy days in the cozy, secluded, and wintry atmosphere of Masuleh. After wandering through the winding staircases, treat yourself to a cup of a warm drink by the oil heater. To reach Masuleh, start your journey from the city of Fuman; after an hour of driving, you will arrive in Masuleh. Be cautious of the roads in winter, and definitely bring tire chains with you.

Abyaneh

Abyaneh village, Isfahan Province, shines like a red gem in the heart of Isfahan Province. Situated about 2,200 meters above sea level, it is one of the highest villages in Iran. The houses of Abyaneh are constructed from red clay, and winter presents a different face of the village; snow blankets the red earth, creating a unique and captivating landscape. The narrow, winding alleys of the village become covered with snow, and the chimneys of the houses emit smoke, offering a delightful winter scene that feels like a postcard for tourists.

Due to Abyaneh's unique geographical location, the number of visitors significantly decreases in autumn, with only a few daring individuals braving the cold conditions to witness the village's winter beauty. Traveling to Abyaneh in winter

comes with its challenges. There may be closures or limited services in restaurants and tourist facilities; therefore, if you plan to visit Abyaneh during this season, be sure to prepare and plan accordingly. Accessing Abyaneh is quite straightforward; it can be reached via the Kashan-Natanz-Isfahan highway. Alternatively, you can take the Persian Gulf highway, which connects Qom to Isfahan.

Kandovan

One of Iran's most unique villages is Kandovan, known for its remarkably strange and distinctive architecture. Located in East Azarbaijan Province, Kandovan attracts both domestic and foreign tourists every year. The village is recognized as one of the unparalleled examples of rock villages in the world. Kandovan experiences cold and long winters, and the cone-shaped houses carved into the rocks, covered with snow, create a breathtaking and postcard-worthy landscape. In winter, the cold and silence envelop the village, transforming it into a tranquil haven for those seeking a different experience for a few days. Traveling to Kandovan in winter requires considerable preparation. It is advisable to bring warm clothing, suitable shoes for icy and snowy conditions, and food supplies. To reach Kandovan, you can travel from Tabriz to Azarshahr and then to Kandovan; however, it's important to check the road conditions before starting your journey. The area is entirely mountainous, and heavy snowfall in winter can lead to road blockages. Despite the challenging winter conditions, a trip to Kandovan is worthwhile, as the beauty you'll experience there makes braving the cold an unforgettable adventure.

Deylaman

Deylaman is part of the Siahkal in Gilan Province and can be considered one of the oldest human settlements in the area. With its unique mountainous nature, this destination is significant for travel in the spring and summer; however, it offers a different experience in winter. Throughout the winter, all the pastures in the region are covered in snow, providing a stunning vista. Deylaman takes on a calm and frosty appearance in winter, showcasing its unique beauty. Heavy snowfall transforms the region's lush greenery into a pristine blanket of white. Nonetheless, before traveling to this cold region, keep in mind that heavy snowfall often leads to road blockages. Therefore, pay attention to weather warnings during these seasons and travel cautiously.

Palangan

Palangan is a beautiful terraced village located in Kurdistan Province, near the border with Kermanshah Province. Much like Masuleh, Palangan features terraced houses arranged so that the rooftop of each home serves as the yard for the

house above it. The unique architectural style enhances the area's beauty while maximizing the use of mountainous terrain.

Throughout the seasons, Palangan shines like a paradise nestled in the mountains, showcasing stunning attractions, including towering peaks and flowing rivers in this fertile region. The village is situated about 57 kilometers from Kamyaran and is part of the broader Uraman area.

For those seeking adventure and a connection with nature during the colder months, Palangan is a picturesque winter destination. Its narrow streets and charming houses become blanketed in snow, creating a captivating landscape that delights nature lovers. However, it's essential to be well-prepared for travel to the winter village. To avoid road blockages, check weather forecasts in advance and plan your visit a few days after a snowfall to ensure clear roads while still enjoying the breathtaking winter scenery.

To reach Palangan, travel to Kermanshah, then head towards Kamyaran, and finally make your way to the village.

Uraman Takht

One of the many attractions of the beautiful Kurdistan Province is Uraman Takht village. Located in the western part of Kurdish Province, it borders Iraq to the west. In the Kurdish language, Uraman is a name that consists of two parts: "Ura" and "Man." Some interpretations suggest that "Ura" refers to "Ahura," leading to the translation of "Ahuraman" as "House of Ahura." The name has evolved over time but is still used to reference this beautiful village. Based on archaeological evidence, it is established that people have inhabited the region for approximately 40,000 years.

Uraman village is celebrated as one of the stunning terraced villages of Iran, which adds to its unique charm. The pyramid-like structure of the village is crowned with a historic fortress at the peak. In winter, Uraman Takht takes on an entirely different character. Heavy snowfall transforms the terraced houses into a mesmerizing, white-covered landscape. Although the cold during this season can be quite intense and navigating the terraced streets may pose challenges, the winter beauty of Uraman Takht is nothing short of magical. The stone houses blanketed in snow, along with the smoke rising from lit chimneys, combine with the tranquility and silence that reign in winter, creating a beautiful winter gift for lovers of the season. If you plan to visit the village in mid-winter, you can also participate in the traditional Pir Shaliar ceremony.

Sangan

Sangan village, a hidden gem in the northwest of Tehran, is known for its pristine nature and cool climate, making it an excellent destination

for escaping the hustle and bustle of city life. Situated at an altitude of 2,575 meters above sea level in the Alborz Mountains, Sangan boasts numerous natural and historical attractions. From the breathtaking Sangan Waterfall, which stands approximately 30 meters tall, to the shrines of Imamzadeh Qasem and the Pahneh Hesar Peak, each site offers its unique beauty.

In winter, Sangan reveals a stunning and serene view blanketed in white snow. The Sangan Waterfall, which dazzles in the warm seasons, transforms into an icy chandelier during winter, creating a spectacular sight. The silence and tranquility that envelop the village during this season provide an ideal opportunity to escape the noise of the city and immerse yourself in the unspoiled winter nature.

To reach Sangan, take the road leading to the shrine of Imamzadeh Davood. This road begins in the northwest of Tehran and reaches Sangan. However, it is important to note that traveling to Sangan in winter requires careful preparation and planning. Due to snowfall and freezing conditions, access routes to the village and pathways leading to the waterfall may become slippery and challenging.

Khur

The beautiful Khur village is located within the jurisdiction of Karaj, Alborz Province. Situated 17 kilometers from Karaj along the Chalous road, Khur serves as a cool retreat at the foothills of the Alborz Mountains, functioning not only as a summer destination but also as an integral piece of history and nature. Imagine a lush valley filled with ancient trees, a river breaking the mountain's silence with its melodic flow, and a waterfall cascading down from the rocks. The idyllic image captures a glimpse of Khur's beauty.

Despite its close proximity to the larger cities of Tehran and Karaj, the short distance allows visitors to escape the urban chaos. In this village, you can admire the beautiful Khur Waterfall, enjoy stunning views from Gandomchal Peak, and visit a centuries-old plane tree that is over 800 years old.

As winter arrives in Khur, the village transforms into a scene of enchanting beauty. The nearby Khur Ski Resort offers excellent opportunities for an exhilarating winter trip. Additionally, the Khur Waterfall transforms into an ice chandelier that sparkles in the sunlight, enhancing the winter experience. All of these attractions contribute to an exhilarating journey to the village.

To reach Khur, the best route is via the Karaj-Chalous road. After traveling approximately 17 kilometers from Karaj and before reaching the Karaj Dam, an exit on the left side of the road will direct you towards the village of Khozankala. The road is paved, but be sure to have tire chains ready during winter for a safe journey.



Masuleh
● IRNA



Abyaneh
● yjc.ir



Kandovan
● nasrnews.ir



Deylaman
● yjc.ir



Palangan
● foundation.app



Khur
● travel.mhkarami97.ir



Sangan
● hamhava.com



Uraman Takht
● IRNA



By Amin Shojaei
Guest contributor

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

The relationship between Iran and Russia in the energy sector has always fluctuated between cooperation and competition. From when they were empires to this day, this relationship has been influenced by geopolitical variables, economic developments, and international pressures. At times, shared needs and external pressures have brought the two countries closer, while at other times, differences in national interests and political approaches have created uncertainties in their cooperation.

At a time when the global energy market faces challenges such as economic sanctions, regional crises, the decline of traditional energy resources, and increasing interest in alternative energy sources, global policies have also shifted toward fundamental changes. In recent years, many developed countries have witnessed a rise in nationalist and right-wing tendencies, prioritizing protectionist policies and reducing dependency on foreign markets. This shift has impacted the global economic order and cast a shadow over international energy relations.

In this context, Iran-Russia cooperation in the energy sector stands at the intersection of domestic policies, geopolitical considerations, and international developments. On one hand, both countries seek to increase their share in the global market and reduce dependence on the West. On the other hand, the rise of nationalist policies in consumer countries and technological advancements have introduced uncertainties regarding the future of this partnership. Ultimately, rather than leading to a stable and effective collaboration, this alliance is entangled in structural challenges, regional rivalries, and unpredictable shifts in global politics. Some say that, given historical experiences and conflicting interests, the likelihood of this cooperation reaching a definitive and sustainable outcome appears weak, and it may eventually be reduced to a limited and fragile interaction under the pressure of international developments and nationalist policies of developed countries.

Iran-Russia cooperation in energy industry

Opportunities, challenges and global implications



SHUTTERSTOCK

Opportunities for cooperation

As two major energy powers, Iran and Russia collectively possess over 30% of the world's natural gas reserves and about 20% of the world's proven oil reserves. This vast potential provides a foundation for extensive collaboration in the extraction, production, and export of energy resources. Russia, with approximately 48 trillion cubic meters of natural gas reserves, holds the world's largest share, while Iran, with 34 trillion cubic meters, ranks second. In the oil sector, Iran possesses over 157 billion barrels of proven reserves, and

Russia holds more than 108 billion barrels, making both countries key players in the industry. Given the extensive sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union against both countries, bilateral cooperation enables them to reduce their dependence on Western financial and trade networks. In recent years, agreements such as the \$40 billion memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Russia's Gazprom and Iran's National Iranian Oil Company indicate the two nations' desire to strengthen their collaboration. This agreement includes invest-

ments in gas and oil field development, construction of export infrastructure, and the use of joint technologies to enhance production. Furthermore, Iran-Russia cooperation can reduce their dependence on Western markets and create alternative routes for energy exports. Projects such as the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline and initiatives to increase liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports to Asia illustrate the strategic approach both countries are adopting to diversify their export markets. Since Europe, which sourced about 45% of its gas from Russia in 2022,

now seeks to reduce this reliance, Iran and Russia have the opportunity to strengthen their presence in emerging markets such as China and India. Overall, Iran-Russia cooperation in the energy sector can contribute to their economic development and diminish Western influence in the global energy market, potentially altering the balance of power in the industry. However, realizing these opportunities requires overcoming infrastructural, financial, and geopolitical obstacles, making the path of this collaboration complex and rather uncertain.

Domestic, int'l challenges

Despite Iran and Russia's vast capacities in the energy sector, their cooperation faces multiple challenges at both domestic and international levels. One of the most significant obstacles is regional competition and conflicting interests, preventing the collaboration from reaching a long-term strategic level. Russia, as the world's largest natural gas exporter, supplied over 155 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe annually before the Ukraine crisis. Meanwhile, Iran, due to harsh sanctions, has been unable to secure a substantial share in the global gas market, and some say Russia, as a potential competitor, has little incentive to facilitate Iran's entry into European markets; Then again, they signed the cooperation agreement. In the oil sector, both countries are major exporters, and given the Western-imposed \$60 price cap on Russian oil, Moscow has been forced to sell its oil at a discount, increasing direct competition with Tehran in Asian markets such as China and India. Apart from these conflicts in interests, political instability and Western economic sanctions pose additional barriers. Both Iran and Russia face US and EU sanctions that restrict access to advanced technologies, foreign investments, and energy transportation infrastruc-



Since Europe, which sourced about 45% of its gas from Russia in 2022, now seeks to reduce this reliance, Iran and Russia have the opportunity to strengthen their presence in emerging markets such as China and India.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (l) answers a reporter's question while his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, looks on after signing a long-awaited strategic partnership agreement in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025.
president.ir

ture. Reports indicate that Western sanctions caused a 7% drop in Russia's oil production in 2023, while Iran, due to export restrictions, only exports about 1.5 million barrels of oil per day — far below its actual capacity. Moreover, the global financial system, dominated by the US dollar, complicates banking transactions and payments between Iran and Russia, forcing them to resort to barter trade and local currencies. Infrastructural difficulties and the need for massive investments also hinder energy cooperation between the two nations. Many of Iran's oil and gas fields require modern technology for extraction and production, but sanctions prevent Western companies from operating in Iran. At the same time, Russia, facing its own investment challenges, lacks the financial capacity to fund major energy projects in Iran. For instance, the development of Phase 11 of Iran's South Pars gas field — one of the world's largest — has faced delays since France's Total withdrew in 2018 due to sanctions and a lack of investment. While Iran needs over \$80 billion in investments to develop its oil and gas sector, Russia, struggling with declining energy

domestic production. This trend has directly affected Iran-Russia relations, making economic and trade interactions more difficult. One clear example of this shift is the recent US and European policies on energy security. After the Ukraine crisis and extensive sanctions on Russia, the European Union significantly reduced its reliance on Russian gas. In 2022, US liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports to Europe increased by over 140%, and Russia's share in Europe's gas supply fell from 45% in 2021 to less than 10% in 2023. This change indicates that even markets previously dependent on Russian energy are now seeking alternatives — a trend that could affect Iran and Russia's ability to secure new buyers. Furthermore, the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 allocated billions of dollars to renewable energy development, reducing reliance on fossil fuels. This policy led to a record-high US oil production of 13.2 million barrels per day in 2023, decreasing Western countries' need for Iranian and Russian energy and pushing these two countries to vie harder for Asian and African markets.



purchasing discounted Russian oil, is diversifying its imports from countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These developments suggest that even the Asian markets, which are currently attractive to Iran and Russia, may change course in the long term. In conclusion, the rise of economic nationalism and efforts to reduce reliance on foreign energy pose new challenges for Iran-Russia cooperation. As history has

competitions, and technological advancements in the energy sector. Examining these paths can provide a clearer view of the outlook for energy relations between the two countries.

Scenario one: Deepening cooperation and creating an independent energy bloc. In this scenario, Iran and Russia will expand their cooperation in the energy sector and seek to form an independent en-

ergy bloc separate from the West. Contracts such as the \$40 billion MoU between Gazprom and the National Iranian Oil Company, and efforts to develop joint projects in energy extraction and transportation, can strengthen this path. Moreover, given that Iran and Russia collectively hold over 65% of the world's gas reserves, they can play a more decisive role in the global energy market in this way. However, realizing this scenario requires massive investments, infrastructure development, and coping with Western pressures, which makes its implementation difficult.

Scenario two: Hidden competition and gradual reduction of cooperation. Despite official announcements of strategic cooperation, competition between Iran and Russia over energy markets, particularly in China, India, and Turkey, is a serious challenge. Following Western sanctions, Russia has increased its oil exports to Asian markets, and its share in China's oil market reached over 19% in 2023, while Iran's share in the same market was only 6%. Russia is seeking to maintain its position at any cost. In such circumstances, cooperation between the two countries may turn into an ongoing but imperceptible competition that reduces its importance in the long term.

Scenario three: External factors reducing Iran and Russia's influence. One of the main threats



The rise of economic nationalism and efforts to reduce reliance on foreign energy pose new challenges for Iran-Russia cooperation. As history has shown, global policy shifts can reshape trade routes, and this ongoing trend may further limit opportunities for Iran and Russia in the energy market.



Then-CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company Mohsen Khojastehmehr (C) is seen during the online ceremony of signing a memorandum of understanding worth around \$40 billion with Russia's Gazprom company on July 19, 2022, in Tehran. ● MOJTABA MOHAMMADGHOLI/SHANA

to both countries is the rapid changes in the global energy market and the reduction of the world's dependence on fossil fuels. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), global investment in renewable energy reached over 1.7 trillion in 2023, while investment in the fossil fuel sector was only 1 trillion. This indicates that in the coming decades, consumer countries will seek to reduce their dependence on oil and gas, a trend that can decrease demand for Iran and Russia's energy resources. If this scenario materializes, even the strategic alliance between the two countries cannot prevent their declining influence in the global market.

Future of uncertainty, susceptibility

While Iran and Russia seek to reduce reliance on the West and strengthen bilateral cooperation, factors such as competition for export markets, geopolitical instability, sanctions, and structural shifts in the global energy market could make this partnership fragile and temporary. For this cooperation to succeed, both countries must overcome internal and external challenges and adopt a long-term strategy.



revenues due to sanctions, cannot adequately support such projects. In summary, despite the political and economic incentives driving Iran and Russia toward closer energy cooperation, regional competition, sanctions, and infrastructure limitations create substantial barriers. The lack of a unified strategy and financial constraints obscure the long-term prospects of this alliance, making its full realization uncertain.

Impact of global policies, economic nationalism

In recent years, the rise of economic nationalism and protectionist policies in developed countries has challenged the traditional global energy market. What have further complicated international energy cooperation are the increasing efforts of governments to reduce reliance on foreign suppliers and boost do-

This kind of global change has taken place before. In the 1970s, following the 1973 oil crisis that took place after the Arab oil embargo against the West, many industrial countries set out to branch out their energy resources. This policy led to the development of oil reserves in the North Sea and a boost in domestic production in the US, which ultimately brought about a reduction in the West's dependence on Middle Eastern oil. Today, a similar move is taking place, and Western countries are not only looking to get away from their dependence on Russian and Iranian energy, but nationalist economic policies have also reinforced this trend. Even in Asia, significant shifts are occurring. China, one of the largest buyers of Iranian and Russian energy, is expanding its domestic energy production and developing shale gas projects. Meanwhile, India, despite

shown, global policy shifts can reshape trade routes, and this ongoing trend may further limit opportunities for Iran and Russia in the energy market.

Scenarios for future of cooperation

The cooperation between Iran and Russia in the energy sector is taking shape amidst a backdrop of numerous opportunities and challenges. Considering various geopolitical, economic, and technological variables, several probable scenarios can be envisioned for the future of this cooperation. These scenarios are influenced by factors such as Western sanctions, changes in global policies, regional



The jacket for the Belal Gas Field development project, constructed with a \$16 million investment, is loaded out from the Sadra Yard in Bushehr, southern Iran, on January 22, 2025. ● ALIREZA KHAZRAEI/SHANA



A reporter (standing-R) puts a question to the presidents of Iran and Russia after the two signed a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (front-2nd L) and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (front-L) are seen attending the event. ● president.ir



ture. Reports indicate that Western sanctions caused a 7% drop in Russia's oil production in 2023, while Iran, due to export restrictions, only exports about 1.5 million barrels of oil per day — far below its actual capacity. Moreover, the global financial system, dominated by the US dollar, complicates banking transactions and payments between Iran and Russia, forcing them to resort to barter trade and local currencies. Infrastructural difficulties and the need for massive investments also hinder energy cooperation between the two nations. Many of Iran's oil and gas fields require modern technology for extraction and production, but sanctions prevent Western companies from operating in Iran. At the same time, Russia, facing its own investment challenges, lacks the financial capacity to fund major energy projects in Iran. For instance, the development of Phase 11 of Iran's South Pars gas field — one of the world's largest — has faced delays since France's Total withdrew in 2018 due to sanctions and a lack of investment. While Iran needs over \$80 billion in investments to develop its oil and gas sector, Russia, struggling with declining energy

domestic production. This trend has directly affected Iran-Russia relations, making economic and trade interactions more difficult. One clear example of this shift is the recent US and European policies on energy security. After the Ukraine crisis and extensive sanctions on Russia, the European Union significantly reduced its reliance on Russian gas. In 2022, US liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports to Europe increased by over 140%, and Russia's share in Europe's gas supply fell from 45% in 2021 to less than 10% in 2023. This change indicates that even markets previously dependent on Russian energy are now seeking alternatives — a trend that could affect Iran and Russia's ability to secure new buyers. Furthermore, the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 allocated billions of dollars to renewable energy development, reducing reliance on fossil fuels. This policy led to a record-high US oil production of 13.2 million barrels per day in 2023, decreasing Western countries' need for Iranian and Russian energy and pushing these two countries to vie harder for Asian and African markets.



Then-CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company Mohsen Khojastehmehr (C) is seen during the online ceremony of signing a memorandum of understanding worth around \$40 billion with Russia's Gazprom company on July 19, 2022, in Tehran. **● MOJTABA MOHAMMADGHOLI/SHANA**

purchasing discounted Russian oil, is diversifying its imports from countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These developments suggest that even the Asian markets, which are currently attractive to Iran and Russia, may change course in the long term. In conclusion, the rise of economic nationalism and efforts to reduce reliance on foreign energy pose new challenges for Iran-Russia cooperation. As history has

competitions, and technological advancements in the energy sector. Examining these paths can provide a clearer view of the outlook for energy relations between the two countries.

Scenario one: Deepening cooperation and creating an independent energy bloc. In this scenario, Iran and Russia will expand their cooperation in the energy sector and seek to form an independent en-

ergy bloc separate from the West. Contracts such as the \$40 billion MoU between Gazprom and the National Iranian Oil Company, and efforts to develop joint projects in energy extraction and transportation, can strengthen this path. Moreover, given that Iran and Russia collectively hold over 65% of the world's gas reserves, they can play a more decisive role in the global energy market in this way. However, realizing this scenario requires massive investments, infrastructure development, and coping with Western pressures, which makes its implementation difficult.

Scenario two: Hidden competition and gradual reduction of cooperation. Despite official announcements of strategic cooperation, competition between Iran and Russia over energy markets, particularly in China, India, and Turkey, is a serious challenge. Following Western sanctions, Russia has increased its oil exports to Asian markets, and its share in China's oil market reached over 19% in 2023, while Iran's share in the same market was only 6%. Russia is seeking to maintain its position at any cost. In such circumstances, cooperation between the two countries may turn into an ongoing but imperceptible competition that reduces its importance in the long term.

Scenario three: External factors reducing Iran and Russia's influence. One of the main threats

The rise of economic nationalism and efforts to reduce reliance on foreign energy pose new challenges for Iran-Russia cooperation. As history has shown, global policy shifts can reshape trade routes, and this ongoing trend may further limit opportunities for Iran and Russia in the energy market.

Future of uncertainty, susceptibility

While Iran and Russia seek to reduce reliance on the West and strengthen bilateral cooperation, factors such as competition for export markets, geopolitical instability, sanctions, and structural shifts in the global energy market could make this partnership fragile and temporary. For this cooperation to succeed, both countries must overcome internal and external challenges and adopt a long-term strategy.



A reporter (standing-R) puts a question to the presidents of Iran and Russia after the two signed a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (front-2nd L) and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (front-L) are seen attending the event. **● president.ir**

revenues due to sanctions, cannot adequately support such projects. In summary, despite the political and economic incentives driving Iran and Russia toward closer energy cooperation, regional competition, sanctions, and infrastructure limitations create substantial barriers. The lack of a unified strategy and financial constraints obscure the long-term prospects of this alliance, making its full realization uncertain.

Impact of global policies, economic nationalism

In recent years, the rise of economic nationalism and protectionist policies in developed countries has challenged the traditional global energy market. What have further complicated international energy cooperation are the increasing efforts of governments to reduce reliance on foreign suppliers and boost do-

This kind of global change has taken place before. In the 1970s, following the 1973 oil crisis that took place after the Arab oil embargo against the West, many industrial countries set out to branch out their energy resources. This policy led to the development of oil reserves in the North Sea and a boost in domestic production in the US, which ultimately brought about a reduction in the West's dependence on Middle Eastern oil. Today, a similar move is taking place, and Western countries are not only looking to get away from their dependence on Russian and Iranian energy, but nationalist economic policies have also reinforced this trend. Even in Asia, significant shifts are occurring. China, one of the largest buyers of Iranian and Russian energy, is expanding its domestic energy production and developing shale gas projects. Meanwhile, India, despite

shown, global policy shifts can reshape trade routes, and this ongoing trend may further limit opportunities for Iran and Russia in the energy market.

Scenarios for future of cooperation

The cooperation between Iran and Russia in the energy sector is taking shape amidst a backdrop of numerous opportunities and challenges. Considering various geopolitical, economic, and technological variables, several probable scenarios can be envisioned for the future of this cooperation. These scenarios are influenced by factors such as Western sanctions, changes in global policies, regional

The jacket for the Belal Gas Field development project, constructed with a \$16 million investment, is loaded out from the Sadra Yard in Bushehr, southern Iran, on January 22, 2025. **● ALIREZA KHAZRAEI/SHANA**



AFC Champions League Elite: Esteghlal knockout hopes hanging by thread after Al Shorta draw

Sports Desk

Esteghlal's hopes of advancing to the AFC Champions League Elite last-16 were left in jeopardy after a frustrating 1-1 draw against Iraqi champion Al Shorta on Monday.

The Tehran Blues got off to a flying start to a first Asian home game at the iconic Azadi Stadium in nearly six years, finding the net through new signing Joel Kojo four minutes into the contest.

Esteghlal wing-back Abolfazl Jalali found the Kyrgyz international on the near post with a low cross, before Kojo's sliding effort found the bottom corner. The home side was on the back foot for the best part of the first half but could have still doubled the lead right before the break, when Mohammadreza Azadi's sizzling strike from the edge of the box came off the crossbar and then Ramin Rezaeian's header on the rebound went just wide.

Substitute Rewan Amin drew the visitors level four minutes after the restart.

Ameer Saba's corner was flicked across the goal by Ayoub Moudane's header and, after Mahmoud Al Mawas directed the ball back into the six-yard box from the far post, Amin hooked a goal-bound effort over his shoulder.

Esteghlal desperately pushed for a second goal afterwards and Rezaeian and Masoud Juma



Esteghlal wing-back Ramin Rezaeian is dejected during a 1-1 draw against Al Shorta in the AFC Champions League Elite at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on February 3, 2025.
● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

thought their sublime finishes had restored the lead, before both were denied by the offside flag.

The result kept the Blues in the eighth place of the West's 12-team table with six points but

they will likely have to beat Al Rayyan in Qatar on the final day of the league phase in two weeks to secure a top-eight finish.

Earlier in the day, second half goals from Mahmoud Trezeguet and Roger Guedes saw Al

Rayyan come from behind to beat defending champion Al Ain 2-1 and move up to sixth in the standings on eight points.

Al Shorta, meanwhile, is on the cusp of elimination, sitting second from bottom with three points.

'Fair result'

Esteghlal's Interim coach Sohrab Bakhtiarzadeh thought the final outcome was a "fair result."

"We pressed more in the second half and were looking to win but were not in our regular

form. We could have scored the second goal at the end of the first half, but it didn't happen," said the Iranian, who took charge of the Blues bench for a second spell this season after South African Pitso Mosimane walked away from his job last week.

"We took risks in the final minutes and made changes to put pressure and score. We had players on both wings who did what we wanted but despite these advantages, we were unable to score," Bakhtiarzadeh added.

Al Shorta boss Salah Alwan, meanwhile, was positive despite the result almost surely ending his team's campaign.

"Our team came to get three points, but this one point is good for us, and I'm happy with the result we got at Azadi Stadium. Esteghlal are a great team but we were better and controlled the entire pitch," said Alwan.

"It doesn't matter where we are in the standings or what our conditions are. We only think about getting better game by game in every league and every match, and we don't think about the table, and the table had no effect on our game."

Iran names 23-man squad for U20 Asian Cup

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Hossein Abdi announced the 23-man squad for the upcoming AFC U20 Asian Cup in China.

A winner of four successive titles in the 70s, Iran will begin its Group C campaign against Indonesia in Shenzhen on February 13.

Abdi's boys will then take on Yemen three days later before squaring off against defending champion Uzbekistan on February 19.

The top two of the group will

progress to the last-eight round, with the four semifinalists qualifying for the FIFA U20 World Cup in Chile in September.

Australia and Kyrgyzstan will go head-to-head in the opening match of the competition on Feb. 12 in Group A – also featuring the host and Qatar. Five-time champion Iraq, was beaten by Uzbekistan in the 2023 final, heads the Group B cast with Jordan, Saudi Arabia and North Korea also vying for the two quarterfinal spots. South Korea, the most deco-

rated team in the event with 12 titles, is in Group D alongside Japan, Syria, and Thailand.

The following is Iran's full squad for the tournament:

Goalkeepers: Arsha Shakouri (Havadar), Mohammad Gandomi (Persepolis), Armin Abbasi (Persepolis)

Defenders: Alireza Homaeifard (Persepolis), Hesam Nafari (Zob Ahan), Erfan Darivish-A'ali (Foolad Khuzestan), Ali Hassani (Foolad Khuzestan), Nima Andarz

(CD Leganes), Yaqoub Baraje'eh (Persepolis), Sina Mo'azamitabar (Fajr Sepasi), Mobin Dehqani (Khaybar), Abolfazl Zoleikhaei (Esteghlal)

Midfielders: Samir Hoboubati (Persepolis), Abolfazl Zamani (Esteghlal), Mahan Sadeqi (Malavan FC), Esmaeil Qolizadeh (Sepahan), Yousef Mzaraeh (Foolad Khuzestan), Abbas Kahrizi (Paykan), Amirmohammad Razaqinia (Golgozar)

Strikers: Mohammad Dindar (Havadar), Pouria Shahrabadi (Golgozar), Abolfazl Moredi (Foolad Khuzestan), Reza Ghandipour (Malavan FC).



● FFIRI



Devin Booker (L) shoots the ball to become the Suns' all-time leading scorer during an NBA game against the Trail Blazers in Portland, OR, US, on Feb. 3, 2025.
● IMAGN IMAGES

Booker breaks Suns scoring record in loss to Portland

BBC – Devin Booker became the Phoenix Suns' all-time leading points scorer against the Portland Trail Blazers on Monday – but it was not enough to earn victory. Booker topped the game's scoring charts with 34 points to surpass Suns legend Walter Davis' total of 15,666. However, he missed a free throw at the end of overtime that would have levelled the game, with Portland claiming a narrow 121-119 win. Booker reached the milestone with a three-pointer in the

third quarter, sparking a warm reception from the Portland crowd, before hugging his family on the sidelines at the next timeout.

The four-time All-Star has spent his entire career at the Suns, making 642 appearances since being 13th overall pick in the 2015 draft.

Davis, a six-time All-Star, played in 766 games for Phoenix between 1977 and 1988. Elsewhere, Jalen Brunson scored 42 points as the New York Knicks overturned an 11-point deficit in the fourth

quarter to beat the Houston Rockets 124-118.

The Oklahoma City Thunder extended their lead at the top of the Western Conference with a 125-96 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander top-scored with 34 points for the Thunder, who led by 44 points at one stage in the third quarter. A depleted Bucks side were without Giannis Antetokounmpo, Damian Lillard, Brook Lopez, Khris Middleton and Bobby Portis. The second-placed Memphis

Grizzlies beat the San Antonio Spurs 128-109, with Jaren Jackson Jr top-scoring with 31 points.

Trae Young scored the game-winning basket with 1.6 seconds left as the Atlanta Hawks won 132-130 at the Detroit Pistons to end their eight-game losing streak.

Nikola Jokic scored 27 points with 14 rebounds and 10 assists as the Denver Nuggets beat the New Orleans Pelicans 125-113, while the Golden State Warriors beat the Orlando Magic 104-99.

Iran FM: Resistance front should rebuild itself for future

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that the resistance front should rebuild itself and apply the lessons it has learned from the recent conflicts for the future. Addressing an international conference, dubbed 'Al-Aqsa Storm, Gaza, Narratives and Realities', the top Iranian diplomat said the resistance front in the region has gone through a difficult period, adding that he is confident it will return stronger than before. This is not the first time that Lebanon's resistance group Hezbollah has lost its leader, Araghchi said, adding that it became stronger after the loss of its previous leader and, "I am confident that it will become strong again."

Leader of the Hezbollah resistance movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was assassinated in an Israeli strike in Lebanon on September 27. Many commanders of the resistance movements in the region were also killed in the regime's attacks during its onslaught on the Gaza Strip and Lebanon over the past 16 months. The Iranian foreign minister, however, said the Israeli regime failed to achieve its goals in its aggression against Gaza and Lebanon. Araghchi said the Israeli regime has had a series of successes during the war, which are destruction of homes and the killing of civilians. Araghchi said they aimed to destroy Hamas, but after 16 months of massacre, they were forced to negotiate with the resistance fighters and make concessions.

Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire deal on January 17 to end the regime's attacks on the Gaza Strip, which came into effect on January 19. Since then, hundreds of Palestinians and several captives held in Gaza have been released under the agreement which has been mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the US. Humanitarian aid has been allowed to enter Gaza and patients have been allowed to leave Gaza for other countries for treatment as part of the ceasefire agreement.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addresses an international conference, dubbed 'Al-Aqsa Storm, Gaza, Narratives and Realities', in Tehran on February 4, 2025. IRNA

Gov't spox warns banks will be crippled by not joining FATF

National Desk

Iran's government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said that, "We will cripple our banks" by not accepting the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Mohajerani said in a weekly press conference on Tuesday

that the Palermo and the CFT conventions, to which Iran has yet to join, alongside the sanctions imposed on Iran have created problems for the country's banking system. She said that to create banking relations with the countries that Iran is cooperating with them, including the members of the BRICS group of emerging economies and Eurasian countries, "it is necessary to



Iran's government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani speaks during her weekly press conference in Tehran on February 4, 2025. IRNA

prove that we do not launder money, do not have organized cooperation with terrorism, and do not assist (terrorist) groups such as Boko Haram, etc."

Since January 12, Iran's Expediency Council has started re-examining various clauses of the Palermo and CFT conventions after the country's top leadership allowed

renewed discussions on the FATF case in the council. Restrictions imposed by the FATF on Iran's banking system will be removed once the country enacts the Palermo and the CFT conventions. The Iranian Parliament has approved the Palermo and the CFT, but Iran's Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting parliament legislation, has refused to

ratify them, citing the need for some amendments. Iran has approved other conventions and regulations adopted by the FATF. The renewed push to examine Iran's full accession to the FATF comes amid efforts by President Masoud Pezeshkian and his administration to open up to the world and to improve an economy affected by global inflation and foreign sanctions.

Iranian naval flotilla docks at UAE's port

International Desk

An Iranian naval flotilla docked at the United Arab Emirates' Sharjah's Khalid port early on Tuesday for the first such a move in defense relations between the two Persian Gulf countries. The naval fleet, comprising of vessels belonging to the Iranian Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy, was welcomed at the UAE's port by Emirati vessels and military

officials, as well as foreign diplomats and military attachés residing in the Persian Gulf country, and Iran's Ambassador to the Arab country, Reza Ameri. The naval visit comes amid growing relations between Iran and the UAE. Both countries have demonstrated serious will to strengthen their cooperation in all fields. On Monday, Commander of the IRGC's Navy Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri announced that four military ships from his force and

the Iranian Army's naval division will depart for the UAE for a friendly visit of the Arab nation's naval force. Tangsiri stated that the naval visit to the Arab country is the first of its kind. The Iranian naval forces have increased their presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for merchant vessels and tankers. Iran also maintains strong presence in the Persian Gulf in order to protect naval routes and pro-

vide security for merchant vessels and oil tankers, especially in the strategic Strait of Hormuz through which about a fifth of the volume of the world's total oil consumption passes on a daily basis. Iran has repeatedly said that the security of the Persian Gulf can be provided by its littoral states and there is no need for the presence of foreigners in the Persian Gulf, especially the United States. The UAE is Iran's second-largest



Iranian naval vessels docked at the UAE's port. The visit is seen as a sign of improved relations between the two countries. The UAE is Iran's second-largest trading partner after China and expansion of security cooperation between the two countries is of great importance for them.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran welcomes domestic ...

It is natural that through such partnerships, domestic companies will reap the rewards of their involvement, re-investing their profits in domestic ventures for the nation's benefit. Currently, investment in Asaluyeh, which houses facilities to process natural gas extracted from the South Pars, particularly regarding pressure boosting, is crucial due to the annual decline in Iran's gas reservoir levels. Moreover, since some of Iran's dealing gas fields are jointly utilized with other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, failure to excel in extracting from these joint fields will not only make it harder to address the energy shortfall in Iran, but it will also allow those countries to exploit far more from these fields than Iran does.

Therefore, the Parliament expect the government's plans for the development of gas fields in the south of the country to be expedited. Due to the sanctions imposed, the country faces challenges in extraction and recovery of resources and lacks access to the necessary technologies. To overcome this challenge, Iran needs to attract investment and embrace new technologies. Given the circumstances, Iran can leverage the capabilities of nations like China and Russia to acquire cutting-edge technologies. Iran possesses some of the world's richest energy resources, ranking second in gas reserves and fourth in oil reserves globally. A nation with such potential in energy should not be grappling with energy shortages. Therefore, to rectify this,

increasing production and optimizing energy consumption should be high on the agenda. The involvement of the private sector in boosting production will be particularly helpful. Simultaneously, the government should make use of the private sector's capabilities to move toward developing renewable and clean energy sources. Efficient energy management is key to tackle the energy deficit in Iran. One strategy is to set energy swap arrangements. Iran can use the mechanism to fulfill the gas demand in the northern regions, sourcing the required gas from Russia. This approach ensures that instead of incurring high costs by transporting gas from distant southern fields, we can secure it through swaps with Russia, allowing the surplus gas in the south to be allocated for industrial use or export.

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Intersection of Japanese art, architecture at Tehran's Silk Road exhibition

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The 'Art and the Space in Between; Iran-Japan' exhibition, running from January 7 to February 7 at the Kamalolmolk Gallery in Tehran, showcases the works of prominent Japanese artists, including three Pritzker Architecture Prize winners. Organized by the University of Tehran's Faculty of Architecture and supported by the Japanese Embassy, the exhibition features the intricate concepts of space and time—encapsulated in the Japanese term "Ma"—while celebrating the artistic legacy of Arata Isozaki and fostering intercultural dialogue along the historic Silk Road. The exhibition features a collection of installations focusing on space, thresholds, and comparative studies of the Silk Road. The exhibition, subtitled 'Journey Along the Silk Road,' features key concepts of Japanese art and aims to enhance intercultural studies, facilitating the exchange of ideas and artistic expressions along the Silk



IRAN DAILY

Road. It includes works from three acclaimed Pritzker Prize-winning Japanese architects: Arata Isozaki, Shigeru Ban, and Ryue Nishizawa. Majid Montazer Zohouri, head of the Museums and Cultural Spaces Office at the University of Tehran, explained to Iran Daily reporter that the exhibition celebrates the artistic legacy of Arata Isozaki, a renowned Japanese artist and architect. Isozaki originally held this exhibition decades ago, and this event serves as a tribute to his work. Shabnam Torabi, an expert at the exhibition, elaborated that the Japanese terms for

space and time are encapsulated in the word "Ma." This concept forms the core of the exhibition. In Persian, there isn't a direct equivalent for "Ma," but it could be understood as "pause." She noted that "Ma" represents a mental concept inherent in Japanese architecture. While European and Western architectural styles may not emphasize the relationship between space and time, Iranian architecture showcases elements of this idea, such as corridors and entryways in traditional homes that distinguish the boundary between the outside and inside. When en-

tering an Iranian home, one does not step directly into the interior but must pass through a hallway to reach the private space. To clarify the concept of "Ma" in architecture, Torabi explained that various spaces within a home facilitate movement between areas. Each space emphasizes the significance of "Ma," suggesting that empty spaces carry more importance than they appear. To help the audience connect with this concept, the exhibition features nine distinct



another. Each space seeks to convey the idea of interstitial space and transition. The main conceptualizer of this exhibition is the late Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, who passed away in 2022. He



spaces defined through installations and architectural art, illustrating the importance of transitional spaces, such as indoor settings, Japanese gardens, bridges, roads, and light—symbolizing the movement from one point to

originally held this exhibition 47 years ago in Paris in 1978. Now, nearly half a century later, a group of his Japanese admirers, along with an Iranian team, have revived it. Due to the Iranian team's involvement, several con-

cepts have been woven into Iranian culture and thought, including ideas that have traveled from Iran to Japan along the Silk Road, such as the concept of paradise. Plus, the exhibition features images of instruments like the *barbat*, which entered Japanese Buddhist culture through the Silk Road during the Sasanian era and has been played in temples ever since. In this way, the Silk Road not only serves as a conduit for cultural exchange but also resonates with the concept of "Ma" and interstitial space. Torabi emphasized that "Ma" is a complex mental concept that underscores the importance of transitional spaces. For instance, the entrances to Japanese tea houses are often designed so small that visitors must bow their heads in respect to enter. A similar practice can be seen in old Iranian homes, especially in *zurkhaneh* (which literally means 'strength house' in Persian, a special traditional place where men practice heroic sports), where doorways are low enough to require visitors to bow as they enter.

Minister calls for balance to enhance Qur'an exhibition appeal

Arts & Culture Desk

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between the various dimensions of the International Holy Qur'an Exhibition to enhance its appeal to both general and specific audiences. During the policy-making council meeting for the International Holy Qur'an Exhibition, held on February 4, Salehi acknowledged the challenges they face this year, saying, "We are confronted with several constraints, but limitations

can sometimes lead to the creation of opportunities," according to IRNA. He added the financial constraints as the first limitation, stating, "This year, we have two Qur'an exhibitions, one in (March-April) and another in Esfand (February-March), which only happens once every 33 years. However, the budgetary resources have not been allocated for two exhibitions." Salehi further explained that the venue, Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla (prayer grounds), also presents a unique situation as it



is only available for less than half the duration compared to previous years due to its use for Friday prayers until the end of winter. He added, "The third issue is the change of government and the

appointment of new officials. This combination of factors has created a unique set of circumstances for this year's exhibition, and expectations should be adjusted accordingly."

The minister suggested that these limitations could be turned into opportunities, saying, "The issues related to the exhibition space and budget can lead to prioritizing and eliminating the superfluous elements that have become customary." Salehi continued, "The current situation provides an opportunity for selection and filtering, allowing the exhibition to improve by eliminating unnecessary elements." He emphasized the need to capitalize on these limitations for better balance, filtering, and selec-

tion, stating, "The financial situation also presents an opportunity for further cost-saving measures and requires a new approach to financial management to navigate these new conditions." Salehi then elaborated on the various aspects of the International Holy Qur'an Exhibition, saying, "One aspect is cognitive, dealing with Qur'anic knowledge and teachings. Other dimensions include artistic, technological, international, and media aspects, which should complement each other to collectively enhance the exhibition's appeal."

Over 8,000 works submitted at Fajr Int'l Handicrafts Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The ninth edition of Fajr International Handicrafts Festival, known as Sarv-e Simin 9, received 8,172 submissions, said the Deputy Minister of Handicrafts at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Maryam Jalali, during a press conference and poster unveiling ceremony held in Tehran. Out of the total submissions, 7,974 are from 4,378 domestic artists, and 198 are from artists representing 20 different countries, IRNA reported.

Jalali highlighted that the highest number of entries, 853, came from the Fars Province, particularly in the wooden and wicker handicrafts category. "In the seventh festival, we focused on women as the driving force, and in the ninth edition, we emphasize generational bonds," Jalali added. "Our mission in this third step is to achieve national unity through cultural diversity." The deputy minister emphasized the importance of the festival as a significant event in the handicrafts in-

dustry. "The festival is one of the many events in the value chain, and we aim to adhere to our goals and ensure coherence. The relevant departments are in harmony, and the festival is an extension of our ongoing efforts," she added. Jalali further explained that the festival serves as a platform to evaluate outstanding works, and they have strived to achieve excellence in both quantity and quality. "While we may not have achieved complete satisfaction, we are committed to continuous growth," she said.

The ninth festival, according to Jalali, is a celebration of authenticity and arts, with the participation of the people and artists at its core. "The cultural, tourism, and support departments have come together to make this exhibition and festival a reality. Our focus is on trade at the exhibition and authenticity at the festival. We have achieved systemic and organizational unity and are now moving towards popular unity," she added, referring to the recent exhibition held in November. Jalali emphasized the



multi-faceted nature of the festival, mentioning the presence of international evaluators who have come to Iran for two purposes: To assess the festival's entries and to

evaluate the traditional jewelry and handicrafts of Yazd for potential UNESCO World Heritage status. Unveiling the festival's poster, Jalali explained its symbol-

ism, saying, "The flowers in the poster bow their heads to symbolize humility for the festival." She further elaborated on the design, adding, "The nine paisley motifs represent the nine steps, and the lines forming a hook shape are a contemporary interpretation, as storytelling takes precedence in today's world. The design, growing from the heart of the seals, signifies our future vision, reminding us to embrace modernity while remaining committed to our authentic roots."