



## Activities at Shahid Rajaei Port revert to normal after huge blast

### Safety measures need to be enhanced at Iran's key commercial port



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#### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The precise cause of the explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, has yet to be pinned down, and it seems likely that negligence played a part in the deadly incident. However, what is crystal clear—and what has been caught on camera—is that a minor fire, triggered by the explosion of flammable materials, broke out and quickly spread to a nearby fuel tank, which then set off the main blast. This fuel tank was a single unit with no adjacent tanks, but the blast, which was felt like an earthquake in surrounding areas, ripped through machinery, equipment, and imported and exported goods stored nearby, making it tough to put out the fire.

As reported in the media, the human and financial toll from the main explosion has been substantial, though it is still too early to put a figure on the full extent of the damage. Shahid Rajaei Port is Iran's largest commercial port and serves as the beating heart of the nation's trade. Between 80% and 90% of southern transit operations go through this port, which also handles more than 70% of the country's container traffic and over half of all imports and exports.

Despite the recent incident, operations at Shahid Rajaei Port have carried on, as the export and import docks are set apart from the site of the accident. Thanks to the quick on-the-ground efforts of local and national authorities, the port has bounced back to full operation in no time, ensuring uninterrupted trade and transit.

From the early hours after the incident, a host of provincial and national organizations—including the Basij volunteer force, naval units of both the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Army, the Red Crescent, city fire departments, the port's own emergency teams, and rescue squads from neighboring provinces—rushed in to help bring the fire under control and assist the injured. The medical university, provincial security council, and governor were on the ground from the outset, and both the minister of interior and the minister of roads made their way to the scene without delay. Special thanks are also due to President Masoud Pezeshkian, who showed up in the province, visited the patients at their bedsides, boosted the morale of both medical staff and victims, and issued orders to speed up relief efforts, get to the bottom of the incident, and make up for the losses. Now that the fire has been put out and the situation brought under control, reconstruction efforts must get underway without delay, and the root cause of the accident must be tracked down to prevent such disasters from happening again. Given Shahid Rajaei Port's critical role in national trade and transit, it is crucial for the authorities to step up efforts to equip the port with state-of-the-art firefighting and rescue facilities. The layout of machinery and adherence to passive defense principles at the port must also be reviewed so that, should a similar incident crop up, the risk of further casualties and damage can be kept in check.

Unfortunately, the current emergency response capabilities at the site are outdated, making it urgent to address these shortcomings without delay. In the aftermath of this accident, all safety, security, technical, and port authorities—especially the Ports and Maritime Organization, the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the Interior Ministry, and security forces—must look into every aspect of the incident thoroughly, and those found to have fallen short or been involved in the accident should be brought to justice.

## Pezeshkian's visit to Baku sends strong message to extra-regional players

### Corridors key to lasting relationship

#### INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev in the balcony of Azerbaijan's Zugulba Presidential Palace in Baku on April 28, 2025. [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)

By Reza Edalatipour  
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*Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, on his first visit to the South Caucasus since taking office, set off for Baku to draw a line under the turbulent years between Iran and Azerbaijan. Hamed Hekmatara, a geopolitics and diplomacy researcher at the University of Tehran, told Iran Daily in an interview that the trip sent a clear signal regarding Tehran-Baku cooperation across political, economic, and security arenas.*

**Iran Daily: Pezeshkian's trip took place at a sensitive juncture in Iran-Azerbaijan relations, especially following border tensions involving Armenia. How will this visit impact political ties between the two neighbors?**

**HEKMATARA:** In a bid to redefine regional relations and cool down geopolitical tensions in the Caucasus, Pezeshkian's visit to Azerbaijan and his candid talks with the country's political and economic officials conveyed a clear message from Tehran: Iran seeks a stable region free from foreign interference, grounded in mutual respect for national sovereignty.

He managed to lay out the Islamic Republic's principled stance effectively, asserting that the territorial integrity of all regional countries must be respected, and no country should set its sights on the territories of others or interfere in the domestic affairs of its neighbors. This approach, particularly amid rising tensions over developments in the South Caucasus, sends an important message to Baku and Yerevan.

Within this framework, resolving remaining misunderstandings and security concerns between Tehran and Baku could open the door to a new chapter in bilateral relations. Boosting political and economic ties will not only strengthen bilateral relations but also help pave the way for regional stability, cultural bonds, and accelerated joint development. The Caucasus today more than ever calls for geopolitical wisdom and an end to zero-sum games.

**How might this visit feed into stronger cooperation on the North-South corridor and ease Iran's connection to Europe via Azerbaijan?**

The land route of the North-South corridor runs through Azerbaijan, which acts as a link between Iran and Russia. Past disputes had thrown a wrench in cross-border traffic, especially customs and transit operations. This visit could smooth over previous disputes and kick-start trade between the two countries and others along the corridor.

As trade picks up steam, Iran and Azerbaijan will inevitably step up cooperation to develop the corridor and streamline commerce. Such sustained collaboration in transport and trade will bring the two sides closer, helping to clear the air on past, present, and future disputes. Basically, international corridors represent a new form of regionalism and can shore up intergovernmental ties, fostering peace, stability, and economic prosperity.

**How can Azerbaijan's participation in the North-South and East-West corridors be seen as a guarantee for**

**sustainable regional economic and transport ties?**

The Azerbaijan Republic sits at a crossroads between Iran and Russia, and also between the Caspian Sea and Turkey. Alongside Iran, it holds the key to the intersection of the North-South and East-West corridors. Some extra-regional actors have tried to undermine Iran by developing rival corridors through Azerbaijan, aiming to cut Iran out and sow discord between the two nations.

However, Azerbaijan's cooperation with Iran to route the East-West corridor through Iranian soil rather than southern Armenia can settle geopolitical disputes and thwart extra-regional attempts to damage Iran's regional ties. Similarly, Iran can lean more heavily on the land and rail routes through Azerbaijan for the North-South corridor instead of relying on maritime routes via the Caspian Sea to get to Russia.

Both countries, despite some extra-regional efforts, have come to terms that circumventing each other's geography in developing international corridors would also involve bypassing each other's geography in yet another international corridor. Therefore, their mutual interests call for paying close attention to each other's views on corridor development.

**In light of Israeli efforts to deepen ties with Azerbaijan, what security message does Pezeshkian's visit send?**

Pezeshkian's warm reception by President Ilham Aliyev, the smiles exchanged during his speeches and the recitation of verses by the great Iranian poet Shahrar, blew apart the heavy

costs—both material and psychological—that the Israeli regime has poured into the region to drive a wedge between Iran and its neighbors.

Despite shared cultural, religious, and historical ties, this regime has long sought to isolate Iran from neighbors ranging from Azerbaijan and Turkey to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Iran's continued engagement can turn the tables quickly, transforming regional security threats into unparalleled and unshakable opportunities.

**Can it be said that this visit, following agreements aimed at expanding economic and political cooperation, has strengthened Iran's role in the South Caucasus?**

When Azerbaijani officials and people, who highly value cultural ties, sense firsthand the warmth and solidarity expressed by Iran's president, the Israeli regime's efforts against Iran hit a dead end mentally.

Therefore, given the rich cultural commonalities, cultural diplomacy toward neighboring countries should be ramped up across all levels—from top officials to ministries, organizations, and media outlets like national TV. In this way, such efforts, at a fraction of the cost compared to Iran's rivals, any sabotage of Iran-Azerbaijan relations will be rendered ineffective at any level given the historical ties between the two countries.

Consequently, the two culturally aligned nations will no longer need to plan and waste resources managing the fallout of such influence, but instead will focus their time and energy on strengthening their unbreakable historical ties to build a prosperous and resilient region.