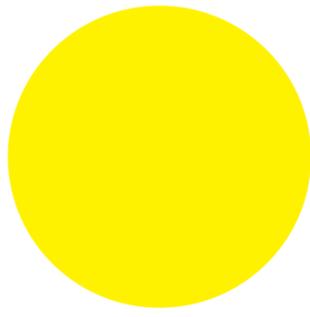


NIOC to offer gas field development to steelmakers to produce own energy

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Sanctions removal top priority in nuclear talks

By Ali Majedi
Former Iranian diplomat

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

The demand for nuclear energy in West Asia is very real, but whether it should be met through a nuclear consortium or any other means, is a matter of time as specifics of a nuclear consortium—who will be involved and how—have not yet come to light.

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said the idea of such a consortium was far from novel, and had been floated for nearly two decades. He said one justification behind the initiative, which he described as "not bad", was the "region's need for nuclear energy," and that Iran was ready to get on board. However, Baghaei stressed, this move was in no way meant to replace the country's ongoing domestic uranium enrichment activities.

Now what is clear is that Iran should somehow wrap up the 20-year nuclear saga through a fair deal to help flourish its economy. The nuclear infrastructure is already in place on Iranian soil, and it is now up to decision-makers to step in and call the shots.

In that respect, the nuclear program has delivered results and should not be brushed aside. But from the public's standpoint, what matters most is an agreement that lifts sanctions. A balanced outcome is needed—one that hits the mark by lifting the sanctions while also protecting Iran's nuclear know-how and opening the door to economic development.

Looking back, there were signs of progress. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) helped Iran cement its capabilities, get its foot in the door, and roll back nuclear-related sanctions. But the 2018 US exit from the deal during the first term of President Donald Trump threw a wrench into the works, and the situation spiraled again.

During the 18-month window when the JCPOA was active, international doors began to open, and major US companies showed interest in investing in Iran. But the process never got off the ground, due to a lack of political will or red tape on the American side. And now, as Iran and the US are engaged in nuclear negotiations, President Masoud Pezeshkian has clarified that if the problem stemmed from Tehran, it has been dealt with.

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Genocide in broad daylight

Israeli PM announces plan to 'take control' of whole Gaza

International Desk

The Israeli occupation army on Monday told Gazans in the main southern city of Khan Yunis and the nearby areas of Bani Suheila and Abasan to "evacuate immediately" as the regime's prime minister said Israel will "take control" of the whole of Palestinian territory.

The call came after the military announced it had begun "extensive ground operations" in an expanded offensive against Palestinian fighters.

Military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said troops aim to "encircle" some areas, "get the civilian population out of the way, and then fight Hamas". Khan Yunis resident Mohammed Sarhan said Gaza's main southern city "felt like the apocalypse" on Monday. "There was gunfire coming from every apartment, fire belts, F-16 warplanes and helicopters firing," he said. Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee earlier called on Gazans in the city and nearby areas to "evacuate immediately".

A woman and a child cry as a little girl lies on a hospital bed waiting for first aid treatment at Al-Awda Hospital at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, following an Israeli airstrike that hit a school hosting Palestinian refugees in the camp on May 19, 2025.

AFP



Iran urges expansion of AI cooperation among Muslim nations

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From bitumen to North-South Corridor
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Iranian artist turns scrap metal objects into artefacts

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FM spokesperson: Iran not to seek permission for uranium enrichment

'Tehran open to regional nuclear fuel consortium'



International Desk

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said on Monday that Iran is not going to ask for permission from anyone to enrich uranium, the main sticking point in the ongoing nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington. The United States is in no position to urge other countries ask for permission

to exercise a right recognized under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Baqaei said during his weekly press conference in Tehran. US officials have recently voiced strong opposition to Iran's uranium enrichment activities, while Tehran has repeatedly insisted that it was "non-negotiable." In the latest comments by the US offi-

cial regarding Iran's uranium enrichment, Steve Witkoff, the US chief negotiator in nuclear talks, said on Sunday that the US government's "red line" in nuclear talks with Iran is that Iran cannot maintain any ability to enrich uranium.

"We have one very, very clear red line, and that is enrichment. We cannot allow even 1% of an enrichment capability," Witkoff told ABC's "This Week" program.

If the argument that any country enriching uranium necessarily is after producing nuclear bomb or is able to produce such weapons, so all enrichment facilities in South Korea, Brazil, and many other countries should be dismantled, the Iranian official said.

Baqaei said that Iran's nuclear program dates back to 60 years ago and the US cannot expect Iran to shut down its peaceful nuclear program, calling the US demand irrational, immoral, and unlawful.

Tehran and Washington have held four rounds of Omani-mediated nuclear talks since April 12, the highest-level contact

between the two countries since the United States abandoned the 2015 nuclear accord.

Since then, there have been reports of Iran's proposal for the formation of a regional consortium to enrich uranium. However, Baqaei denied that Iran had proposed the idea but said it was floated in the past by several countries.

"One of the justifications (for such a proposal) is that the Middle East region and the Persian Gulf countries may need nuclear power and would like to build new power plants, and these power plants require nuclear fuel," said Baqaei.

"If such an initiative is proposed, we would welcome it and could also participate in it, but it should be noted that such an initiative is in no way intended to replace Iran's uranium enrichment program," he added.

On Tuesday, The New York Times quoted four anonymous Iranian officials as saying that Tehran had proposed "a joint nuclear-enrichment venture involving regional Arab countries and American investments."

The venture would serve "as an alterna-

tive to Washington's demand that it dismantles its nuclear program," it added. On Sunday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran would continue enrichment "with or without a deal." Araghchi said that the US officials are completely far from the realities of negotiations.

"I think they are completely far from the realities of negotiations and enrichment will continue in Iran," Araghchi said.

"If they are interested in ensuring that nuclear weapons are not produced (by Iran), we are fully prepared, but if they have unrealistic demands, they will not achieve any results," Iran's top diplomat added.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi also said on Monday that the nuclear talks "will lead nowhere" if Washington insists that Tehran drop its uranium enrichment activity to zero.

"Our position on enrichment is clear and we have repeatedly stated that it is a national achievement from which we will not back down," Takht-Ravanchi said.

Pezeshkian sanguine about Iran-US talks leading to regional stability



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) shakes hands with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi in a meeting in Tehran on May 18, 2025. [president.ir](#)

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Sunday expressed hope that nuclear talks between Iran and the US would lead to a fair agreement that guarantees lasting stability in the region.

The Iranian president made the remarks in a meeting with the Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi on the sidelines of Tehran Dialogue Forum (TDF), a gathering of high-level officials from dozens of countries to discuss regional cooperation, diplomacy and global peace.

"We hope that through the sincere and dedicated efforts of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, these talks will result in a fair agreement that ensures lasting peace and stability in the region," Pezeshkian said.

In a separate meeting with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, the Iranian president said that reaching an agreement with the US is possible but only if Washington abandons its bullying tactics.

Confirming Pezeshkian's comments, Al Thani said experience has shown that in dealing with the Islamic Republic of Iran, pressure

and coercion have been ineffective while dialogue and mutual understanding have proven successful.

The two sides also discussed ties, with the Iranian president voicing optimism that the bilateral agreements would swiftly enter the implementation phase to benefit both countries and their peoples.

The Iranian president also held other meetings with the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Nechirvan Barzani, Secretary of Armenia's Security Council Armen Grigoryan, Taliban's caretaker foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and the Nurlan Yermekbayev, secretary general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). All of them have been invited to take part in Tehran Dialogue Forum, which opened in the Iranian capital on Sunday.

Senior officials from 53 countries, including ministers, and heads of think tanks and intellectuals, took part in the two-day meeting.

Top general warns Iran's enemies of devastating harms if airspace violated

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri warned that any hostile move by enemies against the Islamic Republic, including violation of the country's airspace, will cost them dearly. Bagheri made the remarks after a high-profile meeting of the air defense units in the Iranian capital Tehran on Monday, Press TV reported.

"The ill-wishers of the Iranian nation and enemies should know that any violation of our country's airspace will inflict significant harms on them, and will expose them to the costs that are definitely much higher than the results they may expect," Iran's highest-ranking military commander stated.

He underscored dramatic progress that has been made in improving the air defense capabilities during the past year. Bagheri highlighted that certain sections of the Air Defense units have experienced a fivefold increase in comparison with the preceding year as regards the number of radars, monitoring systems, and detection devices used for tracking hostile moves.

The top general stated that Air Defense capabilities in the fire control systems, interception, and detonation of intruding aerial targets have developed by two to three times in some cases.

He underlined that Iran's airspace is



being monitored constantly, and the Armed Forces are a hundred percent prepared to confront any act of aggression.

The chief of staff of the Armed Forces highlighted that Iranian Air Defense units control the country's airspace round the clock, and prepare themselves for any possible scenario through frequent exercises and drills.

The volume of investment in the fortification of Iran's Air Defense has risen by several times, Bagheri noted.

Iranian officials say the Islamic Republic will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which is entirely meant for defense.

Genocide in broad ...

"From this moment, Khan Yunis will be considered a dangerous combat zone," he said on social media.

Page 1 > Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a video posted on Telegram, said that "the fighting is intense and we are making progress."

"We will take control of all the territory of the strip," he added. "We will not give up. But in order to succeed, we must act in a way that cannot be stopped," Netanyahu said. Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard on Monday condemned Israel's plans to take control of the Gaza Strip, saying the move would violate international law.

"If this means annexation, it is against international law. Sweden stands firm in its belief that Gaza's territory must not be changed or reduced," she said.

She also urged Israel to allow a resumption of humanitarian aid to Gaza. After more than two months of a total blockade, the World Health Organization issued a stark warning on the humanitarian crisis in the besieged Gaza Strip, saying "two million people are starving".

Under mounting pressure, Israel allowed limited aid into the besieged territory on Monday.

Netanyahu cited "practical and diplomatic reasons" for the resumption. Gaza's civil defense agency said 52 people were killed in Israeli attacks on Monday across the territory.



Palestinians move with their belongings as they flee the northern cities of Jabalia and Beit Lahia Gaza Strip towards Gaza City amid continuous Israeli strikes in the besieged Palestinian territory on May 17, 2025. [BASHAR TALEB/AFP](#)

The UN's OHCHR rights office decried actions that are "in defiance of international law and tantamount to ethnic cleansing", citing the latest attacks, displacement, the "methodical destruction of entire neighborhoods" and denial of humanitarian aid.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran urges expansion of AI cooperation among Muslim nations

Economy Desk

Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref called for the establishment of a high-level steering committee for Artificial Intelligence (AI) development within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at the second Ministerial Meeting of the OIC-15 Dialogue Platform in Tehran on Monday.

The second meeting of higher education ministers from member states of the OIC Dialogue Platform opened in Tehran on Sunday and continued on Monday at the level of science ministers from Islamic countries, IRNA reported. Highlighting Iran's strategic focus on AI, Aref stressed, "The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes in advancing science and technology in this field," IRNA quoted Aref as saying.

The establishment of the 'Headquarters for AI Technology Development and Applications' underscores the government's commitment to progress in the high-tech domain, he said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has prioritized multiple measures to develop

infrastructure, provide intelligent support, and foster an innovation ecosystem in AI," Aref added.

"Iran believes the future of AI development in the Islamic world must rest on three pillars: multilateral cooperation, scientific synergy, and shared infrastructure," he said, adding that the country "suggests forming a high-level steering committee for AI development within the OIC to establish a sustainable framework for deliberation, policymaking, monitoring global AI trends, and drafting mid- to long-term roadmaps for scientific and technological collaboration in this field."

The vice president reiterated Iran's readiness to play an active role in advancing AI technology among Islamic nations, stating, "AI is not merely a technology — it has comprehensive impacts on industry, economy, and human societies. If Muslim nations move forward with collective will, knowledge, and cooperation, they can jointly create a future where AI serves businesses, governments, humanity, development, and dignity."

Aref also noted that members of the OIC-15 Dialogue Platform have agreed to issue a statement at the conclusion of this meeting as the first joint AI document of Islamic countries — "a document that reflects our collective determination to advance convergent policies."

"The establishment of centers, creation of an inter-Islamic network of young ambassadors for science, technology, and innovation, and the launch of low-cost or free platforms in emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, and nanotechnology must be prioritized by Islamic nations," he added.

Islamic world's AI share less than 5%

According to the Iranian vice president, the Islamic world's share in AI-related scientific production, technological development, and economic value creation is estimated at less than 5 percent.

"This figure starkly contrasts with the vast potential and capabilities of Islamic countries. Formulating an intergov-



Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (center) poses for a photo alongside ministers from the OIC member states at the second Ministerial Meeting of the OIC-15 Dialogue Platform in Tehran on May 19, 2025. fypresident.ir

ernmental program and fostering active collaboration among Islamic nations to increase their share in the global AI market is imperative," he said.

"According to credible estimates, AI will impact 40 to 60 percent of jobs worldwide. While approximately 83 million jobs may be lost over the next four years, at least 69 million new AI-dependent jobs will emerge," he said.

He further noted, "The young and tech-enthusiast population, a dynamic and growing human capital in fields like basic sciences, engineering, and related disciplines, the large domestic markets of Islamic countries — home to over 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide — and the rising demand for AI products and services are among the significant assets of Islamic nations for advancing AI."

Minister offers roadmap to boost Tehran-Ashgabat trade to \$3b by 2028

Turkmenistan determined to expand gas ties with Iran



Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadegh (L), and Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov are seen at the 18th session of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission in Tehran on May 19, 2025. IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadegh, proposed drafting a three-year cooperation roadmap to increase trade between Tehran and Ashgabat to \$3 billion by 2028, while Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov emphasized the need to strengthen bilateral gas collaboration.

Speaking at the 18th session of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission on Monday, Sadegh stated, "Last year (began on March 20, 2024), bilateral trade reached \$600 million, reflecting growth compared to the previous year."

"Cooperation with Turkmenistan is a priority in the Islamic Republic of Iran's policies. The presence of high-ranking officials from both nations, the establishment of joint commissions, and working committees demonstrate the shared resolve to achieve mutual goals," she emphasized.

Referring to the 17th Joint Cooperation Meeting held in Ashgabat on November 17-18, 2023, Sadegh noted, "Since then, bilateral agreements have been diligently pursued, and their implementation remains satisfactory."

"Between the 17th Commission session and today, we reached a strategic agreement in transport and transit, setting a target of 20 million tons of goods transiting through both countries by 2028," she added.

However, Turkmenistan's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, addressing the \$460.99 million trade volume between Tehran and Ashgabat in the past

year, said, "This figure is unsatisfactory for two friendly, brotherly nations. We must explore solutions to enhance relations." "Bilateral trade has grown by just 1% compared to 2003, despite aiming for \$5 billion a decade ago — a target we once achieved," Meredov noted.

He urged, "We must define new pathways and mechanisms to develop bilateral ties, resolving existing border trade issues."

Detailing the breakdown, the Iranian minister said, "The allocation for each transport mode is as follows: 6 million tons via rail, 7 million tons via road, 2.5 million tons via combined transport, and 500,000 tons via maritime. Sustaining this trajectory until 2028 will unlock new horizons for both nations' regional transit roles."

Rail cooperation

On rail cooperation, Sadegh said, "The agreement to exchange 400 railcars daily at the Sarakhs border and 100 at the Incheh Borun border marks a critical milestone. Efforts by both nations' railway authorities are underway to operationalize this goal."

Regarding customs collaboration, she stated, "Both sides have taken effective measures, including six-monthly meetings between customs chiefs and the signing of a Joint Action Plan to deepen customs cooperation starting in 2024."

Expanding gas ties

Speaking at the same session, Meredov declared, "We are committed to expanding gas cooperation with Iran. Pursuing long-term gas exports to Iran and

transiting Turkmen gas via Iran to third countries are among our priorities."

"We possess all necessary capacities and resources to advance gas exports to Iran. Several issues are under review, and we hope to finalize measures to strengthen these exports," he stressed.

On petrochemical collaboration, Meredov said, "the two sides, over the past 15 years, have achieved strong cooperation in petrochemicals and gas-to-petrochemicals. We stand ready to exchange expertise in this field."

"Iranians possess valuable expertise in the petrochemical and gas-to-petrochemical sectors. Iranian companies, like those from other countries such as Japan and South Korea, can operate in this field in Turkmenistan," he said.

Meredov further outlined plans, "We aim to produce fertilizers, establish synthetic gasoline plants, and other projects in Turkmenistan, initially through cooperation with Iran, to boost our industrial capacity."

During his address at the Tehran Dialogue Forum, the Turkmen foreign minister also stated that his country supports the full implementation of projects such as a highway from Ashgabat to the Iranian border.

"We support the comprehensive implementation of projects like a highway from Ashgabat to the Iranian border. At the same time, it is essential to coordinate efforts among Turkmenistan, Pakistan, and other regional countries to establish a regional transportation network extending beyond Central Asia to the East, West, and South," he added.

NIOC to offer gas field development to steelmakers to produce own energy

Iran plans to hand over the development rights of three untapped gas fields to the country's steel manufacturers in a move designed to ensure energy supplies for the struggling sector, Deputy Oil Minister Hamid Bovard said on Monday.

The initiative aims to bring energy-hungry industries into the fold, allowing them to take part in production and in turn, alleviate the perennial shortages that have dogged their operations.

Iran's heavy industries, including steel, petrochemicals, and mining, have borne the brunt of rolling power and gas cuts in recent years, as the government has prioritized household consumption during peak demand periods. The policy has inflicted billions of dollars in loss annually to their production.

"A plan was devised to allocate two or three gas fields to them so that they can also take part in production and help address some of their energy-related challenges," Bovard told reporters in remarks carried by Mehr News Agency.

Although the official did not name any specific fields, he hinted that they were likely among Iran's smaller reserves.

According to Bovard, the daily gas consumption of steel companies fell below 50



SHANA

million cubic meters (mcm), a figure that makes it unlikely they would be tapping into the country's major deposits. The daily energy demand accounts for 6% of Iran's total daily gas production, which stands at around 880 mcm.

The announcement came on the heels of a push by the National Iranian Oil Co. (NIOC), also headed by Bovard, to drum up private-sector interest in its upstream gas assets. Last month, the energy giant unveiled investment packages for 49 gas fields, aiming to ratchet up daily output capacity by as much as 500 mcm.

Of those, 35 onshore projects would require an injection of over \$13 billion, while the 14 offshore fields — largely untapped — would need an estimated \$27 billion in capital. Bovard stressed on Mon-

day that the NIOC was open about financing models for these ventures. "We are even prepared to fully hand over certain fields to the private sector, to ensure maximum participation in investment and production," he said.

The flexibility signals a departure from Iran's traditionally state-heavy approach to energy development, and underscores the urgency with which Tehran is trying to close the gap in domestic gas supply — a shortfall that at times reaches 300 mcm per day.

Iran, home to the world's second-largest natural gas reserves after Russia, is trying to boost extraction.

Under a four-year roadmap, the country plans to ramp up unprocessed gas output from 1.1 billion cubic meters to 1.33 bcm per day.

Sanctions removal top ...

Whether via a nuclear consortium or by scaling back specific nuclear activities as done before, the current talks should be underpinned by strategic thinking.

Iran's enrichment activities were already kept in check and monitored by the IAEA under the JCPOA. That arrangement held water. Today, Tehran is once again sitting

down at the table with Washington. As stated by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Iran is also eager to loop in the European troika. These players had been part of earlier negotiations, and the previous framework had indeed borne fruit.

For new talks to succeed, the US must climb down from maximalist positions. While it is common to enter nego-

tiations with big asks, meaningful progress requires each side to act in good faith and meet halfway. Iran's current approach appears to be just that while keep its nuclear red line intact.

With mutual flexibility and staying the course, this diplomatic path could pave the way to removing sanctions and unlocking economic potential.

From bitumen to North-South Corridor Prospects, hurdles in Iran-Oman trade

INTERVIEW

The deputy chairman of the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce Ahmad Shirzadian is deeply aware of the various dimensions of economic and trade relations between the two countries. Thus, the following interview with him sheds light on both the opportunities and challenges in Iran-Oman trade, especially in areas such as maritime transport, non-oil exports, health tourism, and educational cooperation.

What's the current state of trade between Iran and Oman?

SHIRZADIAN: Sanctions and the lack of banking infrastructure stand out as the biggest hurdles on the road to expanding non-oil trade between the two countries. Because of sanctions, we can't make use of tools like LCs and other banking documents, which drives up the risk of trade. Naturally, when risk goes up, trade volume takes a hit.

Although over the past decade, trade between Iran and Oman has shot up from \$200 million in 2013 to about \$2.5 billion this year, this growth has now hit a plateau, and Iran's share remains negligible compared to Oman's total trade volume. In the past two years, our exports to Oman have outstripped imports by more than 80 to 90 percent.

How can maritime transport costs between Iran and Oman be reduced? Are there alternatives to expensive ports? Maritime transport between the two countries mostly goes through small ports like Suwaiq in Oman and Jask in Iran. While we also export from Bandar Abbas, that route to ports like Muscat or Suwaiq is pricey and not cost-effective. In ports operated by Oman's state-owned companies, such as Suwaiq or Sultan Qaboos, there's generally no issue, and Iranian goods move through easily.

Do Iran's domestic economic structure and production issues affect the quality and price of exports?

The main issue in non-oil exports to Oman boils down to the domestic economic structure. Many of our products simply don't have an export edge and aren't competitive.

For example, in fruit and vegetable exports, Oman is an open market and imports from all over the globe. Sometimes, a product that's expensive in Tehran gets imported to Muscat at a lower price from elsewhere. This puts our exporters at a disadvantage in the Omani market.

How can Iran expand energy-related exports to Oman based on market needs?

Bitumen is one of the few Iranian products Oman actually needs. Due to the unique structure of Iranian refineries, bitumen production in the region is cornered by a handful of countries, with Iran among them. That's why bitumen continues to be exported to Oman, but other energy-related products aren't in high demand, since Oman is a producer itself.

With the arrival of low-cost competitors like Indian firms in Oman's market, how can Iranian companies stay competitive?

Looking back, Iran had a golden era in



Ahmad Shirzadian

Oman's engineering and technical services market. Before local Omani engineering firms got off the ground, Iranian companies snapped up major projects in power plants, road construction, and infrastructure, and they largely pulled them off successfully. But as joint Omani-foreign companies, especially cheaper Indian competitors, moved in, the space for Iran has narrowed. One of today's main stumbling blocks is bank guarantees, which Iranian firms struggle to secure for tenders.

Given Oman's status as a major importer of food, building materials, and fossil fuels, what opportunities exist for Iran?

That is true. Still, we only have a comparative advantage in some areas, such as building materials, coal, bitumen, and steel products.

Exporting building materials from Iran to Oman is a real opportunity. With Oman's construction sector on the rise and its focus on quality standards, Iran can carve out a solid share of this market.

Does Iran have unique strengths in health tourism that could give it an edge over rivals?

Health tourism has long been a feature of Iran-Oman cooperation, especially with Omani patients coming to Fars Province, but we're still lagging behind competitors. Countries like India, Thailand, and Turkey set the bar high with transparent, high-standard services, from costs to treatment types and facilities. We, on the other hand, are still at a stage where patients don't know exactly what services they'll get, where, or at what price.

If we can get a grip on the small-time brokers in health tourism and roll out services in a transparent, structured way, we could snap up a bigger slice of the market.

What educational cooperation opportunities exist between Iran and Oman, and how can they be tapped?

There's strong potential for cooperation in education and maritime transport. Oman also stands out as a country with high capacity in maritime affairs. However, as long as sanctions stick around, expanding joint ventures in these areas would be limited. If political and economic conditions pick up, we could see a boom in bilateral cooperation.

What investment opportunities are there in Oman for Iranian investors, and what are the main obstacles?

In fields like mining, high-tech manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and fisheries, Oman welcomes Iranian investment. But

only investors familiar with international standards and able to put forward viable business plans can cash in on these opportunities.

A key obstacle is the lack of such investors in Iran. Many local businesspeople stick to traditional methods and aren't up to speed with international investment concepts. Oman won't let in projects that don't make economic sense.

Despite Oman's strong growth in mining and its top-notch fisheries and medical equipment sectors, Iran can only make the most of these opportunities by coming up with precise, economically sound proposals.

How can Iran tap into Salalah Port under sanctions, and what opportunities would open up in the North-South Corridor if barriers are lifted?

Oman's geography is a game-changer. Sitting at the crossroads of East and West, its southern Salalah Port is a successful transshipment hub, acting as a bridge between the two regions and holding a key position in global trade routes.

Sanctions have kept us from fully accessing this port, but if obstacles are lifted, Salalah could play a vital role in the North-South Corridor, especially in tandem with Chabahar Port and Iran's expanding rail network. Reviving the Ashgabat Agreement among Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan would make Salalah a crucial link between South and North.

Iran's port infrastructure, like Caspian Port and the extension of rail lines toward Astara, allows trade with Oman to stretch from the south to the northwest and neighboring regions. Right now, the North-South Corridor is a major, obstacle-free, unrivaled route that we can take advantage of in dealings with Oman, with Salalah as its main gateway. Its transshipment nature gives it high capacity for distributing goods to Africa and even the Americas.

How can logistics, legal, and banking infrastructure help turn Oman into an export hub for Africa and the subcontinent?

Turning Oman into an export hub for markets like Africa and the subcontinent hinges on having robust logistics, legal, and banking infrastructure at home. For example, over the past three decades, the UAE has built up Dubai and Jebel Ali Port

Iranian Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade Mohammad Atabak (L) and his Omani counterpart, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, attend the 21st session of Iran-Oman Joint Economic Cooperation Committee in Muscat, Oman, on January 24, 2025. The two sides reached an agreement to eliminate trade tariffs during the event.
● OMAN NEWS AGENCY



Bitumen is one of the few Iranian products Oman actually needs. Due to the unique structure of Iranian refineries, bitumen production in the region is cornered by a handful of countries, with Iran among them. That's why bitumen continues to be exported to Oman, but other energy-related products aren't in high demand, since Oman is a producer itself.



The board of directors of the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce met with Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef (C), minister of Industry, Commerce, and Investment of Oman, on the sidelines of the 21st session of the Iran-Oman Joint Cooperation Committee in Muscat, Oman, in January 2025.
● IROMCC

as a regional hub by developing such infrastructure. Right now, Oman lacks these facilities in most of its ports since it hasn't set its sights on this goal in its long-term strategies. The only true hub is the Duqm Special Economic Zone, which, thanks to its prime location by the Arabian Sea and near Ras Markaz energy

facilities, was designed as an energy hub. Salalah Port also plays its part as a transshipment port and could become the point where Iranian goods hook up with African markets. Sohar Port, meanwhile, is mainly for supplying raw materials and exporting products from local factories, such as alu-

minum plants. So, the kind of infrastructure seen in Jebel Ali isn't yet in place for Oman to become a regional goods hub, though some energy sector plans are underway.

What are the prospects for expanding Iran-Oman economic cooperation if international conditions improve and

sanctions are lifted?

Given the excellent political ties between Iran and Oman, there has always been a degree of flexibility in economic relations. Oman has, in some areas, turned a blind eye to sanction pressures and kept up cooperation, though the details can't be discussed here.

Still, Omani officials, like those elsewhere,

are waiting for international conditions to improve and sanctions to be lifted so they can make the most of their longstanding friendship with Iran, step up their presence in the Iranian market, and broaden economic engagement.

The article first appeared in Persian on Tasnim news agency.

Iran, Turkey on track for \$30b trade

PERSPECTIVE

Trade and economic relations between Iran and Turkey have picked up steam in recent years, maintaining a dynamic and upward trajectory despite regional and international challenges. Turkey, with its robust economy, access to European and Asian markets, and pivotal role in energy and goods transit, has emerged as a key trading partner for Iran. The abolition of visa requirements since 1964, geographic proximity, and joint membership in organizations such as ECO and OIC have further shored up these ties.

Despite international sanctions and regional rivalries, both nations have set their sights on boosting bilateral trade to \$30 billion in the coming years, a target that underscores the vast potential for economic cooperation.

A review of trade trends reveals that since the 1970s — when trade volume between Iran and Turkey stood at \$1.5 billion — figures climbed to \$10 billion in the 2000s. In 2012, bilateral trade hit \$12 billion, but after the United States pulled out of the JCPOA in 2018, trade slumped to as low as

\$5.5 billion in 2019.

Nevertheless, since 2022, trade between Iran and Turkey has bounced back, and by 2024, bilateral exchanges reached \$8.1 billion.

Turkey's exports to Iran have centered on industrial goods, machinery, household appliances, and food products, while its imports from Iran have consisted mainly of energy (natural gas and crude oil), petrochemicals, and basic metals. Thus, Iran is primarily seen as an exporter of raw materials (petrochemicals and metals), while Turkey is regarded as a supplier of industrial goods.

According to experts, Iran and Turkey, in addition to leveraging their shared borders and trade cooperation, stand to benefit from joint gas pipelines, exhibitions, and new contracts in energy and transit, all of which point to significant potential for expanding ties.

Within this context, both countries, through long-term agreements — most recently at the 29th Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Commission — have mapped out plans to ramp up trade to \$30 billion annually. This goal is within reach, provided banking barriers are done away with, transport is streamlined, and local

currencies are used in transactions.

In the short term (through the end of 2025), trade is expected to hover between \$8–10 billion, with a focus on petrochemicals, machinery, and transit.

A key takeaway in Iran-Turkey relations is their mutual dependence: Iran needs Turkish machinery and textiles, while Turkey relies on Iranian gas and petrochemicals.

To date, Turkey has poured approximately \$2.5 billion into Iran, including \$800 million in textiles, \$700 million in construction, and \$600 million in energy. Iran, for its part, has invested around \$600 million in Turkey's transit and transportation projects.

All things considered, given the geopolitical standing of both nations and their shared economic interests, strengthening bilateral relations could go a long way toward ensuring regional stability, energy security, and sustainable economic growth in Western Asia. Achieving this will hinge on a shared commitment to clear up obstacles, build trust, and carry out joint action plans.

The article first appeared in Persian on Mehr news agency.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (l) shakes hands with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in a meeting on the sidelines of the 11th summit of the D-8 organization on December 19, 2024.

president.ir

Iraq's import tariff hike not aimed at Iran

PERSPECTIVE

In recent days, reports have cropped up across various media outlets and social networks, claiming that the Iraqi government has slapped hefty tariffs on Iranian exports. Some economic actors further claimed that this move has thrown a wrench into the trade flow between the two countries, even bringing some shipments to a standstill at the borders.

However, the Iran Trade Promotion Organization has pushed back against claims that these tariffs are solely targeting Iranian goods, clarifying that Iraq's actions fall in line with its policies to support domestic production. These tariffs, it was stated, are being rolled out for all countries, depending on the type of product and Iraq's production capacity. Farzad Piltan, advisor to the head of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization and his assistant for international affairs, spelled out the dimensions of the issue and the options available to Iranian exporters.

Piltan noted that Iraq backs up its domestic producers by raising import tariffs on goods that can be produced locally. This policy covers a wide range of products, including plasticware, disposable goods, and agricultural products. For agricultural goods, tariff support is phased in seasonally, and this measure is meant to be supportive rather than restrictive.

He went on to stress that during periods when Iraqi domestic production is sufficient, similar foreign goods are hit with high tariffs or even a temporary import ban.

Tariffs fluid, tied to Iraq's production capacity

Citing the experiences of some Iranian exporters who have recently run into higher tariffs at the Iraqi border, Piltan explained that exporters sometimes find themselves facing sudden tariff hikes. However, these increases are applied across the board and are not unique to Iran. For instance, an exporter of chocolate also came up against this issue.

The advisor further emphasized that Iraq's import tariffs vary depending on the product, its domestic production rate, and its market share. For example, if a product is fully produced in Iraq, the import tariff may go up significantly. But if only 30% of the market demand is met domestically, the Iraqi government sets a lower tariff to allow the rest to be covered by imports.

Advice to exporters

He also pointed out that one of Iraq's goals is to draw in foreign investment. Iraq is encouraging foreign exporters, including Iranians, to shift from pure export to investing and producing within Iraq. This approach can drive down costs and allow investors to take advantage of the incentives offered by the Iraqi government.

Piltan stated that Iranian companies wishing to hold onto the Iraqi market can branch out by pursuing joint production, technology transfer, or setting up production units inside Iraq. These strategies not only cut tariff costs but also shore up bilateral economic ties.

Tariff hikes, import bans nothing new

Abdolamir Rabihavi, director general of the West Asia Office at the Iran Trade

Promotion Organization, emphasized that Iran's approach has always been based on engagement, dialogue, and following up through Iraq's Ministry of Trade. "After the necessary reviews, the issue is passed on to Iranian producers and exporters so they can make informed decisions about their business activities," he added.

It is worth noting that officials at the Trade Promotion Organization have underscored that the Iraqi market remains a top export priority for Iran. Economic actors can capitalize on opportunities by investing directly, forming joint ventures, or setting up agencies and factories in Iraq, thereby driving down expenses and benefiting from the legal support of the Iraqi government.

The article first appeared in Persian on Mehr news agency.



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One of Iraq's goals is to draw in foreign investment. Iraq is encouraging foreign exporters, including Iranians, to shift from pure export to investing and producing within Iraq. This approach can drive down costs and allow investors to take advantage of the incentives offered by the Iraqi government.

Teenage sensation Daneshvar heralds 'new era' for Iranian chess



Iran's Bardia Daneshvar (C) poses on the podium with the men's gold medal at the Asian Individual Chess Championships in Al Ain, UAE, on May 16, 2025.

Sports Desk

Bardia Daneshvar's historic crown at the Asian Individual Chess Championships marked the beginning of a "new era" for the sport in Iran, Shadi Paridar, the head of the Iranian Chess Federation, said.

"This is an unprecedented achievement in the past hundred years – one that even the golden generation of the Iranian chess couldn't accomplish," Paridar, a FIDE woman grandmaster, told IRNA.

Daneshvar, 19, collected seven points to finish atop the men's Open standings of the nine-round Swiss tournament in Al Ain, the United Arab Emirates, last week.

"The tournament was called off last year, so all of the top contenders in Asian took part at the event to secure qualification for this year's Chess World Cup. Chess in Asia is now at an elite level, and China, India, and Uzbekistan are among the global powerhouses of the sport," added Paridar.

"Bardia needs more sup-

port and his great achievement deserves recognition, as it brought Iran's century-long drought at the Asian competitions to an end."

It was a tight race until Round 6, when 12th-seed Daneshvar seized the lead and never looked back. After a crucial victory over Abhimanyu Puranik of India in the penultimate round, he entered the final round with a score of 7/8, a full point ahead of his nearest rivals in the table.

Despite losing in the final round to top seed Indian Nihal Sarin, finished level on seven points with Daneshvar, the Iranian grandmaster walked away with the ultimate prize thanks to the superior average rating of his opponents. Sarin settled for the silver, while Shamsiddin Vokhidov of Uzbekistan secured the bronze, edging out five players (all with 6.5/9) on tie-breaks.

The event in Al Ain bringing together over 250 male and female players from 38 countries.

FIBA West Asia Super League:

Tabiat runner-up as Al Riyadi secures back-to-back titles

Sports Desk

Iran's Tabiat Eslamshahr settled for a runner-up finish at the FIBA West Asia Super League after suffering a 104-77 defeat against Al Riyadi Club Beirut in Sunday's final showpiece in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon.

Already the reigning three-time West Asia League champion, the Lebanese powerhouse refused to stop there and went on to secure the pan-regional competition's ultimate prize for the second year in a row.

No other team in this league had been able to accomplish what it has done and the Lebanese club made it look so easy as Al Riyadi went on a 13-game unbeaten run to lift the trophy, including a five-game sweep of the Final 8.

"This is a great achievement for Lebanese basketball," said Al Riyadi head coach Ahmad Faran. "Back-to-back champions. We are proud. And we are still

hungry. We're looking forward to achieving more."

Wael Arakji, who went on to pick up the Most Valuable Player prize of the tournament, led the way in the victory with 28 points and six assists, scoring 12 of his output in the opening frame alone to help his side overcome a tepid start and seize control of the contest.

Riyadi was staring at a one-point deficit but the lefty guard swished in one of his six three-pointers for the go-ahead bucket, which ignited what would be a 15-0 run toward a 26-12 lead at the end of the period.

His solid start seemingly rubbed off on his teammates, with Amir Saoud and Thon Maker taking turns in leading their second-quarter surge that saw the squad inflate the lead to 53-32 with 1:25 left before the break. There was hardly any let-up from then on, and the game would become a one-sided show

in Riyadi's favor – much to the joy of Lebanese supporters that trooped to the venue to witness a coronation at home.

Marcus Georges-Hunt also played a crucial part in the win with 24 points and five rebounds, while Last year's MVP Thon Maker finished with 20 points, and nine rebounds, with Saoud supplying 13 points and six assists off the bench.

Tabiat, on the other hand, was led by Croatian center Ivan Buva, who registered 15 points and five rebounds as the Iranian club achieved a highest finish for the country in the WASL history. Sina Vahedi had 14 points. Amir Qolizadeh scored 12, while Perry Petty and Arman Zangeneh added 11 each.

Al Riyadi and Tabiat will now turn their attention to the Basketball Champions League Asia in June 9, with the former defending its title at the flagship club competition in the continent.



Al Riyadi's Wael Arakji (R) goes up for a basket during a victory over Tabiat in the FIBA West Asia Super League final in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon, on May 18, 2025.



Iranian weightlifter Yousefi set to miss World Championships

Sports Desk

Iranian superheavyweight prodigy Alireza Yousefi will be facing a race against time to return to full fitness for the upcoming World Weightlifting Championships – starting October 1 in Førde, Norway – as well as November's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh.

Two-time world junior champion Yousefi, 21, has been sidelined since

undergoing a surgery in late January for a torn ligament and meniscus in his right knee.

"Alireza hasn't started his weightlifting training yet, and is only doing general strength and conditioning work for now. We'll have to see how his situation develops. With the world event just four months away, there's a real chance he might miss the competition in Norway," Ali Jabbari, a member of the Iranian coaching staff

said this week.

Yousefi made his World Championships debut in style last year in Manama, Bahrain, where he grabbed a gold and a bronze medal.

The Iranian set a new Asian record of 262kg to beat fellow-Iranian Ali Davoudi to the clean & jerk gold in the +109kg contests, before a total tally of 456kg saw him finish behind Armenian Varazdat Lalayan and Davoudi.

Iranian artist turns scrap metal objects into artefacts



Adel Pasha

By Leila Imeni
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

When it comes to Iranian handicrafts and arts, people often think of carpet weaving, kilim weaving, inlay work, woodcarving, and leatherworking. However, the true scope of Iranian artists' talents stretches far beyond these familiar arts, including many creations that fewer people may be aware of. One extraordinary example is the production of sculptures from metal waste, crafted by a talented artist from Tabriz in East Azarbaijan Province.

At first glance, one might not guess that the raw materials used to create these beautiful and delicate artworks — crafted with remarkable attention to detail — were once discarded vehicle parts. Adel Pasha, who has been a shoemaker for forty years, began creating sculptures from metal waste six years ago. In an interview with Iran Daily at the International Tourism and Handicrafts Exhibition of Khorasan Razavi in Mashhad, he said: "I produce different items; for example, I make metal tanks and trailers from Pride brake pads, motorcycle timing gears, Nissan timing chain."



He has also built several sculptures for the Tabriz Municipality, including a large sculpture of a horse installed in a park, which visitors can even ride.

A sculpture depicts a person weaving a carpet, a replica of Tabriz Municipality building, and a large sculpture of a dog are some of the artworks he has made for the Tabriz Municipality.

When asked about his customers, he mentioned: "Balance sculptures, one of the artworks I produce, usually purchased by children. This particular piece is made from waste materials such as jam



jar lids, satellite dish rods, and similar items and car sculptures often find buyers among owners of auto galleries."

Waste materials like timing chains, screws and nuts, bearings, fans, ball bearings, steering components, and engine parts from gearboxes are transformed into beautiful works of art by this talented artist. Each of his creations is a symbol of his creativity and ingenuity, highlighting the hidden value of discarded objects like vehicle parts.

He mainly sells his artworks through participation in hand-

icraft exhibitions and through his personal social media channels. His range of products also includes sculptures of tractors and trailers, musical instruments such as guitars and the traditional Persian tar, locomotives, cameras, insect models like mosquitoes and cockroaches, motorcycles, vintage cars, mannequins, and more — many of which attract much attention from visitors.

Although he has worked alone in a small workshop up to now and currently does not have apprentices, he is eager to expand his workshop and aims to teach this art form to others. This artist transforms lifeless waste into sculptures full of vitality and meaning. Chains that have been abandoned, rusted springs, scattered car and motorcycle parts — everything gains a new identity in his talented hands.

Having participated in numerous exhibitions, he previously mentioned that one of his future plans is to hold exhibitions abroad to showcase Iranian art and culture beyond the borders of the country. His next goal is to shift his focus onto creating sculptures symbolizing nature — such as trees, flowers, insects, and natural landscapes — using his artistic vision.

Natural beauty, healing powers of Dehloran hot springs

Iranica Desk

Dehloran hot springs consist of multiple springs and a mud pool, with water temperatures reaching around fifty degrees Celsius. They are among the prominent health tourism destinations in Ilam Province.

These natural hot springs are situated three kilometers from the city of Dehloran, in the foothills of Siah

Kuh and close to Khofash (Bats) Cave. One of the most remarkable and unique characteristics of these springs is that, when sunlight reflects off the water, they create a rainbow-like color pattern. This extraordinary natural phenomenon has led Dehloran hot springs to be regarded as one of the rarest natural phenomena in Iran.

Because heated water can

hold more dissolved solids than cold water, warm and especially hot springs tend to be rich in minerals, particularly sulfur. Every year, many visitors come to Dehloran to bathe in these springs, seeking relief from conditions such as articular pains, rheumatoid arthritis, various skin wounds, and muscular issues, and to benefit from the therapeutic properties of the mineral waters.

However, due to the high sulfur content, patients with heart conditions are advised to avoid prolonged exposure or immersion in the waters. Dehloran hot springs are classified as fossil springs, formed as a result of the geological activity associated with nearby oil and gas resources. The springs originate from two main mineral-rich streams, which

converge underground to form a river of hot, mineral-laden water. The mineral composition of the waters also significantly affects the region's vegetation and ecosystem.

Access to Dehloran hot springs is quite straightforward, with two main routes: The primary route is via an asphalted road from Dehloran city, leading to the springs located to the west

of the city. This route also provides access to Khofash (Bats) Cave, making it a convenient choice for visitors. The secondary route is a dirt road, offering a more adventurous experience. Travelers on this route are often surprised by the sight of the Tar (Qir) Springs along the way. In these springs, instead of water, thick tar flows from the earth's surface. This site is registered

as a national heritage of Iran. The Tar Springs are another rare geological phenomenon in Ilam Province and are the only tar springs of their kind documented in Iran.

Overall, the Dehloran hot springs' combination of natural beauty, unique geological features, and therapeutic benefits make it an extraordinary destination worth exploring.



Iranian film wins top honors at Philadelphia's festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Ali Atshani picked up two awards at the 28th FirstGlance Film Festival in Philadelphia, according to a statement from the film's publicist. His film 'My Little Moon' won Best Director for Atshani and Best Lead Actress for Natalia Polo. The event ran May 16–18 at the Film Society Bourse Cinema in downtown Philadelphia. 'My Little Moon' had been nominated in five categories, including Best

Film, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Sound Design, and Best Cinematography. The FirstGlance Film Festival, founded in 1996, is one of the longest-running indie film events in the US. It showcases independent features and shorts from around the globe. The film follows two teenage girls—one in Iran, the other in the United States—who build a deep online friendship. Despite borders and cultural divides, the story underscores a universal message: friendship and



Iranian filmmaker Ali Atshani poses for a portrait during the 28th FirstGlance Film Festival in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US, May 18, 2025. ● IRNA

love know no boundaries. Natalia Polo stars alongside Nicole Amato, Brent Kubelik, Matthew Firman, and Elnaz Bagheri. 'My Little Moon' has already earned awards at festivals in Canada, Kansas City, Santa Fe, and Riverside, California.



Iran eyes deeper spiritual diplomacy with Vatican amid 2025 pilgrimage push

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is ready to open "a new chapter" in spiritual diplomacy and interfaith dialogue with the Vatican, Culture and Tourism Minister Reza Salehi Amiri said, citing shared values and deep religious traditions. Speaking during a meeting with Archbishop Richard Gallagher, the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States, Salehi Amiri pointed to the Islamic Republic's "civilizational experience" and holy sites as a foundation for a broader push in faith-based diplomacy, IRNA reported. "The year 2025, declared by the Pope as '2025 Holy Year' must become a turning point," he said, calling it a chance to "revive the role of religions in reimagining meaning" in a world rattled by conflict and confusion. Pilgrimage, he added, is more than

just ritual. It is a "shared narrative" of truth, compassion, and peace that binds peoples together. Salehi Amiri, who traveled to the Vatican as the special envoy of President Masoud Pezeshkian for the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV, said Iran seeks to help shape global pilgrimage routes, promote "peace caravans," and invest in scholarly exchange on interfaith dialogue. "What the world needs today," he said, "is a return to a shared religious understanding of human dignity." Gallagher welcomed Iran's stance and praised what he called an "intelligent and accurate" linkage between pilgrimage and global peace. He said the Catholic Church supports initiatives that promote coexistence, spiritual exchange, and joint pilgrimage routes. Iran's active role in 2025-related



programs, Gallagher added, could "reinforce the divine identity of contemporary humanity." He emphasized Iran's vast potential in Islamic theology, pilgrimage culture, and interfaith cooperation. The Vatican and Iran have engaged in occasional high-level talks since formal diplomatic relations were established in 1954. Pope Francis has often spoken of the importance of dialogue with the Islamic world, notably during his historic visit to Iraq in March 2021.

Persian Gulf poem strikes chord at Russia-Islamic world forum

Arts & Culture Desk

A student's recital of a poem about the Persian Gulf drew attention at the closing of the 16th International Economic Forum 'Russia - the Islamic World: Kazan Forum' in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan. During the "Iranian Cultural Noon" part, organized by the Iranian Consulate and Iranian students in Kazan, audiences were introduced to Iranian traditions, classical music, regional costumes, calligraphy, and historic heritage, IRNA reported. One highlight stood out: the reading of "I Am the Daughter of Iran" by a young Iranian woman. Her voice rang clear with the line, "This gulf deep in the earth, is forever the Persian Gulf of Iran." Audience members, Iranians, Russians, and delegates from both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, responded with applause. Several called the performance "moving" and "powerful." Although not present, Iranian singer Salar Aghili's song "Iran" played in the background. Its lyrics—"Iran, for your



tears and laughter... your beating, blazing heart..."—added emotional weight to the ceremony. Iran's consul general in Kazan, Davoud Mirzakhani, delivered a speech on the nation's cultural legacy. Other parts spotlighted Iran's arts, crafts, and ancient civilization. Tatarstan, long regarded as a cultural bridge between Islam and the north, hosted the May 14–17 forum, which covered a broad spectrum—economics, politics, science, and the halal industry among them. First launched in 2009, the forum aims to build ties between Russia and the Islamic world.

Steadfast guardians of community health, family doctors lead the way



By Ebrahim Noori Goushki
Family medicine specialist

PERSPECTIVE
EXCLUSIVE

World Family Doctor Day (May 19) is an opportunity to remind everyone of the tireless efforts of my colleagues in the field of health. We live in a world that is changing at an amazing pace; from health crises and natural disasters to psychological pressures, social changes and human lifestyles. In the meantime, "resilience" as the ability to adapt and withstand hardships is the key to our individual and collective health. In this turbulent path, family doctors, as the backbone of the primary health care system and an important link between people and the health structure, who provide primary health care with a community-oriented and community-centered perspective based on continuous communication with people and a complete understanding of their family and social context, are undoubtedly a solid and reliable companion. The family doctor is not only a healer of diseases, but also a supporter of mental health, a guide for making the right treatment decisions, and an informed listener to our physical and mental concerns. With the family doctor, psychological and

social resilience is strengthened in families, diseases are identified earlier and better managed, health education continues continuously and effectively, and trust and human connection become the foundation of peace in crises. In an unstable world, the family doctor is the pillar of our health sustainability. To commemorate the International Family Doctor Day and to appreciate the efforts of colleagues and to raise awareness of the important role of family physicians, it is suggested that by holding specialized conferences or meetings, organizing awareness campaigns on social media, incentive plans for family doctors, producing educational and informational content, collaborative activities with educational centers, and the presence of family physicians in the media, we point out the unique role of these physicians in maintaining the health of the community and remind them not to pay attention to family physicians only on May 19, but to appreciate their efforts and their unique role in the health system every day of the year. Finally, as a small member of the large family of family doctors around the world, I extend my congratulations and best wishes to all family doctors around the world and clinical specialists in this field on this auspicious day. May your path be green and your thoughts be rich.

'Serious alarm': Iran facing drop in birth rate

Social Desk

Iran's birth rate has hit a historic low, dropping 7.4% over the past Persian calendar year, Vice President for Executive Affairs Mohammad Jafar Ghaempanah warned Monday, calling it a "serious alarm" for the nation's future. At a National Population Day event in Tehran, Ghaempanah revealed that fewer than one million births were recorded last year, with total fertility falling to 1.44—far below the replacement level of 2.1, Tasnim News Agency reported. "The statistics and figures indicate the decline of the productive population," he said, warning of "irreversible" consequences if the trend continues. The warning comes amid new national survey results showing that nearly 78% of married Iranians of childbearing age have no desire to have children. Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, Secretary of the National Population Task Force, presented the findings Monday, noting that this sharp reluctance stems mainly from "worry about the future" of potential children. Economic insecurity, housing shortages, and job instability were cited



as key reasons couples are choosing not to grow their families. "This decline is no longer due to disease or disaster," Dastjerdi said. "It's driven by human will." The country is also aging fast. Officials project the proportion of citizens over 65 could jump from 10.4% to 26.5% within 25 years, making Iran potentially the oldest population in the region. The average age of first marriage—28 for men and 24 for women—is climbing, and officials are calling for plans to reverse that trend. The drop in population is viewed not just as a demographic

issue but also as a national security concern. A shrinking population in a region with growing neighbors, Dastjerdi warned, could disrupt the "balance of power." While the government has focused on boosting quantity, officials now stress improving quality too, with calls to invest in maternal care, early childhood health, and education. Ghaempanah also slammed previous policies banning fetal screening, calling them "unscientific" and counterproductive. "There needs to be hope," he said. Without it, families won't take the leap.