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### Iran, Armenia eye \$3bn trade boost

Tehran opposed to any geopolitical changes in region

By Ara Shaverdian  
MP representing Armenians of Tehran, Northern Iran

#### OPINION

President Masoud Pezeshkian has placed stronger trade and economic ties with Armenia high on his agenda. Since taking office a year ago, his administration has made expanding relations with neighbors a central priority of foreign policy, and major steps have already been taken in this regard.

The two neighbors have set their sights on raising bilateral trade from \$1 billion to \$3 billion, a goal that continues to be actively pursued.

The president's visit to Armenia later today comes at a crucial and sensitive moment, given the latest developments in Yerevan. The trip carries considerable weight, with expectations that memorandums of understanding—particularly in economic cooperation and cross-border trade—will be signed. The aim is to push up trade volumes to \$3 billion.

Armenia is a permanent member of the Eurasian Economic Union, while Iran has been an observer since August last year. Since then, several high-level meetings, attended by the Iranian first vice president, have emphasized stronger economic cooperation. The president's upcoming visit to Yerevan is clearly a continuation of these economic agreements.

At present, a road linking the Norduz border crossing to northern Armenia is being built with the participation of Iranian contractors. The involvement of Iranian specialists in Armenia's infrastructure projects underlines Yerevan's willingness to bring Iran into its development plans.

Numerous agreements have already been struck between the private sectors, business leaders, and investors of both countries, spanning customs development, transportation, school construction, and more. Both governments have stressed the importance of keeping this process on track, and hopes are high that it will go on.

The Armenian government has repeatedly expressed its interest in welcoming Iranian businesspeople and investors. In this context, Iranian companies can maintain an active presence in Armenia and neighboring countries, free from the burden of cruel sanctions imposed by the West and the United States.

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## 'Time to end war': Mass Israeli rallies call for stopping Gaza genocide

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A member of the Israeli riot police arrests a demonstrator, during a protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanding an end to the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip in Tel Aviv on August 17, 2025.

● AFP



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# Iran's Armed Forces warn US, Israel against renewed onslaught

## National Desk

Iran's Armed Forces warned the United States and Israel against any renewed onslaught on the Islamic Republic, saying Iran is ready to crush aggressors and sinister plots against the country's security. The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Sunday that Iran is more determined than ever to confront any "arrogant-Zionist threat and conspiracy." The IRGC also said the Islamic Republic stands ready to crush any aggressor and any sinister plot against its security. The IRGC delivered the remarks in a statement on Sunday, marking the anniversary of the return of liberated prisoners of the war that was imposed by Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein on the country in the 1980s. The statement came a day after the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces sternly warned the United States and Israel against any renewed aggression against Iran, stressing that such folly will be met with a crushing response much stronger than that of the 12-day imposed war in June. The top Iranian military body released a statement on Saturday, as it commemorated the release anniversary of the prisoners of war from Iraq. "Global arrogant powers have not learned from their successive past failures since the victory of the Islamic Revolution 46 years ago.



Smoke billows following missile attacks from Iran on Tel Aviv, Israel on June 13, 2025.  
● REUTERS

They once again launched an act of aggression against Islamic Iran in cooperation with the bogus, savage and child-killing Zionist regime – their devoted agent and proxy in the region. "However, as many experts, analysts, politicians and observers have acknowledged, this sinister plot brought them nothing other than a disgraceful defeat, humiliation and shame," the statement read. The General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces then cautioned the US and the Israeli regime to cease their conspiracies and hostility against the "powerful and invincible Iran." It said in the event of any miscalculation or hostile act, what led to Iran's restraint and prevented large-scale operations during the 12-day imposed war, will not be repeated. The statement concluded that enemies will instead face new surprises

and measures far more crushing and destructive than before. On June 13, the Israeli regime launched its aggression targeting senior Iranian officials and nuclear scientists in an act of terrorism that killed scores of civilians as well. Days later, the United States escalated the war by bombing three civilian nuclear facilities in Iran. In a powerful response, the Iranian Armed Forces launched retaliatory strikes on strategic Israeli targets across the occupied territories and also hit the Al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military outpost in West Asia. On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the illegal assault as Tel Aviv, overwhelmed by the counterstrikes, was compelled to seek a cease-fire.

## 'Time to end war': Mass Israeli rallies call for stopping Gaza genocide



Israelis stage a protest demanding an end to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip in the occupied al-Quds on August 17, 2025.  
● MENAHEM KAHANA/AFP

Demonstrators across the Palestinian occupied territories called for an end to the Gaza war and a deal to release hostages still held in Gaza. The protests come more than a week after Israel's security cabinet approved plans to capture Gaza City, following 22 months of war that have created dire humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian territory, AFP reported. The war was triggered by Palestinian resistance group Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israeli targets in the occupied territories, during which 251 people were taken captive. Forty-nine captives remain in Gaza, including 27 the Israeli military says are dead. Demonstrators also blocked roads, including the highway connecting Tel Aviv and the occupied al-Quds where they set tires on fire, accord-

ing to local media footage. Israeli police said more than 30 protesters were arrested for disturbing public order. Organizers also called for a general strike on Sunday – the first day of the week in Israel. "I think it's time to end the war. It's time to release all of the hostages. And it's time to help Israel recover and move towards a more stable Middle East," said Doron Wilfand, a 54-year-old tour guide, at a rally in the occupied al-Quds. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed the protesters, saying their actions "not only hardened Hamas's position and draw out the release of our hostages, but also ensure that the horrors of October 7 will reoccur." Egypt said in recent days mediators were leading a renewed push to secure a 60-day truce that would

include the release of captives, after the last round of talks in Qatar had ended without a breakthrough. Some Israeli cabinet members who oppose any deal with Hamas slammed Sunday's demonstrations. Israel's far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich decried "a perverse and harmful campaign that plays into the hands of Hamas" and calls for "surrender." Culture minister Miki Zohar, of Netanyahu's Likud party, said on X that blocking roads and disrupting daily life was "a reward to the enemy." The Israeli plans to expand the war into Gaza City and nearby refugee camps have sparked an international outcry as well as domestic opposition. Israel's Army Radio reported on Sunday that military chief Eyal Zamir was due to review the "plans to conquer Gaza City" in a meeting later in the day. According to the report, residents would be evacuated before troops encircle the city and finally seize it, beginning "in the coming weeks." Israel on Saturday said it was preparing "to move the population from combat zones to the southern Gaza Strip for their protection." UN-backed experts have warned of widespread famine unfolding in the territory, where Israel has drastically curtailed the amount of humanitarian aid it allows in. Israel's offensive has killed more than 61,944 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to figures from the Health Ministry in Gaza.

## Armenia assures Iran of non-deployment of foreign forces along border: FM spox

### International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said Yerevan had explicitly informed Tehran that no foreign forces would be stationed along the two countries' common border under a US-brokered peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan earlier this month.

In an interview with a radio channel on Sunday, Ismaeil Baqaei said Armenian officials have said that the construction of the corridor will be carried out with the participation of Armenian companies and an American company under Armenian law.

"We are highly sensitive about this issue, and Armenia itself is also aware of the consequences of the presence of foreign forces," he said. Baqaei said Iran believes that foreign intervention and the presence of transregional forces in the Caucasus region is not beneficial to the regional countries and only makes the situation more complex.

He noted that the South Caucasus region is of great importance for Iran and the countries in the region, especially Russia, from various political, economic, and geopolitical perspectives.

Iran's government's spokeswoman Fati-meh Mohajerani also on Saturday warned that involvement of transregional actors into the Caucasus equations could have long-term negative consequences for peace and stability of the region. Back on August 8, Armenian Prime Minis-



Ismaeil Baqaei

ter Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed the US-mediated peace deal at the White House. The accord includes the creation of a transit corridor through Armenia to connect Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhchivan – a longstanding demand of Baku. Under the deal, the United States will have development rights to the corridor – dubbed the "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity" (TRIPP) – in the strategic, resource-rich region. Iran has long opposed the modification of the corridor – often referred to as Zangezur – fearing it would cut the Islamic Republic off from the Caucasus. Christian-majority Armenia and Muslim-majority Azerbaijan have feuded for decades over their border and the status of ethnic enclaves within each other's territories. The nations went to war twice over the disputed Karabakh region, which Azerbaijan recaptured from Armenian forces in a lightning 2023 offensive, sparking the exodus of more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians.

## 'Horrific war crime': Tehran raps Israeli plan to dislocate Gazans to south

### International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry strongly condemned in a statement on Sunday Israel's plan to forcibly displace Palestinians from "combat zones" to southern Gaza, days after the regime announced a new offensive to seize control of Gaza City, the territory's largest urban center.

The ministry said the "regime's decision to forcibly displace the residents of Gaza City – who have endured nearly two years of the most intense bombings and have faced forced starvation by the regime over the past five months – constitutes a clear example of a war crime and a crime against humanity."

The statement emphasized the responsibility of the international community and Islamic countries to confront "this horrific war crime," which it said is aimed at completing the plan of genocide and the erasure of Palestine as a nation and identity. The ministry said Israel's decision is the result of the impunity granted to the "criminal leaders" of the Israeli regime, which itself stems from the comprehensive military and political support provided by the US and some European countries to the regime, as well as the lack of



AFP

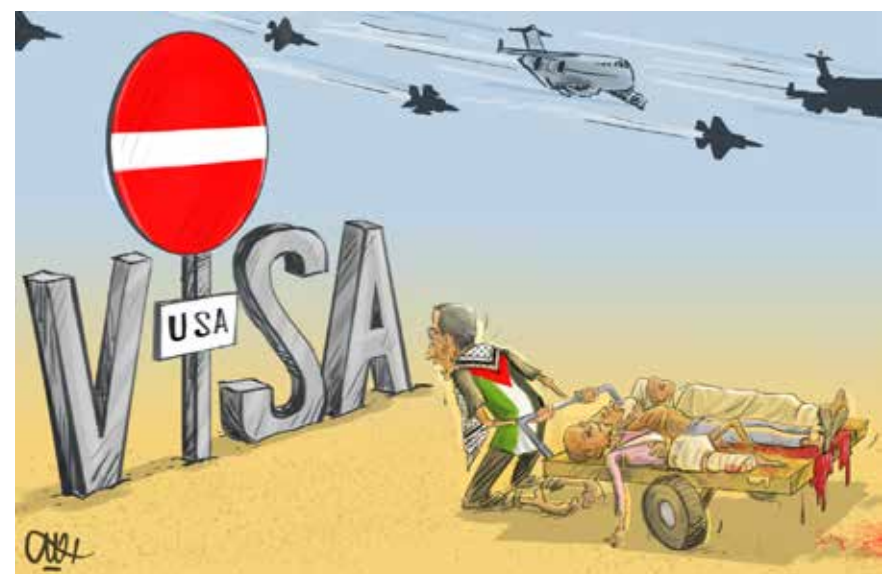
any serious action by the United Nations Security Council and international courts to hold the regime's leaders accountable for their crimes in Gaza.

The Israeli occupation army's Arabic-language spokesperson Avichay Adraee said on Saturday that residents would be provided with tents and other shelter equipment transported through the Karem Abu Salem, or Kerem Shalom, crossing by the United Nations and international relief organizations.

The statement comes less than a week since Israeli prime minister Netanyahu announced that the military had been given the green light to "dismantle" what he described as the two remaining Hamas strongholds of Gaza City in the north and al-Mawasi further to the south.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist





# Pezeshkian: Armenia, Belarus visits to empower private sector, expedite deals

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian announced that the main focus of his upcoming visits to Armenia and Belarus would be to facilitate private sector activities and accelerate the implementation of agreements. On Sunday, a coordination meeting was held with the participation of Pezeshkian, cabinet ministers, and senior executive officials to review various dimensions and outline the agenda of the official visits to the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Belarus, IRNA reported. The president will leave Tehran for Yerevan today and then travel to Minsk. Pezeshkian underscored that among the key priorities of the two visits are facilitating the activities of the Iranian private sector in both destination countries and expediting the implementation of pending agreements and major projects, particularly joint investment initiatives.

The president said these priorities would shape his meetings with Armenia's prime minister and Belarus's president, as part of efforts to deepen relations and advance mutual interests. During the Sunday meeting, the different aspects and levels of Iran's relations with Armenia and Belarus were comprehensively examined. The existing and potential capacities in key sectors such as energy, transportation, trade, investment, healthcare, environment, science, culture, and tourism were thoroughly outlined. Opportunities, challenges, and obstacles to developing mutual cooperation were identified, and practical solutions to overcome them were carefully discussed. One of the major and sensitive issues raised during the session was the recent agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan on establishing a transit corridor.



President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) heads a coordination meeting on the agenda of his official visits to Armenia and Belarus in Tehran on August 17, 2025.

● [president.ir](#)

Azerbaijan and Armenia last week signed a peace treaty in Washington aimed at ending nearly four decades of conflict. Reports indicated that a US private consortium would oversee the Zangezur corridor along Iran's border, a development that has drawn Tehran's close attention. In this regard, the engagement of Armenian officials with senior authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure the protection of Iran's national interests and considerations was cited as an example of the country's active and constructive diplomacy. In addition, draft cooperation documents and memorandums of understanding between Iran and Ar-



menia and Belarus, which are on the verge of being signed, were closely reviewed to pave the way for their prompt implementation. In the session, the president, with

particular attention to the issues raised — especially in the sphere of trade and economic exchanges — emphasized the firm determination of the Islamic Republic to expand

regional cooperation and strengthen friendly relations with neighboring and like-minded countries, based on constructive engagement and mutual interests.

## Deputy minister: Foreign banks still serving Iranians, but under tight FATF oversight



A view of the building of Central Bank of Iran

● [IRNA](#)

not been cut off, but they remain heavily restricted. This is while, at present, for Myanmar, only identity verification has been set by countries as a requirement." The FATF has, for the first time in six years, formally invited the head of Iran's Financial Intelligence Unit to participate in direct negotiations. The invitation follows Iran's recent presentation of its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing measures to FATF's regional group, as well as the ratification of the Palermo Convention by the country's Expediency Council. Speaking to Tasnim, the head of the Financial Intelligence Unit responded to a question about the status of countries with FATF action plans similar to Iran's, saying that about 28 countries are currently under FATF action plans and are effectively on the "grey list," with some

coordinating their measures with FATF mechanisms. Three countries — Iran, Myanmar, and North Korea — remain under enhanced monitoring and on FATF's blacklist. The deputy minister noted that Myanmar currently has a better status than Iran on the blacklist, and with the final ratification of the Palermo Convention, there is hope that countermeasures against Iran may be eased at the upcoming FATF meeting. Khani added that FATF assesses countries' performance within the framework of implementing domestic anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing laws. Most countries have incorporated FATF's 40 recommendations into their legal systems. If shortcomings are identified, countries are first placed on the grey list, during which they are asked to make necessary reforms within a specific timeframe (usually one to one-and-a-half years). Failure to comply may lead to blacklisting. Khani stressed that the essential difference between the grey list

and the blacklist is that, in the former, the target country is directly addressed by FATF and urged to correct deficiencies, while in the latter, all FATF member states are called on to apply countermeasures against the country. Citing the tougher conditions facing North Korea, he said that unlike Iran, banks and financial intermediaries linked to North Korean nationals are completely deprived of access to global financial services. FATF has also authorized its members to adopt even harsher countermeasures against countries on the blacklist — measures that some countries are already sporadically applying against Iran. Referring to the upcoming FATF meeting, scheduled for late September or early October in Spain, Khani said Iran has demonstrated goodwill in recent years through multiple legislative reforms and, ultimately, ratifying the Palermo Convention. He said Iran's participation in the Madrid session would be an opportunity to open the door for dialogue, particularly to reduce

countermeasures or secure a return to the grey list. Khani emphasized that Iran's action plan was approved about eight years ago and, despite the official timeline having expired, it is still in place. This is while FATF has annulled the action plan for countries such as North Korea. The continuation of this process, he said, shows Iran's engagement and acceptance of FATF's general framework. He noted that even recent assessments on Iran are based on outdated versions of the recommendations, while other countries are evaluated based on actual performance and proof of effectiveness. He concluded that ratification of the CFT Convention by the Expediency Council is a necessary step toward improving Iran's position within FATF. Expert reviews have long been completed, leaving only the final session and vote. He stressed that this matter should be expedited, as remaining in the current situation only gives Iran's adversaries more room to apply international pressure mechanisms.

## ISA: Private sector faces no restrictions in satellite manufacturing

'Shahid Soleimani' constellation underway with consortium of private/state-owned firms

Economy Desk

The head of the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) announced on Sunday the organization's readiness to hand over satellite manufacturing projects to the private sector. In an interview with ILNA, Hassan Salarieh, outlining the country's space projects, said there are no legal restrictions on satellite production. "Based on the technical capacity and financial strength of the private sector, the agency intends to assign several projects to it." He explained that the reason for the new approach is the belief that competition and growth in the space industry will only occur once the private sector enters the field. Furthermore, successful participation in international collaborations and major space projects will only be possible if the private sector plays a more active role in satellite design and production, delivering multiple outputs. However, he added, "Some high-risk projects are still better pursued and designed by government research centers, the Space Research Institute, and state-owned companies, since the technological risks of major

projects should not be placed on the shoulders of the private sector. For this reason, the public sector remains more active in such areas." The ISA head also announced the launch of experimental models of the "Shahid Soleimani" constellation within the current year (to be ended on March 20, 2026). Salarieh explained that "Shahid Soleimani" is Iran's first narrowband constellation, being designed and built through a consortium of private and state-owned companies. As previously stated, prototypes of these satellites are currently being designed and manufactured. He stressed that the project is one of the country's most important space initiatives, as it represents the first constellation to be fully designed and built domestically, with the private sector playing a significant role in satellite production. He went on to say that the concepts of simultaneously manufacturing multiple satellites, launching them together, managing them concurrently, and operating them as part of one constellation all involve specific technical dimensions, which are being addressed in the project.



Underlining that the construction of experimental models is nearing completion and they will soon be launched, he added that the launch of the main models must be coordinated with the launch vehicle program after ground tests are completed. He said the project has progressed well, with designs finalized and subsystem manufacturing advancing. Salarieh elaborated on the private sector's role in completing the agency's projects, noting that the "Kosar" and "Hodhod" satellites were launched in 2024. These were entirely designed and manufactured by the private sector, making them the first satellites in the country to be fully developed domestically by private companies.

## Two mega projects turning eastern provinces into transit hub

Iran's eastern provinces are becoming a transit hub with the commissioning of two mega projects aimed at enhancing transportation infrastructure and promoting trade development. Mehdi Parsi, the director general of Roads and Urban Development of Sistan and Baluchestan, announced that 30 kilometers of the highway on the Zahedan-Birjand route will be put into operation by the end of the Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2025) as part of the government's transportation development plan across the country's eastern strip. "This project will not only help reduce accidents and increase travel safety, but also play an important role in facilitating trade and improving the quality of life in the province,"

Parsi said, underlining that the timely financing of the project could bring it on stream in a shorter time frame, Press TV reported. The total length of the Zahedan-Birjand route is 211 km, of which 150 km has been converted into a highway and is currently in operation. The highway project is currently under construction with over 40% physical progress and requires the allocation of necessary funds to expedite its completion. Mansour Bijar, the governor-general of Sistan and Baluchestan, also visited the Zahedan-Birjand project to review the status of its executive operations. Emphasizing the significance of the highway as one of the country's vital transit arteries, Bijar said, "The completion of the project, as the province's

top priority, will help solidify Sistan and Baluchestan's position as a key link in Iran's eastern transit corridor." Another high-profile infrastructure project is the Chabahar-Sarakhs railway, which has been branded as a catalyst for the economic and transit transformation of eastern Iran. Connecting Chabahar Port to Sarakhs, the railway project can facilitate trade exchanges for landlocked countries in Central Asia and Afghanistan and contribute to the sustainable development of the region. Governor-General of South Khorasan Province, Mohammad Reza Hashemi, described the project as a vital artery that fortifies the country's transit infrastructure and helps access to international corridors.



## One year with Pezeshkian

## President's three trump cards in foreign policy



## ANALYSIS

The Persian calendar year 1403 (March 20, 2024–March 20, 2025) turned out to be a challenging and eventful year. The passing of Iran's previous president in a helicopter accident, alongside the martyrdom of the secretary general of the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah, left the Iranian nation in mourning. Still, the Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly weathered much tougher storms and has managed to pull through crises with determination and authority. Since Ebrahim Raisi was unable to serve out his four-year term in the executive branch, last July, the people elected a new face as Iran's ninth president. From the get-go of his campaign, he set out on a path of honesty, fairness, and justice, and spoke candidly with the true beneficiaries of the Islamic Revolution. Masoud Pezeshkian made no empty promises and shied away from releasing a long list of promises just to win votes. Instead, he spoke about the importance of the Seventh Development Plan and the 20-Year Vision Document, stressing that if we can stick to this roadmap, there's no need for reinventing new slogans or electioneering promises.

## 'Dignity, wisdom, and expediency'

During a televised debate with his rivals, when asked about his administration's foreign policy game plan, he responded: "We will move forward based on the overarching principles of 'dignity, wisdom, and expediency.' If we keep fueling infighting at home, we'll just end up turning on each other. So, we need to build consensus and unity domestically, set aside differences, and then accept that our nation's best interests lie in

opening channels of dialogue with the world and claiming what's rightfully ours." He mapped out his government's main foreign policy line should he come out on top in the early presidential election, and his political allies, by taking part in campaign programs and rallies, dug into the "doctor-turned-politician's" take on foreign affairs.

Along those lines, Fayyaz Zahed, a representative of Pezeshkian's campaign HQ, appeared on Radio during the election to emphasize that diplomacy and field action must go hand in hand: "The field can be an effective tool, but it has to fall in line with a nationwide policy, and, execution-wise, it must answer to a clearly defined command."

He stressed that foreign policy should never fall victim to domestic squabbles: "If we've got family disputes at home, we have no right to air our dirty laundry in public. Nor should we use international achievements as a stick to beat rivals with, or undercut our own diplomats by tripping them up and making life difficult for them." All in all, one must acknowledge that the world is in a period of transition, and an independent, major player like Iran has the chance to carve out a prominent position on the global stage, provided that:

1. Foreign policy delivers tangible benefits for the nation.
2. False dichotomies are avoided in its approach.
3. A multi-pronged, not a

one-dimensional strategy, is pursued and followed through. July 5, 2024, finally rolled around, and after a tight, hard-fought race, Masoud Pezeshkian emerged victorious in the runoff. He officially took up the mantle of president on July 28, upon receiving his mandate from the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Now, a year has passed since President Pezeshkian's win. Though his administration has been in office for less than a year, a relative assessment of the government's record can be made against the people's demands and the country's urgent needs so far.

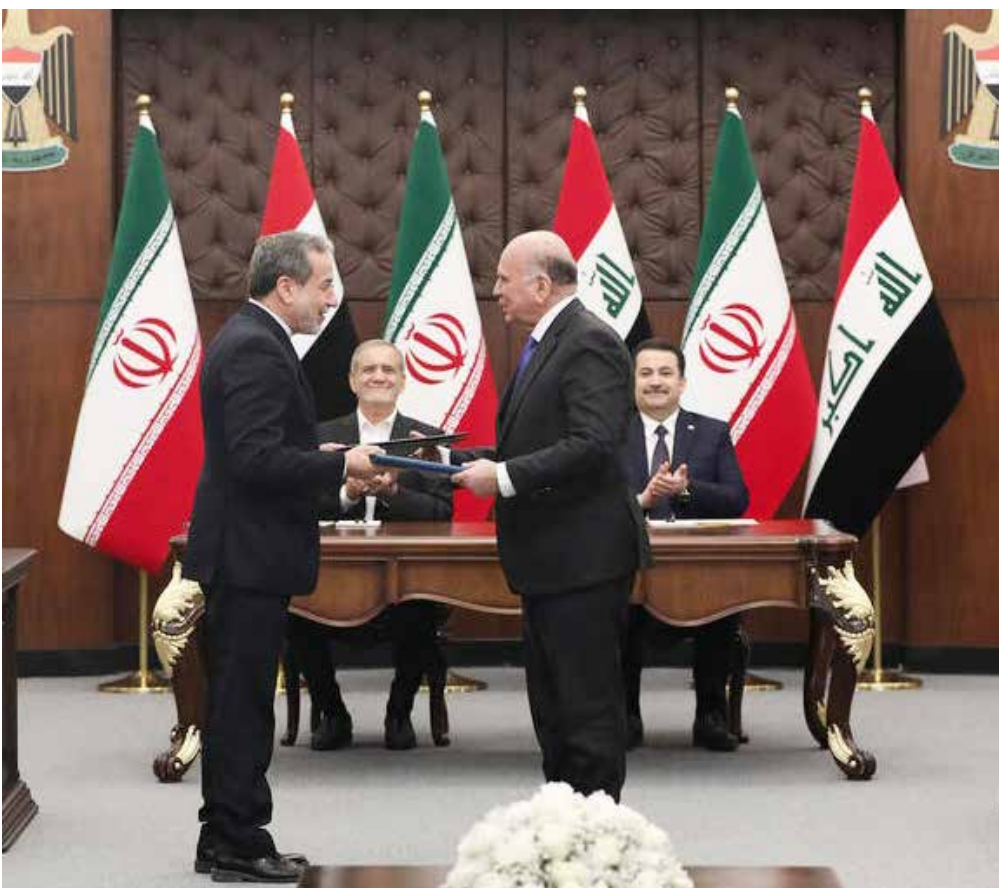
One of the most important moves in the post-election era

was for the people's choice to set out his government's foreign policy in no uncertain terms. In an article titled "My message to the new world", published in English, the messenger of unity laid bare his foreign policy blueprint:

"Under my administration, we will prioritize strengthening relations with our neighbors. We will champion the establishment of a 'strong region' rather than one where a single country pursues hegemony and dominance over the others. I firmly believe that neighboring and brotherly nations should not waste their valuable resources on erosive competitions, arms races, or the unwarranted containment of each other. Instead, we will aim to create an environment where our resources can be devoted to the progress and development of the region for the benefit of all."

In his piece, Pezeshkian stated that Iran was ready to work with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and regional organizations to deepen economic ties, boost trade, ramp up joint investments, tackle common challenges, and move toward a regional framework for dialogue, trust-building, and development:

"Our region has been plagued for too long by war, sectarian conflicts, terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, water scarcity, refugee crises, environmental degradation, and foreign interference. It is time to tackle these common challenges for the benefit of future generations. Cooperation for regional development and prosperity will be the guiding principle of our foreign policy." Pezeshkian's view was clear: "As nations endowed with abundant resources and shared traditions rooted in peaceful Islamic teachings, we must unite



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian  
● PRESS TV



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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (front-L) and his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein, exchange cooperation documents that were signed in the presence of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (back-L) and Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani (back-R) in the Iraqi capital on September 11, 2024.  
● IRNA



and rely on the power of logic rather than the logic of power. By leveraging our normative influence, we can play a crucial role in the emerging post-polar global order by promoting peace, creating a calm environment conducive to sustainable development, fostering dialogue, and dispelling Islamophobia. Iran is prepared to play its fair share in this regard.” Now, with a year gone by since Pezeshkian’s ascent, commentator and journalist Jalal Khosh-chehre, in an op-ed titled “What Went on the Fourteenth Administration’s Foreign Policy,” asserted that Pezeshkian, throughout his campaign, doubled down on two winning ideas: ensuring external security and building domestic unity. He anchored foreign policy on three strategic pillars: deterrence, peace, and diplomacy. Pezeshkian worked hard to spell out these three concepts for both domestic and foreign audiences, seeking to tie Iran’s interests to those of its neighbors. As a result, his policies not only caught on at home but also struck a chord abroad — so much so that they set alarm bells ringing in Israel. If we want to zero in on President Pezeshkian’s record in foreign policy, we must lay out three key principles and then raise a fundamental question.

**1. Striking a balance between the field and diplomacy:** Since the post-election period up to today, Pezeshkian has struck up a fortunate balance between the field and diplomacy, clearly exemplified by the swift rollout of Operation True Promise III and the firm, tough response to the aggressor enemy. Mohammad Golzari, secretary of the Government Information Council, said regarding this that after the attack by the Zionist regime against Iran, the president and the entire government, through round-the-clock efforts and coordinated field management and active diplomacy, kept the country from spiraling into bigger crises. He added that Pezeshkian is well-versed in defense as well as dialogue; For him, the field is the place to stand one’s ground protecting Iranian soil, and diplomacy is a way to ease tensions with the world. Majid Nasirpour, the representative of the city of Sarab and member of the Social Committee of the Parliament, also put his stamp of approval on the balance between field and diplomacy, which is the president’s demand, telling IRNA: “We are compelled to have a strong presence across all arenas to run the country properly. Just as our military forces are widely recognized as a deterrent, many issues on the international stage must be followed up on and negotiated. Throughout this period, we have witnessed full coordination between field and diplomacy, both stepping up in pursuit of national goals and interests.” Nasirpour stated that given the country’s circumstances, our diplomatic apparatus and government coordinate with the field and all other governing bodies, including the Supreme National Security Council, to divide up the work, and our diplomacy moves forward with strength and resolve. In summary, it must be admitted that Pezeshkian understands the importance of both arenas: the “field” and “negotiation.” He knows both how to defend and how to conduct talks. Accordingly, he neither plays



down the field nor undermines diplomacy, but keeps a well-balanced approach to pursuing both. For example, in an interview with American journalist Tucker Carlson — which made waves both inside and outside the country — he explicitly said, “We have no problem with negotiation. But the atrocities Israel has committed in the region and against our country... have caused a crisis... We hope that once we overcome this travesty, it will once again be possible to return to the negotiating table. However, that has a prerequisite: confidence in the negotiation process. Israel must not be allowed to attack again right in the middle of talks and ignite a new war.”

**2. Developing regional relations based on neighborly diplomacy:** With Masoud Pezeshkian elected as Iran’s president, the incumbent government set out to pursue national interests through a policy of good neighborliness and balanced engagement. The president’s trips to friendly and neighboring countries such as Iraq, Qatar, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Oman, and Turkmenistan stand as symbols of the effort to strengthen and expand relations with regional and neighboring countries. Moreover, the current government, within a framework of balanced interaction with countries like Russia and Egypt and active participation in regional and international organizations and institutions, has been working out a multilateral approach and has sought to boost economic ties with other countries around the globe. According to the foreign policy laid out by the head of the self-proclaimed “Government of National Unity,” to develop and

strengthen regional and international cooperation, especially continuous and effective relations with neighbors, we have so far witnessed a growing political and diplomatic engagement by Masoud Pezeshkian to realize the motto of unity on the regional and global stages, and this path is being continued by him. Esmail Kowsari, representative of Tehran and member of the Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, pointed out that relations with neighboring and friendly countries must be actively maintained, saying: “Expanding relations with neighbors and friendly countries will lead to economic progress. The policy of engaging with neighbors and friends has been very successful and impactful. Therefore, there is always an emphasis on continuing and preserving this trend.” Within one year after the election, President Pezeshkian has shown he has managed to forge effective and constructive ties with regional countries, and relying on good neighborliness diplomacy, has turned Iran into a more active player in the region. He is also vigorously pursuing the strengthening of regional diplomacy and defining more serious cooperation with countries with which Iran shares many commonalities, such as Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the development of regional relations based on neighborly diplomacy is another winning hand of the incumbent government.

**3. Forming a regional alliance to overcome crises:** On one hand, the head of Iran’s executive branch keeps pushing for developing regional relations; On the other, he is pursuing the formation of a regional alliance.

During his first foreign trip as president to Iraq, he threw out this idea in a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart and, explaining it, spoke about working toward removing borders between these countries, similar to the European Union experience. Building a regional union could blur borders among countries, strengthen cooperation, and ultimately lead to peace and stability in the region while breaking the back of imperialist conspiracies. Iran fought the vile Zionist regime for 12 days, and if a regional alliance takes shape, the Zionist enemy will no longer be able to roam freely in the Middle East. Accordingly, the government’s strategic policy is to forge an alliance among regional countries to weather the structural and security crises in the Middle East — a union based on common interests, dialogue, and lasting cooperation. Notably, on Tuesday night, July 8, Mohsen Rezaei, former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, in a special news interview, underscored the necessity of forming a South West Union with 25 countries, led by five major regional powers: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. He likened this union to the European Union, recalling how Europeans, after two world wars, came together to form the EU. He said: “This union could become one of the corners of the new world order and the multipolar system alongside the US, China, Russia, and the EU, and thereby shield the region from future conflicts.” Now, it is clear why the president has always hammered home the need to build a re-

gional alliance. He fully understood that this is the best recipe to get through the crises.

**War’s fate if Pezeshkian not been in charge**

Following the Zionist regime’s attack on Iranian soil, some posed the question: What would have been the fate of the war if Pezeshkian had not been at the helm of the executive branch? Although Ayatollah Khomeini, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, managed the war with intelligence and wise measures, the role of the country’s second-in-command cannot be overlooked or downplayed; The president, by being actively present and running affairs fully coordinated and aligned with the Leader, stood firm to defend the nation’s core and interests. He also, with a revolutionary pragmatism, tried over the past year to strengthen the links between the government and the people with a rhythm of unity and cohesion. Hence, if Pezeshkian’s government were not in office, the loss of popular support for the government would have triggered major problems during the war. Ali Shakouri Rad, a political activist, told IRNA: “Analyzing this matter isn’t easy, but one of the key factors alongside Iran’s military might was Pezeshkian’s approach. He was able to bring national power to the forefront through people’s unity and cohesion, which was very impactful. Alongside military strength, the national unity and solidarity between the people and the government in the face of the foreign enemy played an equally pivotal role in ending the war sooner and preventing further devastation.” A glance at the moves and actions of our president shows he remains true to the pledge he made to the people. Before formally starting his work, he unveiled his plans and, up to today — on the eve of his government’s first anniversary — he has done his utmost to stick to those plans. He is after tangible gains in Iran’s foreign policy, avoids creating dichotomies, and treats foreign policy not as one-dimensional but multi-faceted. Overall, he advances the entirety of foreign policy within the framework of the system’s strategy and high-level policies, and at the one-year mark of his election, he can hand over to the people a respectable record. Mr. President, the justice-seeker and peace-lover, well done.

*The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.*



Supporters of reformist Iranian presidential candidate Masoud Pezeshkian lift his portraits during a rally in Tehran on June 26, 2024.  
● RAHEB HOMAVANDI/AFP

Pezeshkian, throughout his campaign, doubled down on two winning ideas: ensuring external security and building domestic unity. He anchored foreign policy on three strategic pillars: deterrence, peace, and diplomacy. Pezeshkian worked hard to spell out these three concepts for both domestic and foreign audiences, seeking to tie Iran’s interests to those of its neighbors. As a result, his policies not only caught on at home but also struck a chord abroad — so much so that they set alarm bells ringing in Israel.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) shakes hands with the late commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force Amir Ali Hajizadeh before an annual military parade in Tehran, Iran, on September 21, 2024.  
● president.ir



# Tractor vs. Esteghlal to headline Matchday 1 as Iranian top flight gets underway

## Sports Desk

Iranian fans will be treated to another nine months of thrilling action and drama as the new Persian Gulf Pro League season kicks off today.

However, all eyes will be on Tuesday's showpiece in Tabriz, where Tractor will begin its title defense at home against Esteghlal on Tuesday.

This will be a second encounter between the two sides in eight days, after Tractor pulled off a late fightback to beat the Tehran Blues 2-1 in the Iranian Super Cup game in Isfahan last week. Tractor had to part ways with two integral parts of its title-winning run in Portuguese midfielder Ricardo Alves, who joined Sepahan, and new Esteghlal center-back Aref Aqasi, while Iran international goalkeeper Alireza Beirnavand will be out with a four-month suspension.

Esteghlal supporters, meanwhile, are desperate to see Portuguese head coach Ricardo Sa Pinto, who is back on the Blues bench after two years, and new signings – including frontline duo Saeid Saharkhizan and Haiti international Duckens Nazon – make an instant impact, as the club will be looking to improve on last season's ninth-place finish in the table.

Elsewhere in the opening round of fixtures, Esteghlal's archrival Persepolis will host newly-promoted Fajr Sepasi at Thran's Shahr-e Qods Stadium today.

Nine-time champion since the Pro League introduction in 2021, Persepolis stood third in the table last season – the Cap-



● RASOUL SHOJAEI/IRNA

ital Reds' lowest finish in the Iranian top flight in a decade – under Ismail Kartal, before the Turkish head coach left his role in July in the aftermath of the 12-day war between Iran and Israel.

Persepolis hierarchy was quick to replace Kartal with former Iran international Vahid Hashemian, though his appointment

is widely seen as a major gamble for the club, given his significant lack of experience as a head coach in senior club football. A number two to ex-Iran manager Dragan Skocic during the 2022 World Cup qualifiers, Hashemian will aim to build on his distinguished career as a player, having scored 53 goals in 254 appearances for Bundesliga

clubs VfL Bochum, Hannover 96, Hamburger SV, and Bayern Munich.

A busy transfer window for Persepolis has seen the Reds, who will be chasing an eighth league trophy since 2017, make 10 marquee signings during the summer – including goalkeeper Payam Niazmand and attacking midfielder Reza Shekari, who

joined from Sepahan, as well as former PSG and Tottenham Hotspur fullback Serge Aurier and Montenegrin midfielder Marko Bakić. Sepahan – runner-up to Tractor last season – is also set for a new era under club legend Moharram Navidkia when visiting Malavan FC on Tuesday. Navidkia returned to Sepahan

bench earlier in the summer to replace French coach Patrice Carteron, who also walked out of his job amid the regional tensions.

Navidkia got off to a losing start to his second spell as Sepahan boss, as the club suffered a 3-2 defeat at Al Duhail last week to miss out on a place in the league stage of the upcoming AFC Champions League Elite season. Joining Niazmand and Shekari in leaving Sepahan in the current transfer window were French midfielder Steven Nzonzi, who parted ways with the club for “safety reasons”, and prolific winger Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi, who signed for Ittihad Kalba in the UAE Pro League.

Meanwhile, ex-AEK Athens full-back Ehsan Hajsafi has returned to his boyhood club for a fourth stint, with goalkeeper Seyyed Hossein Hosseini and his Esteghlal teammate Arash Reza-vand among the new signings. The bad news for Navidkia is that integral midfielder Mohammad Karimi is expected to be out of action for six months after suffering a torn ligament injury against Al Duhail.

Also on matchday one, Zob Ahan will host newcomer Paykan in Isfahan today, while Golgozar and Irasco will meet in Sirjan and Mes Rafsanjan will play away to Khaybar in Khorramabad.

Esteghlal Khuzestan will welcome Shams Azar to Ahvaz on Tuesday, with last season's surprise package Chadormalou hosting Yahya Golmohammadi's Foolad Khuzestan, which hopes to improve on the fourth-place finish in the previous campaign.

## Iran wins Greco-Roman title at Ljubomir Ivanovic Gedza Memorial

### Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers collected an impressive eight medals – including triple golds – as the country claimed the Greco-Roman team title at the Ljubomir Ivanovic Gedza Memorial tournament in Mladenovac, Serbia.

Mohammad-Pouya Asadi (55kg), Reza Qeitasi (63kg), and Mohammadhossein Ostad-Mohammad Me'mar (87kg) walked away with the ultimate prize in their respective weight classes on Saturday.

Former under-23 and junior world champion Iman Mohammadi, meanwhile, had to settle for a silver medal in the 72kg contests after suffering a 2-1 defeat against Belarusian Aliaksandr Liavonchik in the final showpiece.

Elsewhere, ex-cadet world champion Amirmahdi Saiedinava (77kg), Alireza Mohammadhosseini (82kg), Yassin Yazdi (87kg), who was beaten by Me'mar in an all-Iranian semifinal, and Ayoub Hosseinvand (130kg) finished their

campaigns with a consolation bronze medal.

Ahmadreza Mohsennejad, meanwhile, left the event empty-handed following back-to-back setbacks against opponents from Belarus in the 72kg division.

Named after the late Yugoslav wrestler and coach, the one-day event featured some high-profile contestants from the host country, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Sweden, Romania, Croatia, and Belarus.



● IAWFIR

## Thompson beats Lyles in Olympic final rematch in Silesia



Kishane Thompson (3rd R) crosses the finish line ahead of Noah Lyles (L) in the men's 100m final at the Diamond League in Chorzow, Poland, on August 16, 2025.  
● GETTY IMAGES

**REUTERS** – Kishane Thompson laid down a marker ahead of next month's world championships when the Jamaican came out on top in the highly-anticipated 100 metres against Olympic champion Noah Lyles at the Silesia Diamond League meeting on Saturday.

Thompson blasted out of the blocks and never looked like being beaten, while Lyles, with his typically slow start, ran strongly at the end but the Jamaican won in 9.87 seconds, with Lyles clocking 9.90, his season's best. Kenny Bednarek was third.

There were no world records but the sun-soaked crowd were treated to some fine performances, with Olympic and world champions fine-tuning before Tokyo in September.

Faith Kipyegon came agonisingly close to breaking the women's 3,000m

world record and Keely Hodgkinson made a winning return in the 800m. The men's sprint brought together American Lyles and Thompson for the first time since their unforgettable Olympic final last year in Paris, where Lyles beat his rival by five thousandths of a second.

Add Bednarek into the mix, who recently clashed with Lyles, and this was a race that nobody wanted to miss. The two Americans had a heated moment at the U.S. Championships earlier this month, when Lyles stared down Bednarek coming to the line and received a shove in return at the finish. Lyles, whose season was delayed by an ankle injury, looked unperturbed by the defeat, happily signing autographs for fans, and was pleased to have broken 10 seconds for the first time this year. “It is a great stepping stone. I needed

to see a sub-10,” Lyles said.

“I took out some really big heads today, people who run 9.7 and 9.8. The more I run, the better I am getting.”

**KIPYEGON CLOSE**

Kenya's Kipyegon went after the 8:06.11 set in 1993 by China's Wang Junxia, leaving the rest of the field behind from the start, tucked in behind the pacemakers.

Kipyegon pushed on with more than two laps to go, driving for the line, but the 1,500m and mile world-record holder collapsed with exhaustion after coming in less than a second off the record, in 8:07.04.

“To be honest, I did not see the clock on the finish line because I was so tired,” Kipyegon said.

“I saw the world-record red line during the race but today it was very hot.”



# Isfahan's artistic heritage under threat from economic, market pressures

## Iranica Desk

The current state of Isfahan's handicrafts presents a complex and multi-layered picture of the challenges faced in this field. These range from warnings about the infiltration of a "mafia" undermining the industry and the devastating loss of 90% of enamel work, to veterans discussing the intense livelihood pressures they endure and cautioning that Isfahan's rich artistic heritage is at risk of being forgotten.

Anyone who has once walked through Naqsh-e Jahan Square will never forget its captivating charm and the mesmerizing colors of its handicrafts. This enchanting square has been witness to the faces of numerous veterans navigating its winding corridors. Travelers and tourists visiting this historic city have in turn painted a vivid portrait with their words — celebrating this living museum of Iranian handicrafts and extolling its unparalleled beauty, IRNA wrote.

Naqsh-e Jahan and its handicrafts seem inseparably linked, like two souls in one body, with the artists serving as the vital arteries pulsing life through the historical heart of Iran and Isfahan itself. Yet today, serious challenges confront the artists whose lives are deeply entwined with artistic creation, and the accounts of three active figures in this domain reveal the profound nature of the crisis.

One enamel artist from Isfahan sharply criticized the soaring costs of raw materials, the absence of sufficient support, and the encroachment of mafias in the market. He warned that if these trends persist, the art of enameling faces extinction. Ahmad Tataei, who has been dedicated to this craft for over twenty years, recounted in an IRNA interview his limited suc-



● IRNA



● IRNA



● IRNA



● IRNA

cess in exporting to Germany. "We have a high production capacity," he said. "In my own workshop's glazing section, 300 plates were produced in a single day. But a lack of international connections, administrative hurdles, and inadequate planning have stifled continued exports."

He also lamented the damage done to the reputation of enamel work by low-quality and counterfeit products. "My attempts to form a consortium to import raw materials have been thwarted by mafia roadblocks, and the handicraft



● jamaran.news

union merely offers verbal support without any tangible action," he explained.

Tataei sees the primary solution to reviving the art in uniting large producers and exporters. "If these problems are addressed, handicrafts could generate revenue comparable to half of the country's oil income. But, as things stand, younger generations show little interest in learning the craft, and we need a major overhaul of the art economy."

Contrasting this viewpoint, Majdoddin Taj, head of Isfahan's Handicrafts Union, denied

the existence of an "art mafia." He identified the core issues as weak exports, lack of government backing, and insufficient facilitation services.

"Many artists are willing to sell their works cheaply because the domestic market is fragile," Taj said, highlighting the difference between merchants and middlemen. He clarified that merchants have legitimate, defined roles as intermediaries between producers and consumers, while middlemen who manipulate and misuse the system are not the primary problem. Rather, it is the export weaknesses and a lack of supportive infrastructure — such as insurance, tax exemptions, and banking services — that have harmed production and sales.

Taj stressed the urgent need for branding and professional marketing in the handicraft sector. "We must pursue strong exports to overcome the limited domestic market and have our products recognized globally. If the government removes export barriers and facilitates the process, the situation will improve significantly."

On pricing, he noted the current absence of fixed artwork prices allows intermediaries to exploit artists through overpricing. He also underscored the importance of clearly defining roles between producers and merchants, suggesting producers focus exclusively on creation while leaving sales and exports to professional merchants. This division would enhance efficiency and expertise in each sector.

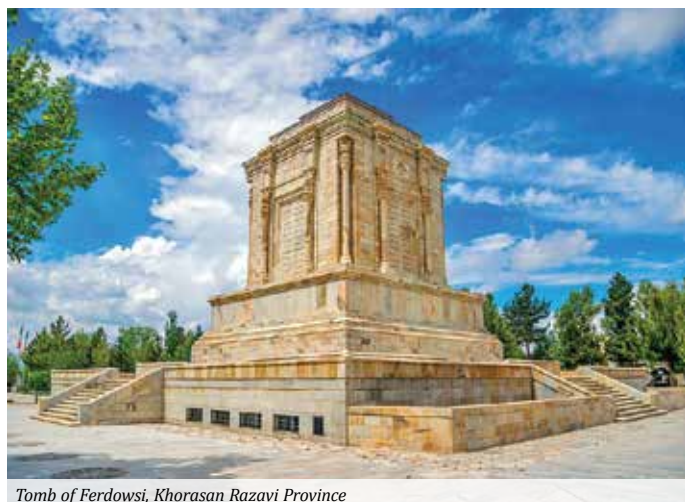
On a broader scale, Iran boasts 299 out of 602 identified global handicrafts, with Isfahan Province making a significant contribution — 196 of these are native to the region — underscoring the area's vital role in the country's artisanal heritage and economic potential.

## Building tourism bridges with cultural concept of neighboring provinces

## Iranica Desk

These days, while tourism is facing significant challenges and is not in a favorable state, the concept of the "neighbor" has emerged as a promising opportunity within the realm of ecotourism. Fatemeh Rahbar, a journalist, has noted that the term "neighbor" has always held a distinct and meaningful place in Iranian culture and literature — not only within social interactions and literary expressions but also in political relationships and diplomatic contexts. In recent times, this term has progressively entered the tourism discourse and gained a fresh and expanded significance.

The impact of neighboring provinces on the growth of health tourism, ecotourism, handicraft exports, the organization of international exhibitions, and even their role in cultural and economic mediation highlights that "neighborliness" transcends a mere geographic concept. It embodies



Tomb of Ferdowsi, Khorasan Razavi Province

a broader, more dynamic relationship that fosters collaboration and mutual benefit, chn. ir wrote.

From a domestic viewpoint, neighborliness within Iran itself has led to the creation of remarkable potentials; ranging from the celebrated tourism triangle of Yazd, Isfahan, and Shiraz, to the prominent corridors of the western region and

central plateau, where neighboring provinces have synergized to establish diverse, rich, and appealing travel routes. For the first time, Iran's ecotourism community has transformed this longstanding cultural concept into a practical strategy for advancing tourism development: through "empowerment training courses grounded in the literature of



Gonbad-e Qabus Tower, Golestan Province

neighborliness."

This idea, though straightforward, carries profound impact: neighboring provinces engage in bilateral agreements to showcase their unique capacities, serve as hosts for one another's ecotourism initiatives, and exchange experiences and knowledge within the framework of short, immersive tours. This approach is deeply rooted

in the fabric of Iranian culture and belief systems — drawing from the moral guidance of the Holy Qur'an and the Bible that encourage kindness toward neighbors, as well as from ancient proverbs proclaiming that "a neighbor is more essential than daily bread."

In the implementation of this plan, the short distances between provinces present a

golden opportunity; during weekend breaks, without disrupting the regular workweek, tourism practitioners can visit neighboring provinces for one or two nights, engage in meaningful dialogue, learn from one another, and uncover new potentials for collaboration.

Khorasan Razavi Province took the lead in initiating this movement, collaborating with Golestan Province to conduct the first educational tour. The results surpassed all expectations: distinct forms of tourism converged, a vibrant exchange of ideas and experiences occurred, and a deeper sense of unity was forged within the tourism community.

Currently, this initiative is expanding to include other provinces and holds the potential to mark the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Iranian and even global tourism — a chapter in which the concept of "neighbor" is defined not by political borders but by cultural and communal ties.





# Iran to review Oscar submission choices



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has convened its Oscar selection committee under the House of Cinema, the country's main film guild, after several years of government oversight.

The panel is tasked with choosing Iran's entry for the Best International Feature Film category at the 2025 Academy Awards, IRNA reported.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has set Oct. 1, 2024, as the deadline for submissions. Eligible films must have been screened for at least seven days in Iran between Oct. 1, 2023, and Sept. 30, 2024. The move restores majority control of the committee to the House of Cinema, which had long pushed for a stronger voice for filmmakers and industry professionals in the process.

Speculation has already begun over the films most likely to be consid-

ered. Among the frontrunners are 'The Old Bachelor' by Oktay Baraheni, 'Woman and Child' by Saeed Roustayi, 'Guardian of the Field' by Seyed Mohammadreza Kheradmandan, 'In the Form of Love' by Siavash As'adi, and 'Cause of Death: Unknown' by Ali Zarnegar. All five have met the eligibility criteria and drawn critical attention at home and abroad.

'In the Form of Love' has screened in competition at six international festivals, winning As'adi a special jury award at the 24th Ojai Film Festival in California and earning newcomer Saina Rouhani a best actress prize at Italy's 21st Salento International Film Festival. Zarnegar's 'Cause of Death: Unknown' has collected awards in New York, Zurich, Shanghai and Hof, including the audience award at the Iranian Film Festival New York.

Baraheni's 'The Old Bachelor' has also been a festival regular, with stops in Rotterdam, Transylvania and Galway. It took best foreign film at Galway, best film at London Breeze in the UK and best actor honors in Transylvania. Critics have praised its "technical polish" and strong performances.

While narrative features often dominate Oscar submissions, Iranian critics note that several documentaries also had notable festival runs and box office exposure this year, raising the prospect of wider debate inside the selection committee.

The House of Cinema last held control of the Oscar process in the mid-2010s. Since then, the Farabi Cinema Foundation, a state-backed body, oversaw nominations. Industry insiders say the return to a guild-led structure signals a push for greater transparency and more artist-driven choices.

## Animation 'Juliet and the King' takes home first int'l prize



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Ashkan Rahgozar's animated feature 'Juliet and the King' claimed its first international award at the Palm Springs International Animation Festival, according to Hoorakhsh Studios.

The film secured the specialized Streamtacular Award during the festival's closing ceremony. The prize recognizes animated works that have gained significant online traction and demonstrated strong influence across digital media platforms.

Rahgozar's latest project marks a fantasy reimagining of the historical relationship between Qajar dynasty ruler Naser al-Din Shah and French actress Juliet. The an-

imated feature weaves together history and imagination to explore their complex connection. "Winning this award launches a journey we began with hope and passion," Rahgozar said in response to the recognition. The director expressed satisfaction that 'Juliet and the King' attracted attention during its second international screening. The Palm Springs International Animation Festival stands among America's most respected independent animation events. The festival showcases "artistic excellence and innovation" while bringing together "filmmakers, artists, and animation enthusiasts to experience groundbreaking storytelling."

Hoorakhsh Studios, which pro-

duced the film, announced the award through its public relations department. The company has established itself as a leading animation house in Iran under Rahgozar's direction.

Rahgozar, born April 12, 1986, founded and leads Hoorakhsh Studios as chief executive. His previous work includes 'The Last Fiction,' which gained international recognition between 2008 and 2017.

The Streamtacular Award specifically honors films that break through in the digital space. Winners demonstrate exceptional audience engagement and impact across modern media platforms.

'Juliet and the King' will screen at multiple festivals before its general release. The film represents the first poetic fantasy adaptation of this particular historical story.

Festival organizers typically announce awards across more than 30 categories during their annual event. The 2024 edition "screened hundreds of animation films and awarded winners in more than 30 categories."

Rahgozar previously served on jury panels at other festivals, including the Thessaloniki Animation Festival in Greece.

## Iranian student teams win 11 medals at FIRA 2025 robotics in S. Korea



### Social Desk

Iranian student and school teams captured five golds, four silvers and two bronzes at the 30th FIRA World Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Championships held in Busan, South Korea, the country's vice presidency for science and technology said on Sunday.

The weeklong competition, which ran alongside the International Symposium on Robotics and AI, brought together leading teams from across the globe to showcase their latest break-

throughs, IRNA reported. Iran's delegation, supported by the vice presidency, highlighted its "creativity and skill" by standing on the podium in several categories, from autonomous driving to aerial robotics.

Among the top prizes, the Negaresh Rastajou student team won the high-speed aerial drones league, while Salam Dibaji Robotics clinched the under-19 sports robots title. The Hades team triumphed in the urban autonomous vehicles league, and Iranian squads swept both youth and adult

divisions of the innovation and business league. Other Iranian groups also placed in the autonomous vehicles, business innovation and under-19 sports leagues, taking home silver and bronze medals.

The FIRA 2025 championships, staged from Aug. 11 to Aug. 17, drew hundreds of teams from around the world. Organizers said the event offered a stage for "cutting-edge" advances in robotics and AI, while giving young engineers a chance to pit their designs against the best in the field.

## Five Iranian films set to compete at Armenia's Fresco festival



Five Iranian films will compete at the 11th Fresco International Festival of Modern Art and Spiritual Films, which runs from August 18 to September 5, 2024, in Yerevan, Armenia.

The annual event showcases spiritual and humanitarian cinema from around the world while fostering open discussions about contemporary social issues. The festival serves as an opportunity for cultural

dialogue and reassessment of spiritual heritage, bringing together filmmakers from different nations.

The Iranian entries include 'The Sunset of Green Snails,' directed by Mohammad Hasani. Director Bahar Dorabadi will present 'The Quarantine Redemption.' Three additional Iranian productions round out the country's representation are 'Dot,' 'The Legend of Nanuk Mountain' by director Mohammadreza Moradi, and 'Winner.'

The Fresco festival has been running annually since 2014, making this year's edition the 11th installment of the competition. Armenia's capital will host screenings and related events throughout the nearly three-week festival period. The competition focuses specifically on works that explore moral and spiritual themes, setting it apart from mainstream international film festivals.

## Iran, Armenia eye ...

So far, two parliamentary delegations from Iran have visited Armenia. The Iran-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group, in addition to its visit with the first vice president, also held talks with Armenia's national security chief, the heads of key parliamentary committees, and the ministers of infrastructure and economy. These meetings underscored the expansion of parliamentary relations and highlighted broader cooperation in political, economic, and commercial spheres. As for the recent peace agreement

between Armenia and Azerbaijan, it must be stressed that no deal should lead to changes in regional borders. Iran has repeatedly declared its opposition to any geopolitical or territorial shifts in the region. The Iran-Armenia border is a strategic frontier, a point emphasized on numerous occasions by Iran's Leader.

Relations between Iran and Armenia rest on a solid historical and cultural foundation. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia emerged as one of the newly independent countries sharing a bor-

der with Iran—one that also enjoys many cultural commonalities. For Tehran, the Armenian frontier is both historic and strategic, and territorial links with Yerevan must never be severed. Foreign forces will not be allowed to gain a foothold in the region. This principle has been repeatedly underscored by Iranian officials, and Armenian leaders themselves have made clear—both in telephone conversations and public statements—that they, too, will not allow geopolitical changes that could put regional interests at risk.