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Pezeshkian in Armenia to discuss foreign meddling in Caucasus, sign deals



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting with Armenian Iranologists in Yerevan, Armenia, on August 18, 2025.
● president.ir

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who has embarked on a two-nation trip to Armenia and Belarus, said on Monday that he will sign sev-

eral agreements with Armenian officials and will discuss serious concerns regarding the United States' presence in the region. Heading a high-level delegation, Pezeshkian arrived in Ye-

revan on Monday on the first leg of his trip.

During his two-day stay in Armenia, Pezeshkian is scheduled to hold talks with the country's prime minister and president and sign documents for bilateral cooperation. He will also meet the elites and Iranian expats and attend a meeting with economic actors. Speaking before departure for the trip, the president said the expansion of relations with the neighboring and allied countries are among Iran's macro priorities.

"During this visit, important memoranda of understanding and agreements will be signed, opening new horizons for preparing the appropriate economic and social ground in the country, which will be beneficial to the progress and advancement of our dear na-

tion."

He said Iran has always tried to maintain and improve the highest level of political, economic, cultural and social cooperation with the friendly and neighborly countries, particularly Armenia.

The Iranian president explained that the North-South will be among the key topics of discussions as it can provide new opportunities for the development of bilateral cooperation.

Pezeshkian expressed Iran's serious concern about the presence of American firms in the region, saying, "Past experience showed that some of these companies have carried out unexpected and undesirable actions under the guise of commercial activities."

"For this reason, we will have serious discussions regarding

the concerns and challenges related to this issue."

On August 8, Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a US-brokered peace agreement in Washington, under which a transport corridor linking Azerbaijan to its landlocked exclave Nakhchivan is to be established.

Under the deal, Armenia granted exclusive rights to the United States to develop a corridor in its southern province of Syunik, which borders Iran, to connect Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan.

Iran has long opposed the idea, saying it would change the geopolitical order of the Southern Caucasus and would restrict Iran's ability to use transport networks in the region.

Pointing to the objectives of his visit to Belarus, Pezesh-

kian said the two countries have in recent years managed to improve relations in the social, economic, cultural, and scientific fields.

It is expected that Tehran and Minsk would also accelerate cooperation in areas such as transfer of technology, agriculture, industry and social issues, the Iranian president said.

"It is noteworthy that Belarus has consistently taken principled and firm positions in international forums in support of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including by condemning the Israeli attacks on our country and the acts of aggression in Gaza."

The president said Iran enjoys high capacities for cooperation with countries in alignment with the Islamic Republic on many strategic issues.

Iran, IAEA to hold new round of talks in coming days: *FM spox*

International Desk

Iran will continue talks with the UN nuclear watchdog and the two sides will probably have another round of negotiations in the coming days, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said on Monday.

"We had talks (with the IAEA) last week. These talks will continue and there will be another round of talks between Iran and the agency probably in the coming days," Baqaei said during his weekly press conference.

Tehran has accused the IAEA of effectively paving the way for the Israel-US strikes with a report on May 31 that led the IAEA's 35-nation Board of Governors to declare Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations.

Israel's aggression against Iran claimed the lives of nearly 1,100 Iranians, including ordinary people, nuclear scientists and top military commanders.

The Islamic Republic has long denied Western suspicions of a covert effort to develop nuclear weapons capability, saying it remains committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty that mandates peaceful uses of atomic energy for signatories.

"The level of our relations (with the IAEA)

has changed after the events that took place, we do not deny that. However, our relations...remain direct," Baqaei said during a televised weekly news conference.

Last month, Iran enacted a law passed by parliament suspending cooperation with the IAEA. The law stipulates that any future inspections of Iranian nuclear sites need approval by Tehran's Supreme National Security Council.

Israel's attacks on Iran derailed months of nuclear negotiations between Tehran and Washington which itself joined Israel's aggression and bombed Iran's three nuclear facilities at the end of the 12-day imposed war. In response to a question about Europe's threat to trigger the so-called snapback mechanism which allows for the return of anti-Iran sanctions suspended under the 2015 nuclear deal, Baqaei said European powers' exploitation of the mechanism to pressure Iran is an illegal and irrational act.

He added that France, Britain and Germany, which along with China and Russia, are the remaining parties to the nuclear deal, have no right to activate the mechanism as they failed to fulfill their obligations stipulated in



the nuclear deal.

"This indicates that the three European countries' effort to continue playing a destructive role in the issue of Iran's nuclear program. We have maintained our interactions with these three countries. Negotiations with them have not been cut off."

Last week, the foreign ministers of the so-called E3 group wrote to the UN to raise the possibility of "snapback" sanctions unless Iran takes action, according to a letter shared by the French Foreign Ministry.

"We have made it clear that if Iran is not willing to reach a diplomatic solution before the end of August 2025, or does not seize the opportunity of an extension, E3 are prepared to trigger the snapback mechanism," the ministers said in the letter.

Araghchi: Geopolitical changes Iran's main concern over Zangezur agreement

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Tehran's main concern regarding a recent agreement reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan is that it may lead to geopolitical changes in the region.

Back on August 8, Armenian Prime Minister 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" (TRIIPP) – 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.

Araghchi in an interview with IRNA stressed that Tehran remains firmly opposed to any changes in borders or foreign military presence in that region.

"We have stated very clearly that we will not tolerate such a thing, and our policy has always been clear."

He described the plan to link Nakhchivan to the mainland Azerbaijan as a sensitive issue that has caused concerns in Iran



Abbas Araghchi
● AFP

and other regional countries.

Araghchi pointed to the US-brokered peace agreement signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, noting that both Baku and Yerevan have explicitly pledged to respect existing borders and sovereignty. "From this perspective, our geopolitical concerns appear to have been addressed for now," he said. "But whether they remain committed to this in the future is something we will closely monitor."

The foreign minister also voiced Tehran's reservations about potential US involvement under the pretext of infrastructure projects.

"Another concern is that this road could become an excuse for the presence of American forces in the region," he said.

He pointed out that in recent days, senior Armenian officials, including Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, have given Tehran assurances that in no way will American forces, or even private US security companies, enter Armenia because of the road.

Aref: Iran will not start a war, but will determine its end IRGC says Israel suffered miscalculation in 12-day imposed war

National Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Monday that while the country is not seeking war, its strategy is clear: if they begin a war against Iran, it will be Iran that decides its end.

Speaking at a meeting with Iranian university chancellors, Aref stated, "We are in a situation where a war was imposed on us. We are not in a cease-fire, but rather in a state of cessation of fire. Therefore, we must be prepared at any moment to confront the enemy."

He stressed that Iran prefers dialogue to resolve disputes but questioned whether the opposing side genuinely believes in negotiations or not.

On June 13, 2025, the Israeli regime launched a 12-day aggression against Iran, targeting several civilian, military, and nuclear facilities.

In retaliation, Iran unleashed waves of drones and missiles at the Occupied Territories, inflicting significant damage

on both settlements and military installations.

On June 22, 2025, the US Air Force and Navy carried out airstrikes against three Iranian nuclear facilities in an attempt to relieve pressure on the Israeli regime. The following day, June 23, Iranian forces retaliated with over 30 drones and missiles against the US base in Qatar, damaging multiple parts of the facility.

Finally, on June 24, after suffering heavy losses at the hands of Iran's Armed Forces, both the Israeli regime and the US were forced to agree to a cessation of hostilities.

The deputy commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) also said on Monday Israel suffered miscalculation in the 12-day war, even though the regime used full force against the Islamic Republic.

"The Zionist enemy and the US entered the war with their full power, but they suffered a miscalculation as they were certain of success, which did not hap-



Mohammad Reza Aref

pen," Brigadier General Ali Fadavi said on Monday.

He said that in the early days of the war, there were communications between regional leaders and the Israeli aggressors, but after a few days, the "situation turned in our favor."

Warning against enemy miscalculations, he asserted, "If this trend continues, they will soon realize the gravity of their mistakes."

General Fadavi added that Iran's "missiles crossing the skies over Iraq and striking critical positions of the Israeli regime during the 12-day war demonstrate such victories."



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Launch of ‘Iran Abad’ campaign with inauguration of 305 projects

Minister: Innovation should ‘keep pace’ with smart tech era

Economy Desk

The national “Iran Abad” campaign was launched on Monday, with Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi attending a ceremony to inaugurate vital water and power infrastructure projects across the country.

The campaign has so far brought into operation 305 major projects in the water and power sector as well as 854 solar power plants with a combined capacity of 5,000 megawatts, ISNA reported. At the event, the implementation of 266 additional water and power projects also began. These projects cover various areas of water, electricity, and renewable energy, and are expected to significantly strengthen the country’s infrastructure.

At the unveiling ceremony of several electrical projects, Aliabadi highlighted the importance of “keeping pace with the era of smart technologies,” stressing the need for innovation and the adoption of new methods in the energy sector.

He noted that Iran must “appear on the global scale” and enter international markets, emphasizing that the country should not halt progress but rather “stand should

der to shoulder with the world’s leading players” in order to overcome challenges and make up for delays.

First Iranian F-class gas turbine unveiled

Also Monday, the first advanced Iranian-made F-class gas turbine was unveiled.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, Aliabadi described the achievement as “an honor for all Iranians,” adding that it is the result of the hard work of the country’s young specialists.

The MGT-75 turbine incorporates cutting-edge technologies, including a three-dimensional axial compressor, single-crystal and directionally solidified blades, an advanced cooling system, and modern thermal barrier coatings. Delivering an output of 222 megawatts, the F-class turbine is equipped with a can-annular combustion system that reduces emissions and allows the use of both natural gas and hydrogen.

The achievement, Aliabadi noted, provides an effective solution for addressing energy imbalances, supporting the development of renewable energy, and meeting the present and future needs of Iran’s power industry. Attaining



Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi briefs reporters on the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony of the first advanced Iranian-made F-class gas turbine in Tehran on August 18, 2025.

● IRNA

F-class turbine technology, he said, symbolizes the country’s industrial maturity and confidence in domestic expertise, while boosting its competitiveness in the energy sector.

Expanding renewable energy capacity

Aliabadi also announced that renewable energy projects will continue to be inaugurated on a weekly basis.

Addressing the role of energy storage systems in supporting renewables, he explained that numerous technical measures are required and that high volumes of renewable capacity cannot be integrated into the grid overnight.

“We are gradually upgrading the network, and by the end of the year we expect to reach a significant capacity,” he said.

Speaking to reporters, the minister said the country had passed the peak demand period for this year’s electricity consumption,



but the imbalance in supply and demand had not yet been fully resolved, urging consumers to continue cooperating in energy management.

Meanwhile, during a separate meeting on overcoming obstacles to the development of renewable power plants, President Masoud Pezeshkian underscored the strategic importance of securing energy supplies. He described electricity generation as one of the country’s top priorities, stressing that large-scale renewable energy projects must be implemented

through sound resource management, without placing additional pressure on foreign currency reserves, and with the full cooperation of investors.

The president further emphasized the need for participation from industrial and manufacturing units in the development of renewable energy. He stated that industrial towns and production centers “must be required to supply part of their electricity needs through solar panels and allocate a defined share of their energy consumption to this sector.”

Paknejad highlights Oil Ministry’s plans for possible snapback invocation



Economy Desk

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, commenting on the ministry’s planning in the event of the possible activation of the “snapback” mechanism said that the existing structures have the necessary measures in place, and these will be applied in line with emerging conditions.

“If anything happens, we have a plan,” he stated, ILNA reported.

Addressing concerns over a potential fall in oil prices and reduced Iranian oil sales following activation of the mechanism, Paknejad said, “So far, not only has the volume of our crude oil sales not declined, but in some months it has even increased. This is a general rule.”

He added that the methods, the complex strategies adopted, and the measures under consideration are not points that can be disclosed. However, he stressed that colleagues and experts in the international affairs division of the National Iranian Oil Company, NICO, and other active structures in this field, have the necessary measures in mind, which will be implemented in accordance with circumstances.

The snapback mechanism, embedded in the 2015 nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), allows the automatic reinstatement of UN Security Council sanctions that had been lifted under the agreement. Iran, however, disputes the legitimacy of the European powers’ efforts to trigger the provision.

Iran weighs enhancing power imports from Turkmenistan

Economy Desk

At a tripartite meeting attended by Minister of Energy Abbas Aliabadi, Tavanir Managing Director Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, and lawmaker Jamshid Qaem-Maqami, a member of Parliament’s Agriculture Committee, the issue of increasing electricity imports from Turkmenistan was discussed and placed on Tavanir’s agenda. The meeting, held at the committee’s headquarters, concluded with a decision for Tavanir’s Deputy for Transmission and Foreign Trade to review the matter and take steps toward boosting electricity imports from the neighboring country.

Tehran, Islamabad eye joint research, trade boost in agriculture sector



Iran’s Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji (c) meets with Pakistan’s Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain (not seen in the picture) in Tehran on August 18, 2025.

● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran’s Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji announced the expansion of cooperation between Iran and Pakistan in agriculture, research, and food security, saying that joint scientific and technological studies to provide practical and innovative solutions in the fields of production and food resource

management are among the key capacities for collaboration between the two countries.

Nouri Ghezleji, in a meeting with Rana Tanveer Hussain, Pakistan’s minister for national food security and research, said that joint scientific and technological studies to provide practical and innovative solutions in production and food resource management are among the im-

portant areas of cooperation between the two countries, IRNA reported.

The minister described the presence of his Pakistani counterpart in Tehran as paving the way for the expansion of cooperation, particularly in food security and agricultural trade, adding that strengthening relations with Pakistan is one of Iran’s government priorities.

He emphasized the implementation of joint research projects, the export of agricultural and livestock products, and the development of border logistics in-

frastructure to expand economic cooperation and food security.

The minister also proposed the establishment of a joint Iran-Pakistan committee to be held at least every six months in order to accelerate cooperation in agriculture, strengthen food security, and address challenges arising from climate change.

Nouri Ghezleji, pointing to the priority of importing meat and rice from Pakistan, noted that Iran is ready to import live livestock and corn, provided that the Pakistani side cooperates and sanitary and quarantine barriers are resolved.

For his part, Tanveer Hussain underlined his country’s determination to expand cooperation in all areas, stating that agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan’s economy and that 67 percent of the country’s population depends on it.

He proposed that cooperation begin with a focus on the production of climate-resilient seeds and the development of joint research projects with Iran.

Tanveer Hussain stressed the importance of setting both immediate and long-term plans to operationalize cooperation, adding that strengthening the export of agricultural products from Pakistan to Iran — including rice, meat, mangoes, corn, bananas, and other fruits — as well as the export of pesticides, would be priorities.

He also pointed to the need to resolve complex issues such as health certificates, barter trade, infrastructure limitations, and customs clearance procedures, saying that these matters should be concluded through coordination and the review of reports by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Iran ConFair 2025 opens with focus on exports, technology and housing

Economy Desk

The 25th International Building Industry Exhibition (Iran ConFair 2025) opened in Tehran on Monday, bringing together companies from Iran and abroad to showcase the latest products, technologies and services in the construction sector.

The four-day exhibition opened on Monday in a ceremony attended by Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd and President of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives Bahman Abdollahi.

Companies and visitors from a number of countries, including Singapore, Italy, Germany, Turkey, and China, are taking part in the four-day event, which offers significant opportunities to expand the country’s economic and trade cooperation.

This edition of the exhibition, the largest international event in the building industry in Iran, has filled all available capacity with 47,000 square meters of exhibition space,

showcasing heavy construction machinery and equipment. For the first time this year, dedicated halls have also been allocated to startups and newly established companies.

Organized by the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives, the exhibition provides a unique opportunity to showcase domestic capabilities, develop export markets, and exchange technical expertise in the construction sector. In line with its mission to boost non-oil exports, support domestic production, and strengthen the standing of the construction industry, the chamber has prioritized holding the International Building Industry Exhibition with its full capacity and resources.

Given the building industry’s central role in economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development, this event—one of the largest and most specialized in the sector across the region—is regarded as a valuable opportunity for industry stakeholders to present their latest achievements, products, technologies, and services.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Iranian road minister said the building industry, through its supply chain and the industries it employs, has the potential to influence a wide range of economic, social, and industrial indicators.

Pointing to the sector’s challenges, Sadeq Malvajerd emphasized “the importance of a national registry and unified standards in the production and use of construction materials, noting that, “The government can act as a regulator in monitoring compliance.”

Also addressing the ceremony, Abdollahi said the building industry has the broadest backward and forward linkages in the country and is therefore considered a driver of the national economy.

4th largest exporter of tiles, ceramics

He stated that the industry is not lacking in global technologies and holds vast export potential. Abdollahi highlighted building

materials and construction products as the foremost export capacity, noting that, “Iran ranks as the world’s fourth-largest exporter of tiles and ceramics.”

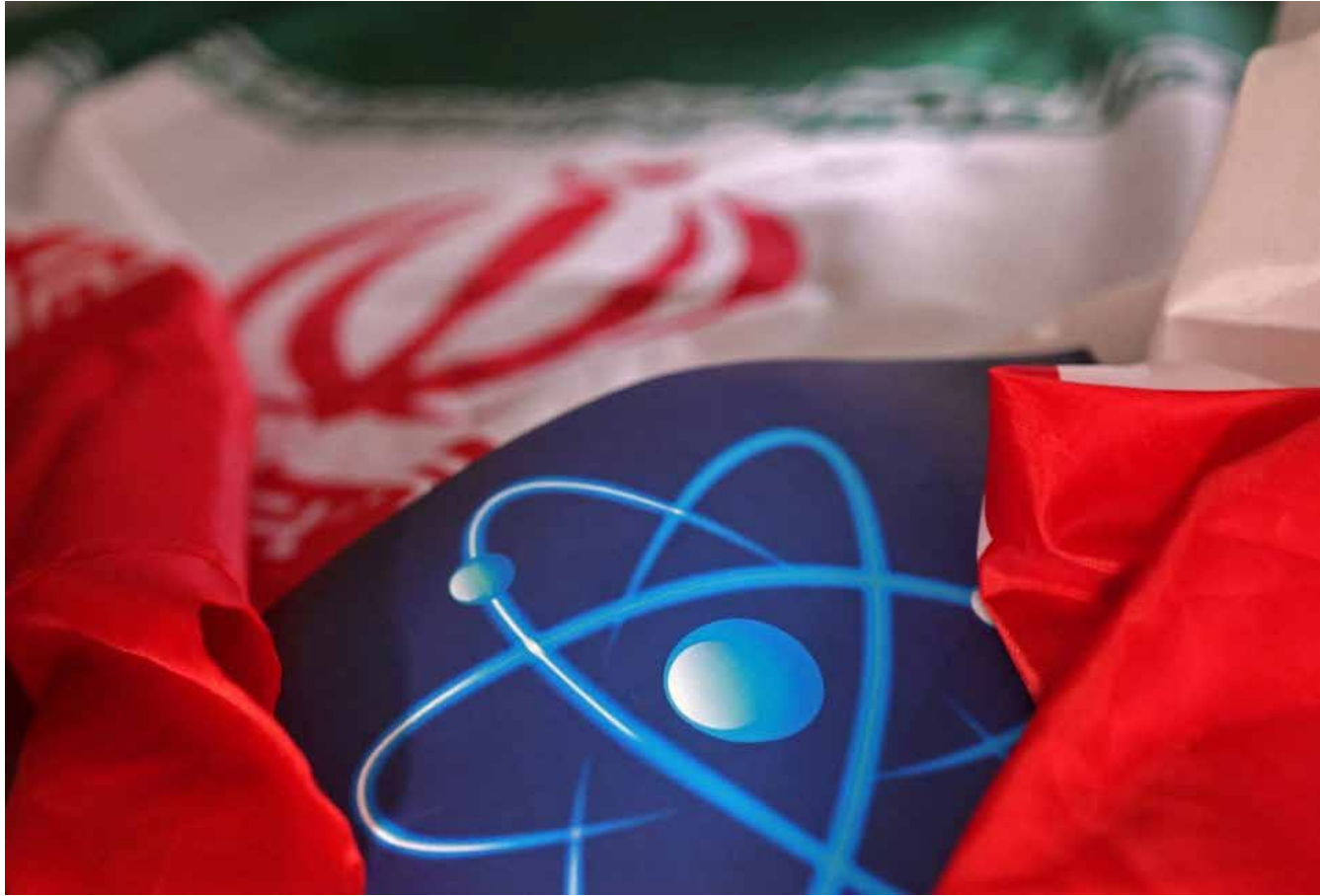
He added that in the steel structures sector, there is capacity for more than one million tons of exports annually, which could generate \$2.5 billion in foreign currency revenues.

Abdollahi also stressed that in technical and engineering services, there is an annual export potential of more than \$40 billion, of which \$15 billion is in the construction sector. However, he pointed out that statistics from 2022 and 2023 show exports of only \$2 billion in this field.

He underlined that the building industry can stimulate more than 130 other industries, and although housing sector growth has been negligible in the past one or two years, both supply and demand capacities remain high. He expressed confidence that Iran can achieve the target of producing one million housing units annually.

Future of Iran's nuclear program

Opportunities, risks in new negotiation phase



By Kamran Yeganegi
Foreign policy expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Iran stands at a juncture where history and geopolitics, science and diplomacy, and national interests and international dynamics are intricately intertwined. Four decades of engagement and confrontation over its nuclear program have transformed this dossier into one of the most complex and enduring issues in Iran's foreign policy. Today — amid a shifting global landscape shaped by power realignments, competition over emerging technologies, and evolving regional crises — the future of this program hinges more than ever on the skillful management of negotiations and Tehran's ability to strike a balance between safeguarding its inalienable rights and addressing the concerns of the international community.

The resumption of contact with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), following a period of heightened tensions and reciprocal measures, presents a fresh opportunity to redefine the framework of engagement. This moment is more than a technical process — it is a proving ground for Iran's diplomacy, where negotiating skill, strategic depth of decision-making, and coordination among domestic institutions will be decisive in shaping the road ahead. It is also a moment to rewrite Iran's international narrative: to secure recognition not as a passive actor under external pressure, but as an active, responsible, and forward-looking participant in the peaceful advancement of nuclear technology.

1. Diplomatic horizon for mutual confidence-building

The visit of the IAEA deputy director general to Tehran carried both symbolic and operational significance, even though he didn't have direct access to nuclear facilities. It marks the first step toward de-escalation after months of heightened tensions and the military confrontation of last June. For Iran, this was an opportunity to reaffirm its position under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), upholding the sovereign right to peaceful enrichment while demonstrating readiness for constructive engagement.

2. Strategic openings: leveraging smart diplomacy

Iran's prior initiatives in earlier negotiation rounds reflected a willingness to pursue balanced and pragmatic solutions. Reintroducing such measures, refined through technical adjustments, could provide a viable framework for reviving talks without undermining national sovereignty.

In today's emerging multipolar order, Iran's capacity to engage in strategic reciprocity — offering verifiable technical assurances in exchange for tangible economic and security guarantees — can transform the nuclear file from a persistent point of contention into an instrument of geopolitical leverage.

3. Risks: navigating domestic, int'l pressures

The forthcoming negotiations have been explicitly described by both Tehran and Vienna as "technical" and "complex". While channels of cooperation remain open, disagreements over inspection modalities and sensitivities regarding facility access persist as significant challenges.

Furthermore, Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium has heightened concerns in several Western capitals. These concerns are not merely technical; They are deeply political, intertwined with domestic debates in Washington, Europe's security anxieties, and the high-stakes calculations of regional actors such as Israel.

Domestically, voices opposed to any perceived dilution of nuclear sovereignty exert pressure on negotiators; Externally, hardline factions push for maximalist demands. Together, these dynamics narrow the diplomatic space, demanding exceptional political skill to avoid stalemate or escalation.

4. Balancing act ahead

The future of Iran's nuclear program in this new phase will be shaped by the delicate interplay of restraint and resolve. Should Iran uphold its legitimate rights under the NPT while showing technical flexibility, and should Western counterparts reciprocate with credible confidence-building measures, a pathway toward sustainable security and economic relief could emerge.

Conversely, if mistrust remains unaddressed and diplomatic gestures are viewed as tactical rather than strategic, the prospects for a final agreement will diminish, deepening the divide between the parties.

The future of Iran's nuclear program cannot be defined solely by technical calculations or centrifuge counts; It is part of a broader equation that encompasses national narrative, regional stability, international standing, and the architecture of the global order. Iran and its counterparts now face a choice whose consequences may shape regional dynamics — and even global politics — for years to come.

If this stage of negotiations is grounded in mutual respect, concrete guarantees, and adherence to international rights and obligations, the nuclear file could shift from being a source of chronic tension to a platform for cooperation, trust-building, and sustainable development. Such an outcome would not only enhance Iran's position in international affairs but could also serve as a new model for resolving complex disputes in today's multipolar world.

However, if the present opportunity is lost to mutual suspicion, short-term calculations, or the dominance of maximalist approaches, the likelihood of an agreement will fade, and the risks of entrenched mistrust and intensified regional instability will grow — an instability from which no party will ultimately emerge as a true winner.

History has shown that critical diplomatic moments test the maturity of political leadership and the ability to move from the logic of crisis to the logic of cooperation. Today, Iran has the opportunity to craft a lasting narrative of strategic rationality — one that could be remembered in the annals of international diplomacy as a turning point toward durable peace and mutual respect.



The atomic symbol and Iranian flag are seen in this illustration taken on September 8, 2022.

● DADO RUVIC/REUTERS



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Massimo Aparo (L), deputy director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and Iran's ambassador to the United Nations agency Reza Najafi talk together at a meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna, Austria, on June 9, 2025. Aparo visited Tehran in early August 2025.

● JOE KLAMAR/AFP



Larijani's visit inflection point in reinforcing security policies

By Mousa Alizadeh-Tabatabaei
Iran's Foreign Ministry official
OPINION

Ali Larijani's recent visit to Iraq and Lebanon marks an inflection point in reinforcing the Islamic Republic of Iran's security and diplomatic policies following recent regional developments.

This visit came amid a highly tense and sensitive security situation in the region, especially after the imposed 12-day war, which calls for smart management and regional cooperation more than ever before.

Appointing Dr. Larijani as the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council was a shrewd move; Beyond his personal and managerial qualities, he is a well-known figure among regional and international politicians and commands wide respect among Iraqi officials.

He started his first foreign trip in this new role in Baghdad, which carries a clear message about Iraq's strategic importance in Iran's foreign policy. The visit was part of ongoing and active consultations between the two countries, once again showing Iraq's critical role as a neighbor in Iran's regional equations.

Following the Zionist regime's incursions into Iranian territory and violations of its airspace, Baghdad took decisive and supportive stances across various government levels, parliament, political factions, and public domains, reflecting the deep alignment of both nations against external threats. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani has consistently backed Iran's diplomatic approach towards regional and extra-regional countries in recent years.

One of the visit's key breakthroughs was signing a security memorandum of understanding between Iran and Iraq, explicitly stating that neither side will allow its territory to be used against the other. This agreement not only demonstrates the two countries' deep commitment to joint security but also serves as a rock-solid guarantee against destabilizing interventions and regional threats. This clause underscores Tehran and Baghdad's determination to prevent any provocative actions and maintain regional stability.

Another pivotal focus was the countries' unity in standing up to the overt and covert support of terrorist groups in the region by the Zionist regime and the United States. Cooperation, like this one between Iran and Iraq, can shift the balance of power towards stability and security and prevent the spread of crises. Within this frame, both sides stressed the necessity to step up regional consultations, including an agreement to hold a joint Iran-Iraq meeting with the six Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Notably, there is a strong political will to follow through on



Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani (C) arrives to meet with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 13, 2025.
● AZIZ TAHER/REUTERS

the practical implementation of the agreements and security commitments. Pursuing the agreements from President Pezeshkian's visit to Iraq last September was also an important objective of Larijani's meetings. Expanding political and economic relations, creating joint corridors, and developing trade cooperation were also put on the agenda.

Dr. Larijani's presence at some Arbaeen pilgrim stations and his contribution to services to the pilgrims reflect Iran's public diplomacy, enhancing the country's cultural standing and influence in Iraq.

During the second leg of the trip, Lebanon was the main focus of discussions and consultations. Iran's policy has

always been grounded on the principle that regional security should be secured by regional countries themselves, and external interferences, especially by Western powers, not only fail to stabilize but often lead to deep political, economic, and social instability.

At a time when the Lebanese government, under external pressure chiefly from the United States, raised proposals like disarming Hezbollah, Iran's senior envoy's presence sent an unequivocal message of Tehran's support for Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the legitimate right of its people to self-defense.

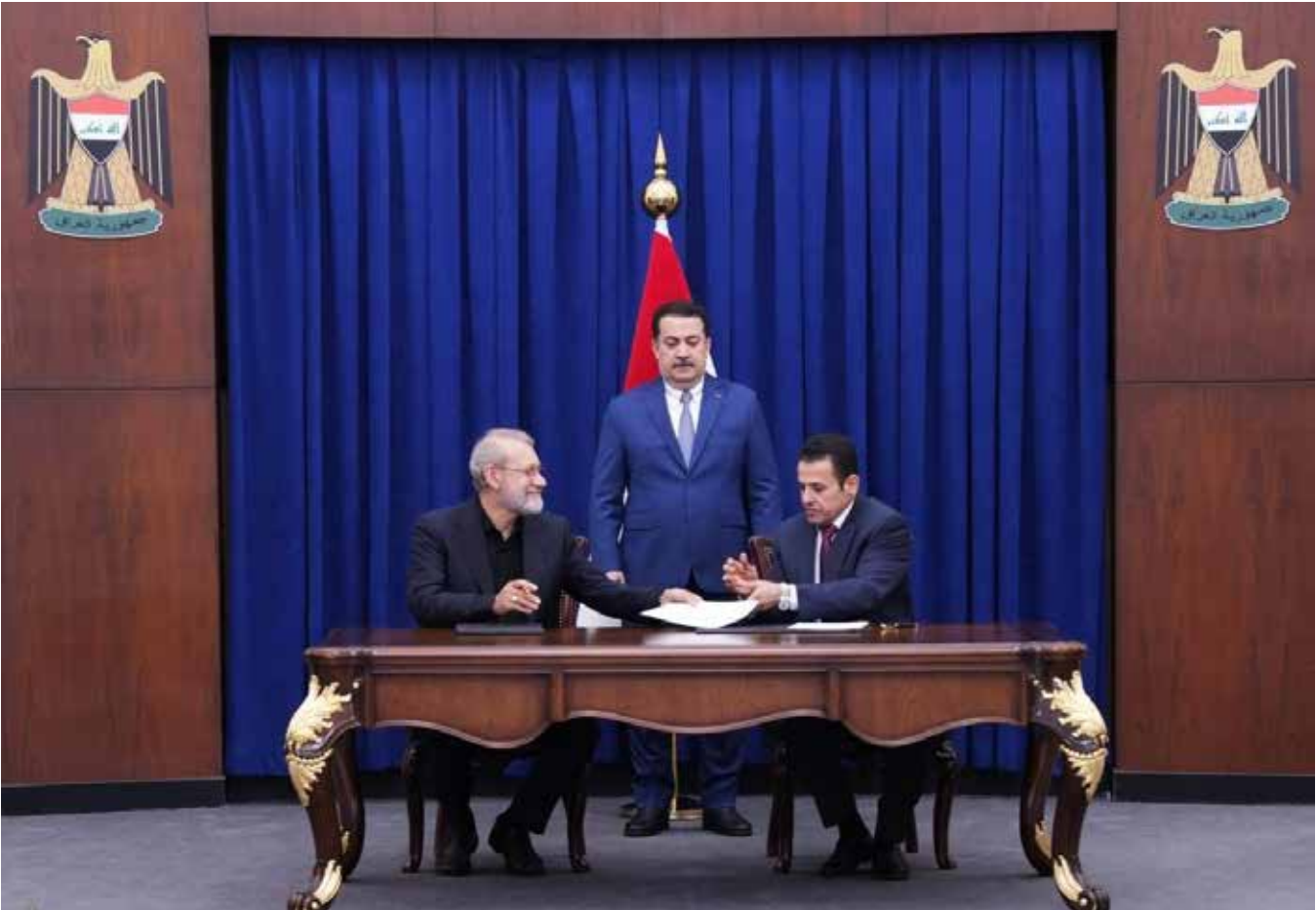
This visit, in itself, was a major success for Iranian diplomacy, particularly as it occurred

when opponents of the Islamic Republic were trying to paint the country as isolated. Tehran's active and influential presence in Baghdad and Beirut, on the eve of the world's largest religious gathering — the Arbaeen pilgrimage — offered a vivid picture of the deep cultural and popular bonds between Iran and its neighbors. This event not only showcased Iran's political and security prowess but also sent a clear message to the international community that the Islamic Republic boldly safeguards its national and regional security and interests with wisdom and capability.

In sum, this trip reflects Iran's serious resolve to push forward security and cooperative

policies at the regional level, counter external threats, and support political and security stability. This approach's importance and necessity in the current challenging Middle Eastern environment cannot be overlooked. Meanwhile, the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon, as integral parts of these countries' social and political fabric, play a crucial role in maintaining security and pursuing national interests, and Iran's support for these groups is an inseparable part of Tehran's overarching security and diplomatic strategy in the region.

The article first appeared in the Persian-language Iran Newspaper.



Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani (L) and Iraqi National Security Advisor Qassem Al-Araji (R) sign a joint security memorandum between the two countries in Baghdad, Iraq, on August 10, 2025.
● IRNA

“One of the visit's key breakthroughs was signing a security memorandum of understanding between Iran and Iraq, explicitly stating that neither side will allow its territory to be used against the other. This agreement not only demonstrates the two countries' deep commitment to joint security but also serves as a rock-solid guarantee against destabilizing interventions and regional threats.”

FIBA Asia Cup:

Iran holds off late scare to beat New Zealand for third place

Sports Desk

Iran survived a furious late charge from New Zealand to secure a 79-73 win in the FIBA Asia Cup 2025 third-place game on Sunday at Jeddah's King Abdullah Sports City, reclaiming a spot on the podium after missing out in 2022.

Veteran forward Arsalan Kazemi spearheaded the Iranian team with 16 points, 15 rebounds and two timely triples, while Seyyed Mahdi Jafari contributed with a game-high 22 points, five assists and five three-pointers. Guard Sina Vahedi added 19 points, five rebounds and four assists as Team Melli finished with a 5-1 record in Jeddah.

For New Zealand, Flynn Cameron fought to the end with 18 points and relentless rim attacks, while Mojave King contributed 13 points and four rebounds.

Iran came out sharp, using Kazemi's veteran poise and Vahedi's attacking flair to build a 28-20 lead after the first quarter. Even with Mohammad Amini unable to see action, Team Melli looked energized as Mobin Sheikh capped the frame with a banked triple at the buzzer.

"We are like a family. We built chemistry and refused to lose," Sheikh said. "I'm proud of my teammates and brothers. Before the tournament began, our team captain said we were the underdogs, so I'm proud we finished third. This win is for our team and for our country."

The lead swelled to 47-33 at half-time behind Jafari's hot shooting, as Iran answered every New Zealand push with composed scor-



Iranian players celebrate a 79-73 victory over New Zealand in the third-place game at the FIBA Asia Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on August 17, 2025.

ing bursts. By the third quarter, back-to-back triples from Matin Aqajanzpour and Kazemi gave Iran a 59-42 cushion, though the Tall Blacks clawed back with Cameron and Jordan Ngatai connecting from deep to trim the gap to 66-54 entering the final period. The fourth quarter nearly unraveled for Iran as empty possessions left them stuck on 76 points for several minutes. Cameron slashed the lead to just 76-73 with under 40 seconds remaining, igniting hopes of a Tall Blacks comeback. But a costly unsportsmanlike foul

on Ngatai gave Jafari a crucial trip to the line, and Kazemi calmly iced the game with two free-throws in the final six seconds. The result marked a proud return to the FIBA Asia Cup podium for Iran, cementing the three-time champion's status among the Asian elite powers. Iran's sole defeat came in the last four, where Sotirios Manolopoulos' men were outclassed 92-48 by Australia, which went on to edge China 90-89 in Sunday's final for a third successive crown at the flagship continen-

tal tournament.

Meanwhile, there was further joy for Vahedi in the awarding ceremony, as the Iranian guard was named in the tournament's All-Star Five – alongside MVP Jaylin Galloway and his Australian teammate Jack McVeigh, as well as Chinese duo Hu Jinqu and Wang Junjie.

Vahedi served as the stabilizing presence for Team Melli, registering 17.8 points, 2.7 rebounds, 2.2 assists, and 1.0 steal to make his first-ever Asia Cup experience all the more memorable.

'Greater than gold'

For Iranian captain Kazemi, the narrow win against New Zealand is a statement per se, as nobody – even their own people – believed that they could accomplish as much.

"We walked into the tournament as underdogs," the veteran forward said, adding: "Nobody was expecting us to accomplish anything, especially in Iran. We have a whole controversy around our basketball team, around this young group of guys, that they're not ready yet."

It was a relatively young team which Greek coach Manolopoulos went with for this year's tournament as half of the 12-man roster are aged below 25, with Mohammad Heydari the youngest of the bunch at only 19.

"We have some young guys; they're unknown, but every game one of them is gonna step up," he said.

"They all can go for 30 points. Tonight, Matin played great, Sina played great, but I think Jafari was the guy that really surprised New Zealand and came out with some huge shots for us," he continued.

Mohammad Amini would've added more to that but the rising star wing was unfortunately out due to a knee issue he sustained against Australia. Yet he served as a reason for them to compete harder.

"Obviously tonight we were missing Amini so I told them, 'He helped us to get here, let's win one for him.' That's kinda like what the atmosphere in the locker room was," the 12-year pro out of Oregon said.

"I played a horrible game against Australia yesterday and being able to regroup in less than 14 hours with these young guys, that shows a lot of character and a lot of toughness. I'm really glad, I'm proud of them," he said.

Kazemi now has two Asia Cup medals, the first being a silver which he and Iran took home in 2017 – the last time that the program stood on the podium. But this bronze, for him, weighs more than the ultimate prize.

"It feels kinda greater than a gold medal for me, because it was very unexpected," the former Olympian said.

Also because he and Team Melli were able to prove the doubters wrong.

"Even after beating Chinese Taipei, and yesterday we lost to Australia – Australia is a great team ... they're just going at us like crazy. I mean, this will definitely shut them up," Kazemi said with a smile.

Iran U21 defeats France ahead of FIVB World Championship



Iranian under-21 players (R) are seen in action during a friendly victory over France in Jiangmen, China, on August 17, 2025.

Sports Desk

Iran came out on top against France in four sets on Sunday in a friendly game in Jiangmen ahead of the upcoming FIVB Men's U21 World Championship – starting Thursday in the Chinese city.

Mohammad Mo'menimogaddam's boys won the first two sets 25-22 and 25-21, respectively, before France bounced

back in the third to win 25-22. The third set was held in a 15-point format due to time restriction, with Iran claiming a 15-11 victory.

A two-time champion over the past three editions, Iran will begin its title defense in Jiangmen against Kazakhstan in Pool B on the opening day of the competition.

A second outing for Iran will come against Puerto Rico on

Aug. 22, followed by games against South Korea – in a repeat of last year's Asian under-20 final, which Iran won in straight sets – Canada, and Poland.

The top four in each of the four six-team groups will progress to the round of 16.

Iranian head coach Mo'menimogaddam will be looking to build on a 20-game unbeaten run at the helm, during which

the country claimed back-to-back Asian under-20 titles either side of the world U21 crown in 2023 – thanks to a 3-2 victory over Italy in the final showdown in Manama. Pouria Ariakhah will be the player to watch in the Iranian squad after the prolific opposite delivered an MVP display during the title-winning run at the Asian U20 meet in Indonesia last summer and was part of the national team in the Volleyball Nations League preliminaries in June and July.

Young setter Emran Kookjili, along with middle-blockers Taha Behboudinia and Armin Qelichniazi, were also among the individual award winners at the Asian event and are expected to play integral roles for the Iranian team in Jiangmen again.

Elsewhere in the competition, the host nation will be joined by Egypt, the United States, Thailand, Morocco, and Turkey in Pool A, with four-time champion Brazil, Bulgaria, Czechia, Colombia, Japan, and Cuba completing the lineup in Pool C.

Italy, Argentina, Tunisia, France, Ukraine, and Indonesia will lock horns for a last-16 spot in Pool D.

Asian Shooting Championships: Iran bags double bronzes in air pistol events

Sports Desk

The third day of the Asian Shooting Championships saw Iran collect a couple of bronze medals in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on Monday.

Amir Joharikhou, Vahid Golkhandan, and former Olympic champion Javad Forouqi teamed up to score 1733 points for a third-place finish in the men's 10m air pistol team event.

China claimed the gold medal with 1744 points, while India edged Iran to the silver by two points.

Joharikhou added a second medal to Iran's haul later in the day by finishing behind Chinese gold winner Hu Kai and South Korean Hong Su-hyeon in the 10m air pistol individual contest.

The 16th edition of the Asian Champions will continue at the Shymkent Shooting Plaza until August 30.



Stone artifacts narrating history in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province

Iranica Desk

Stone artifacts have been discovered and studied in the ancient caves of Shahrekord, Ardal, and Lordegan in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, dating back approximately 10,000 to 11,000 years. Bardgori (stone graves), stone stairways, inscriptions, stone lions, and caravanserais are among the relics from the Elamite and Sassanian eras, which are now protected as archaeological heritage. Stone carving and sculpting remnants from the Stone Age represent one of the native crafts of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, with a rich history spanning many centuries.

This craft has traditionally been applied to a wide variety of products and tools, including millstones, gutters, mortars, various stone lions, and more. Unfortunately, for various reasons, most stone artifacts have not seen widespread use among the general population and are instead utilized in limited ways in nomadic regions and remote villages. The main centers of carving and stone sculpting have been the cities of Shahrekord, Hafshejan, and Farsan, where most craftsmen today produce various stone artifacts on a limited basis and primarily by custom order, chn.ir wrote.

Stone lion

One of the existing rituals in the culture of the people of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, especially the Bakhtiari, was placing a stone lion on the graves of enduring, renowned, great, and famous figures of the tribe.

The stone lion is one of the most important and popular handicrafts in the field of carving and stone sculpting in the province. These relatively enduring stone lions found in the cemeteries of Farsan, Kouhrang, Ardal, and Kiar are a heritage left by the Bakhtiari people since the Qajar era. The stone lion serves as a metaphor for courage and heroism attributed to the khans, warriors, horsemen, noblemen, chiefs, village elders, and leaders of the Bakhtiari tribes. For this reason, upon the death of one of these prominent figures, a stone lion was crafted by local stone carvers and placed on their graves. On the body of the stone lions, symbols such as swords, rifles, and horses, along with the details of the deceased individual, were intricately engraved.

In fact, the stone lions on the graves of warriors and those killed in wars serve as lasting reminders of men who have adorned the turbulent history of their people in a legendary form and now rest beneath the earth.

Islamic stone lions are visible in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Khuzestan provinces, and their surroundings. Hafshejan has been the most important center for making stone lions from the beginning until now, and these lions are mostly used for brave individuals from Chaharmahal as well as the Bakhtiari tribe. The oldest existing stone lion in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari is the lion of "Abdul Hamid bin Ibrahim Hafshajani," dating back 435 years ago during the



Stone lion
● IRNA

Safavid period. There are certainly older Islamic examples originating from this region. Also, the stone lion at Imamzadeh Ahmad in Isfahan, belonging to Shah Ismail Safavi, is among the earliest examples of Safavid stone lions.

Tools and techniques

The tools used for carving and stone sculpting are traditional and primitive, having been used for centuries. These include various types of mallets, heavy and semi-heavy hammers, and steel chisels with diamond-shaped



Stone arches, Junaqan
● yjc.ir



Stone Artifacts Museum, Chaleshtar
● anyja.ir

edges, which are handmade according to their specific uses. Due to the limited use of stone products by the general population in the region, the production of such artifacts is largely restricted to fulfilling small orders from rural and nomadic areas. After transporting the required stones to workshops, the initial shape and anatomy are first designed, and then, using chisels and hammers, the shapes and forms are completed. Most of the designs and figures in stone sculpting and the making of stone forms are geometric and abstract.

Market and costs

Stone products and carvings no longer hold priority among other handicrafts among the people, and unfortunately, due to recent price increases and the decrease in people's purchasing power, orders for stone handicrafts have greatly diminished. The stone carvers of Hafshejan offer their products at the same prices as in previous years, but even so, their sales



Stone carving workshop
● IRNA

have dropped to less than half of what they were before. The production costs for stone artifacts, carving, and sculpting have increased, and maintaining stable sale prices has only been

possible by reducing the profit margins of the producers.

Hafshejan

Among the various stone products and carvings, stone lions,

mortars, gravestones, and manual flour mills currently enjoy the most popularity. Stone carving and sculpting in Hafshejan, part of Shahrekord, has a history of roughly 700 years.



Stone graves
● anahitours.ir

The Bagheri family is among the most famous stone carvers of Hafshejan, with 700 years of experience in this field.

The antiquity and beauty of the gravestones and stone lions in the cemetery of Hafshejan led to the registration of this cemetery as an ancient graveyard on Iran's National Heritage List. The works of Hafshejan stone carvers in historical buildings, especially castles, bridges, and public places such as baths and mosques, remain standing and sturdy in the form of stone bases, capitals, and columns. The types of carving in Hafshejan



Pir-e Ghar Inscription, Farsan
● yjc.ir

are divided into engraving on stone, stone sculpting, stone figures, inlaid stone, relief, and semi-relief. To obtain and purchase stone lions in various forms and other stone figures, one can visit the Hafshejan stone carvers' market located on Shahid Chamran Street. Hafshejan itself stands out as a major historical and cultural center within the province. Its legacy dates back nearly 9,000 years, with extensive prehistoric archaeological sites.

Deep-rooted history

Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province is rich not only in its stone carving heritage but also in its historical significance. The region's landscape is dotted with ancient castles, bridges, and caravanserais that bear witness to its long-standing role as a crossroads of cultures, trade, and tribal life. This deep-rooted history, combined with the traditional crafts like stone carving, continues to shape the cultural identity of the people of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari today.

Persian miniature master laid to rest

Farshchian's path to inspire successors, says Pezeshkian

His works 'reflection of Iranian-Islamic identity': *Minister*



Arts & Culture Desk

The funeral ceremony of Mahmoud Farshchian, Iran's master of Persian

miniature painting who died August 9 at age 96, was held in Isfahan where thousands gathered to pay their final respects to the artist who bridged po-

etry and visual art. The funeral procession for the celebrated painter began from Isfahan's Fine Arts School, the same institution where Farshchian took his first artistic steps as a young man. President Masoud Pezeshkian issued a message at the funeral of Farshchian expressing hope that Farshchian's distinguished school of art endures through the efforts of artists and cultural figures. "The brilliant path opened by this unparalleled artist of Iran will find worthy successors and devoted students," Pezeshkian said, offering condolences to the artist's family, the nation's artistic community, and all admirers of Iranian culture. Farshchian's coffin was carried from the aircraft at Isfahan's Shahid Beheshti Airport amid tearful silence from students, fellow artists and admirers who had gathered since dawn. Culture and Islamic Guidance Minis-

ter Abbas Salehi, who met with artists and Farshchian's family at the Abbasi Hotel's Mirror Hall, called the painter "unique" and praised his lifelong dedication to creating lasting works. "Master Farshchian possessed a special skill in transforming poetry into visual art," Salehi said, describing the artist's work as "a reflection of Iranian-Islamic identity." The minister highlighted Isfahan's role as "Iran's art capital" and noted that Farshchian's development represented the city's historical and cultural capacity. He thanked provincial officials and the municipality for their cooperation in bringing the artist's body back to his birthplace. Former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who attended the gathering, recalled his multiple encounters with Farshchian in New York and Tehran. "Master Farshchian was a gem of Iranian and world art," Zarif said, add-

ing that "his love for Iran and humanity flows through all his works." Zarif recounted taking Farshchian's albums to Paris to gift French officials, allowing them to grasp "the greatness of Iranian art." He described the artist's presence in the art world as inspiring to all. The funeral route will wind from the Fine Arts School toward the Saeb Tabrizi Mausoleum, where Farshchian will be laid to rest according to his wishes. The burial site holds symbolic significance for many artists. Like the 17th-century poet Saeb Tabrizi, who captured the Iranian spirit through verse, Farshchian used brush and paint to portray the same cultural essence throughout his seven-decade career. Farshchian died August 9 in a New Jersey hospital after falling into a coma. Born in Isfahan in 1930, he became internationally recognized for modernizing Persian miniature painting while preserving its traditional roots.

Animated series 'Museum' picked for Chaniartoon festival in Greece

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian animated series 'Museum' was officially selected for the 9th Chaniartoon International Comic and Animation Festival, scheduled to take place from September 12 to 28, 2025, in Chania, Crete, Greece. The festival is renowned for showcasing short animated films from around the globe, encompassing both professional and student works, ILNA reported. Directed by Behrooz and Abtin Yaghmaian, 'Museum' is produced by the Saba Animation Center. Utilizing stop-motion

techniques, the series aims to introduce Iranian art history to young audiences. Each episode immerses viewers in the rich cultural and architectural heritage of Iran, offering a visual journey through its artistic legacy. The Chaniartoon festival is a significant event in the animation calendar, featuring a diverse program that includes film screenings, workshops, comic exhibitions, and immersive experiences in virtual and augmented reality. The festival serves as a platform for cultural exchange and artistic collaboration, bringing together creators



and audiences to celebrate the art of animation. The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's International Affairs Department is responsible for the international distribution of 'Museum,' facilitating its presence at global platforms like Chaniartoon.

Iran launches national health tourism platform to attract foreign patients

Social Desk

Iran officially launched a national health tourism platform aimed at streamlining the reception of international patients, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced. The system, which began as a pilot in Khorasan Razavi Province, is now operational in Tehran and Fars, with plans for nationwide implementation by the end of the Iranian month of Shahrivar (Septem-

ber 21). It integrates multiple stakeholders—including the ministries of tourism, health, and foreign affairs, as well as authorized medical centers, travel agencies, and translators—into a unified digital platform. The project aims to eliminate unauthorized intermediaries and enhance transparency in the sector. Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey emphasized that the system is a "comprehensive, inter-agency platform" designed

to safeguard patient data and ensure regulatory compliance. He noted that the platform's security features are aligned with international standards, providing a secure environment for both patients and service providers. Sajad Razavi, Deputy Health Minister, highlighted the system's role in expediting the treatment process for foreign patients. He added that medical centers in Tehran and Fars are now required to process international patient requests

through the platform within 24 hours, aiming to "accelerate acceptance and treatment" while ensuring "transparency and legality." The health tourism sector has become a significant contributor to Iran's economy. In 2022, the country attracted approximately 1 million health tourists, generating €2 billion in revenue. The government is also establishing health tourism offices in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait to further promote the sector.

Iran plans to deport two million Afghans by year end: *Minister*

Border barriers cut illegal entries 70%

Social Desk

Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni announced Monday that his government plans to deport two million undocumented Afghan migrants by the end of the current Iranian calendar year, as part of a broader crackdown that has already sent 1.2 million people back across the border since March. The deportation drive reflects Iran's tougher stance on the estimated six million Afghan nationals living within its borders, many of whom fled to escape Taliban rule and Afghanistan's deepening humanitarian crisis, IRNA reported. More than 70% of those already deported left "voluntarily," Momeni told reporters upon arriving in the northeastern city of Mashhad, though the UN refugee agency disputes this characterization. Speaking from Iran's border region with Afghanistan, Momeni emphasized that the deportations follow legal procedures and maintain "human dignity." He rejected criticism that the policy amounts to anti-migrant sentiment, noting that all countries maintain specific regulations governing foreign nationals. The minister's visit to Mashhad coincided with his inspection of the Dogharoun border crossing, where authorities have constructed a 130-kilometer section of a planned 953-kilometer barrier wall along Iran's northeastern frontier. The four-meter-high concrete barrier, topped with fencing and equipped with electronic surveillance systems, has cut unauthorized border crossings by 70%, according to Iranian officials.

Border security has become a pressing concern for Tehran, which cites both illegal migration and drug trafficking as key challenges. Provincial officials noted that while traditional opium smuggling has declined, synthetic drug trafficking has surged in recent years. The deportation campaign gained momentum following Iran's conflict with Israel, with Iranian authorities expressing concerns about potential security risks. Many Afghan families have lived in Iran for years, with some children born on Iranian soil. UN officials warn that Afghanistan faces one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with mass deportations from neighboring countries exacerbating unemployment and economic instability. The Taliban government has imposed severe restrictions on women's rights and civil liberties since regaining power in 2021. Iran's crackdown mirrors similar policies in Pakistan, which has also initiated large-scale deportations of Afghan migrants. Both countries hosted millions of Afghans who fled successive waves of conflict over recent decades. The Dogharoun crossing, operating for over a century, serves as a major transit point between the two nations. The border facility sits 18 kilometers southeast of Taybad city and handles significant commercial traffic alongside the growing stream of deportees. Momeni indicated that Iran would continue processing cases involving documented migrants through its National Migration Organization, though he stressed that all undocumented residents must eventually return to Afghanistan.

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