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Iran, Russia push Rasht-Astara railway as missing link in INSTC

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FM: E3 move to unleash snapback sanctions erodes UNSC credibility

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Iran should use 30-day diplomatic window to block snapback

By Mohsen Abdollahi
Legal scholar

OPINION

The three European members of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA)—France, Germany, and Britian, known as the E3—have announced their decision to trigger the "snapback" mechanism, once again pushing the calculations surrounding Iran's nuclear program and the future of the deal into a new phase. Their move, which in practice could pave the way for the reinstatement of all UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, carries major political, economic, and diplomatic implications while posing fresh challenges for Tehran.

Once the snapback is instigated, a 30-day countdown begins during which the Security Council must decide whether sanctions will be reimposed. During this window, a round of negotiations is expected to take place, meaning the diplomatic channel remains open.

Although Russia and China support Iran's position and may deliver strong statements in support of Tehran, neither will have a decisive impact on the process, given that Panama holds the Council presidency through August and South Korea takes over in September—both countries widely viewed as aligned with US interests. Thus, the matter ultimately hinges on Iran's willingness to extend the snapback deadline, which expires in October, and head off the return of sanctions until a compromise can be found.

Iran should seize this opportunity to advance negotiations. Should progress be made, a resolution could be passed to extend the JCPOA timeframe by two to six months, thereby giving diplomacy more breathing room. Iran should not allow sanctions to return and then attempt to push through a resolution halting their enforcement, since that would prove far more complex and difficult.

It is true that the return of UN sanctions does not directly target Iran's oil, gas, petrochemical, banking, or financial sectors. Rather, the bulk of these resolutions impose restrictions on military and nuclear industries, especially arms sales, while calling on governments to closely monitor Iranian transactions and shipments to ensure they are not diverted to nuclear or missile programs.

Although these resolutions, in effect, do not create new direct economic sanctions, they still act as a booster to US and EU unilateral measures, which by themselves have already proven far tougher than the five UN resolutions. If sanctions are reinstated, Iran's room for maneuver will tighten slightly, and Washington will cash in on this by ramping up pressure on countries still engaged in trade with Tehran.

As a result, even if direct financial and trade barriers are not immediately imposed, the cost and risk of doing business with Iran would rise.

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President remotely launches two oil pipelines, 722 industrial projects

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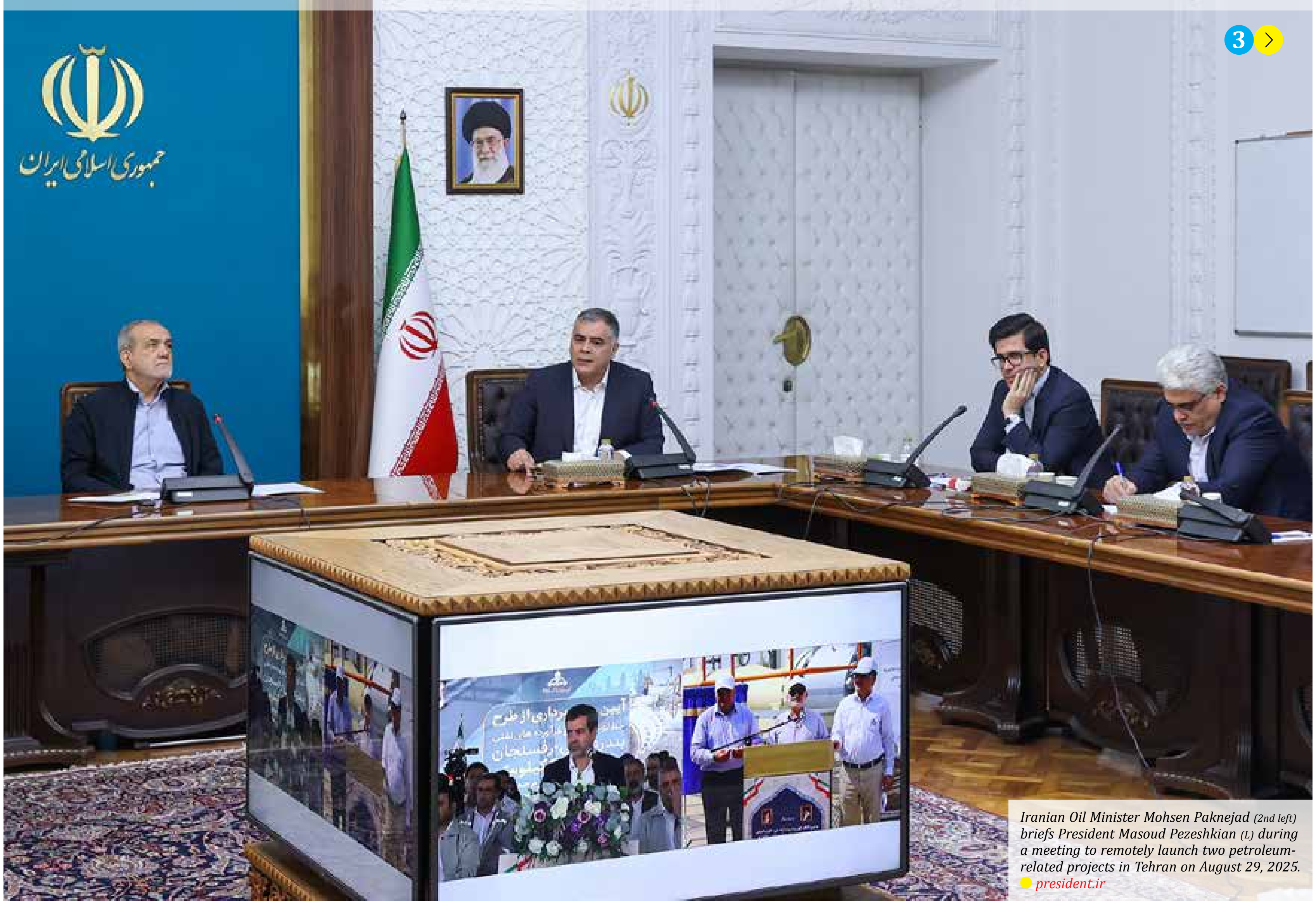
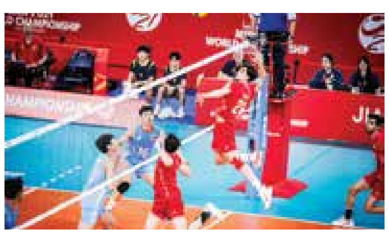


Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (2nd left) briefs President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) during a meeting to remotely launch two petroleum-related projects in Tehran on August 29, 2025.
president.ir



FIVB Men's U21 World Championship:
Iran hammers host to set last-four date with USA

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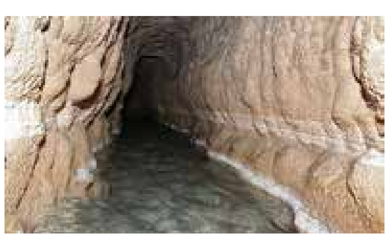

Zarch Qanat breathes new life into Yazd's water heritage

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Iran, Tajikistan push Persian literary ties with 3.4m 'Shahnameh' print run

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Tehran-Beijing trade channels stay open despite barriers

By Arash Nikpey
Member of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

China has been Iran's largest trading partner in recent years, accounting for between 20% to 30% of Iran's foreign trade annually. According to official statistics, China remains Iran's top export destination and one of the largest sources of imports into the country.

Iran's main exports to China consist of oil and petrochemical products, while imports from China include machinery, electronic equipment, auto parts, and consumer goods. As a result, the trade balance between the two countries has in most years leaned in Iran's favor, largely due to the scale of oil, gas, and petrochemical exports to China.

However, reduced oil exports caused by sanctions, coupled with the forced discounts on sales stemming from those restrictions, along with the growth of consumer and industrial imports from China, have in some years pushed the balance toward either equilibrium or a deficit in China's favor.

For instance, in 2023, overall bilateral trade stood at around $14.6 billion. Of that, Iran's exports totaled $6.2 billion, while imports reached $8.4 billion, leaving Tehran with a trade deficit.

The main barriers to trade between Iran and China are sanctions and banking restrictions. Iran's blocked access to the international financial system (SWIFT), US pressure on Chinese banks and firms to scale back dealings with Iran, and the need to get around oil sanctions through intermediaries all serve as major obstacles.

High risks in money transfers further increase the cost of trade.

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