

Minister: Shahriar bridged 'lofty language', everyday speech in Iran

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'Opportunity for dialogue missed': Iran rebukes UNSC's pro-snapback vote

Russia, China, Pakistan, Algeria rap E3 actions as 'unjustified and illegal'



The photo shows the United Nations Security Council holding a meeting on September 19, 2025, in New York during which the top body voted to reimpose sanctions against Iran over accusations that Tehran had violated the 2015 nuclear deal.

• AFP

International agreements as pressure tools

Western powers cite proliferation to justify restrictions

By Ahmad Bina
Human rights expert

OPINION

US officials claim that Iran's nuclear program poses a serious challenge to the interests and security of both Washington and Tel Aviv, as well as to the stability of the Middle East. Under this pretext, the harshest and most unprecedented sanctions in the history of the global economy have been slapped on Iran.

Western powers—particularly the United States—have consistently sought to lean on the Islamic Republic by deploying a variety of tools, including international resolutions, to force Tehran into submission. Over the years, cruel sanctions have been passed against the Iranian government and people, sanctions that clearly clash with the principles of human rights. Washington has mobilized its full political, economic, diplomatic, and military might to bring other countries on board to make Iran bow to its demands—ultimately pursuing its main goal of engineering fundamental change in Iran's policies and, in the long run, dismantling the country itself.

Through various levers, the US managed to line up its allies and many other nations behind its policy of economic pressure on Iran. Before 2010, Europeans and others were reluctant to follow Washington's lead, but over time, the US managed to bring them around. By politicizing Iran's nuclear file and dragging it into the UN Security Council, these countries pushed through several resolutions. Although those measures were briefly suspended following the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA), the three European signatories—France, Germany, and Britain—are now working to revive the Security Council sanctions through the "snapback" mechanism.

Before the JCPOA, the Security Council had passed seven resolutions against Iran over its nuclear case, even while Tehran was operating under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) oversight and within the framework of the NPT. Membership in international treaties and conventions has long been used by Western powers as a strategy to keep targeted countries on a short leash. These powers press reluctant states into signing such documents, even though they themselves often avoid binding commitments. Some sign but later find ways around enforcement, using pretexts and technicalities.

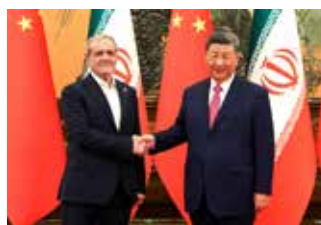
The underlying aim of such treaties is to put countries under pressure when circumstances demand. In the field of nuclear energy, this has become standard practice.

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Diplomacy Decapitated

'Opportunity for dialogue missed':

Iran rebukes UNSC's pro-snapback vote

Russia, China, Pakistan, Algeria rap E3 actions as 'unjustified and illegal'

International Desk

Iran's ambassador to the UN reacted in the strongest terms to a vote on Friday by the UN Security Council to reimpose sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear program, saying that council "missed the opportunity for dialogue and agreement today."

Amir Saeed Iravani called the resolution which advanced European-triggered international sanctions on Tehran "hasty, unnecessary and unlawful."

"Today's action is hasty, unnecessary and unlawful. Iran recognizes no obligation to implement it," Iravani told the UN Security Council, describing it as the "politics of coercion."

"This reckless step undermines dialogue without aggression and sets a dangerous precedent," he added. "The E3 (France, Britain, Germany) and the US, in coordination with Israel, are spreading false claims that Iran's nuclear program threatens peace and security."

His remarks came after the Security Council resolution aimed at halting

the reimposition of sanctions on Iran failed after weeks of diplomatic talks.

The resolution put forth by South Korea, the current president of the 15-member council, did not garner the support of the nine countries required to halt the series of sanctions from taking effect at the end of the month, as outlined in Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Only four countries — China, Russia, Pakistan and Algeria — supported the effort, with some using the meeting to blast the European leaders for an unjustified and illegal action against Iran.

Iravani thanked his four colleagues for voting in favor of lifting the sanctions and rejecting "the blunt instrument of pressure and intimidation."

"They have chosen to stand on the right side of history," he said. Vassily Alekseevich Nebenzia, the Russian ambassador to the UN, said ahead of the vote that, "Their only goal now is to use the council

as a tool for their bad faith play, as a lever to exert pressure on the state in favor of a state which is trying to defend its sovereign interests."

End to years of diplomacy

The Chinese envoy echoed that sentiment, saying that the council's action on this issue has managed to bring a "definitive" end to eight years of diplomacy with "one stroke."

British Ambassador Barbara Woodward said the UK remains committed to a diplomatic solution and is ready for further engagements diplomatically in the next week and beyond to seek to resolve differences.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom moved last month to trigger the "snapback mechanism," which automatically reimposes all UN sanctions that were in effect before the nuclear deal. Those penalties included a conventional arms embargo, restrictions on ballistic missile development, asset freezes, travel bans and a ban on producing nuclear-related technology.

The European parties have accused

Iran of non-compliance with its obligations under the JCPOA over its decision to reduce commitments in response to the US withdrawal from the 2015 deal.

Iran argues that the E3 cannot invoke the mechanism as they first violated the agreement by refusing to compensate for the US withdrawal, which prompted Iran to reduce its commitments.

'Unjustified, provocative' move

Iran's Foreign Ministry in a statement described the move by the three European countries as "illegal, unjustified, and provocative", which severely undermines the ongoing diplomatic processes.

The statement underlined that, "Iran's peaceful nuclear program is based on the will and determination of the Iranian people for scientific and technological progress and development, and the Iranian nation remains resolute in this path. The Islamic Republic of Iran, while emphasizing the pursuit of its interests and rights — including through diplomatic means — re-



Iranian Ambassador to the UN Amir Saeed Iravani (c) speaks with his British counterpart Barbara Woodward (R) during a Security Council meeting on Iran at UN headquarters in New York on September 19, 2025.
ANGELA WEISS/AFP

serves the right to respond appropriately to any illegal action."

Over the last several weeks, intensified diplomacy between Iran and the European countries had taken place.

German and European Union leaders had warned Iran in a call on Wednesday that it had yet to take the necessary action to stop the reimposition of sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

"What Europeans are doing is politically biased and politically motivated ... They are wrong on different levels by trying to misuse the mechanism embedded in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)," Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Friday.

Khatibzadeh cautioned that, "All options are on the table if diplomacy fails."

"If Europeans go on this path, they are making the level of unpredictability to the highest level possible, and they are responsible for... any possible future risks," he declared.

World's inaction on anti-Iran strikes leads to normalization of aggression: *Iran envoy*

International Desk

Iran's ambassador to international organizations in Vienna once again censured attacks on the country's nuclear sites by the United States and Israel in June, warning that the international community's inaction over such strikes would lead to the normalization and repetition of the illegal acts.

Addressing the 69th IAEA General Conference in Geneva on Thursday, Reza Najafi called for Washington and Tel Aviv to be held accountable for their "blatant violation of international law and the non-proliferation regime."

"Today, the international community is facing a very serious issue; a clear message must be sent that illegal attacks on nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are not only a blatant violation of countries' legitimate rights to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but also a direct assault on the credibility of the IAEA's safeguards system."

The Iranian official also pointed to a draft resolution put forward by Tehran and five other nations at the IAEA's conference, which calls for a ban on any attack or threat against nuclear sites under the IAEA Safeguards, saying that many member states of the IAEA are under pressure and threats from the



US not to support the draft resolution. "A considerable number of IAEA member states, in separate contacts with Iran and other sponsors of the draft resolution, have stated that they are under intense pressure and threats from the United States not to vote in favor of the submitted resolution," Najafi said. Meanwhile, the Iranian diplomat said in an interview with IRNA that the United States has threatened the IAEA member states to cast a negative vote or abstain from voting on Iran's resolution.

"A number of these countries have declared that an 'abstention' from this resolution does not reflect their true position, and therefore they have

strongly requested Iran, in consultation with the other co-sponsors of the resolution, to defer action on the resolution to next year's conference."

The resolution follows the US-Israeli aggression against Iran in June, with Tehran warning that the attacks on its safeguarded nuclear facilities have endangered personnel, nuclear material security, the environment, and the credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

Iran's Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan nuclear facilities were bombed by the US, which joined Israel's aggression against Iran in June and claimed the lives of nearly 1,100 Iranian ordinary people, high-profile scientists and military forces.

Tehran concerned about foreign agendas backing 'federalization' of Syria

International Desk

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations expressed concern regarding agendas advocating for the "federalization" of Syria, saying that any attempts to impose external agendas or fragment the nation is unacceptable.

Addressing a UN Security Council meeting on Syria on Thursday, Amir Saeed Iravani said that such aspirations could exacerbate fragmentation and reignite conflict within the country.

"We reiterate that the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Syria must be fully respected. Any attempt to impose foreign agendas or dismember the country is unacceptable," Iravani said.

"We express concern about agendas or demands that could lead to federalization or autonomy. If mismanaged, such demands could lead to fragmentation and a resurgence of conflicts; however, if pursued responsibly within the framework of an inclusive national dialogue under the supervision of the United Nations, they can contribute to national reconciliation and stability." The Iranian diplomat underlined that the Islamic Republic will continue to support the Syrian people and their efforts to restore peace, stability, reconstruction, and national reconciliation, in full alignment with the will of the Syrian people. He emphasized that lasting peace and stability can only be achieved through a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process, free from foreign interference and coercion.

"This process must be genuinely inclusive of all communities. Excluding key groups would only deepen grievances, undermine legitimacy, and risk destabilizing an already fragile situation," he remarked.

Iravani stressed that the UN Security Council must not overlook the ongoing destabilizing and aggressive actions of the Israeli regime in Syria.

'Foreign occupation must come to an end'

He also condemned Israel's acts of aggression against Syria as blatant violations of international law and the UN Charter.

"Iran underscores that all foreign occupation must come to an end. Israeli acts of aggression, including repeated airstrikes on Syrian territory, represent clear violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The Council must not remain silent on these violations," Iravani concluded.

Israel has conducted repeated acts of aggression across the Syrian territory following the collapse of former president Bashar al-Assad's government last year to weaken the Arab country's defensive capabilities.

Israeli forces have deployed to at least nine posts deep inside southern Syria, mostly within the UN-monitored buffer zone, citing the alleged need to counter Daesh's threats. However, this deployment serves as cover for a broader strategy of territorial expansion through both military aggression and settler incursions.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

International agreements as ...

One of the most significant treaties in this context is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

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Treaty (NPT), adopted in 1968 and joined by 190 countries. The treaty restricts nuclear-armed states and obliges them to pursue disarmament in good faith. At the same time, it requires non-nuclear states to refrain from developing such weapons and to accept comprehensive safeguards with the IAEA over their nuclear material.

Article 4 of the NPT, however, explicitly recognizes the "inalienable right" of all member states to research, develop, and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Yet for decades, the atmosphere surrounding nuclear issues has been dominated by suspicion. The pursuit of peaceful nuclear technology by non-nuclear states has been met with distrust and alarm from nuclear-armed nations. The reason lies in the weak structure of the NPT, which is built

on discrimination among member states and has been kept deliberately fragile by Western powers. Countries joined the treaty mainly in the hope of benefiting from Article 4, which guaranteed access to peaceful nuclear energy. Although the NPT was originally intended to halt the spread of nuclear weapons, Western powers have used the excuse of proliferation risks to pile on restrictions.

Global policies shaped by the "non-proliferation doctrine," spearheaded by superpowers such as the United States, have significantly eroded Article 4—particularly the inherent right of member states to peaceful nuclear energy. As former IAEA Board of Governors chairman Bertrand Goldschmidt once noted: "Until the mid-1970s, IAEA safeguards and NPT policies were free of any technical restrictions. At that time, the NPT could be summed up in one sentence: nuclear explosions were banned,

and everything else was allowed. Nothing in the treaty prevented member states from pursuing technical paths of their choice." In other words, before Washington shifted strategy in the 1980s and started clamping down on sensitive nuclear activities, non-nuclear states were entitled to enjoy the full benefits of Article 4 without fear of economic sanctions or military threats. The hardline approach taken by powers like the US has since triggered serious global crises and jeopardized international peace and security.

Despite this, neither the US, nor any of the other eight nuclear-armed states have joined the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), adopted in 2017. The TPNW is the first legally binding international treaty that lays down sweeping bans on every activity related to nuclear arms, from development and testing to possession, stockpiling, use, and threats of use.



Pezeshkian says partnership with Russia shows end of global unilateralism

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that successful cooperation between independent countries such as Iran and Russia proves that “the era of unilateralism in the world has come to an end,” president.ir reported on Thursday.

“We will be able to achieve growth and progress in our countries without dependence on unilateralist powers,” Pezeshkian told Russian Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilev and his delegation in Tehran.

Pezeshkian expressed satisfaction with the process of joint cooperation between Iran and Russia and the commitment of the officials of the two countries to implementing bilateral agreements in the fields of transport, energy and power plants.

He added that Iran is seriously pursuing the implementation of agreements between the two countries and that all the necessary conditions for joint cooperation have been prepared.

Tsivilev, for his part, presented a report on his trip to Iran, including meetings with senior officials and the follow-up to bilateral agreements such as those concluded in the countries’ joint economic commission.

Gazprom’s prospects of cooperation

Meanwhile, Russian energy giant Gazprom said its delegation to Tehran also



discussed prospects for economic cooperation with Iran, including in the gas sector, according to Russia’s Vedomosti. Gazprom added that the delegation held talks with the head of the National Iranian Gas Company. In late June 2024,

Gazprom signed a strategic memorandum of understanding with the Iranian company to develop a framework for supplying Russian natural gas to Iran. Moscow and Tehran reached a deal on 55 billion cubic meters of Russian gas

supplies a year, though prices are yet to be agreed.

According to Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, the agreed route would use Azerbaijani territory, with Iran receiving the gas at Astara.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (4th R) meets Russian Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilev (4th L) and his delegation in Tehran on September 17, 2025.

● IRNA

Armenia-Iran rail link to boost regional transit: Pashinyan

Economy Desk

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Thursday that restoring railway connections between Armenia and Iran would significantly expand economic cooperation and sharply increase the two countries’ transit capacity.

Pashinyan said the reopening of regional routes would boost transit potential not only for Armenia and Iran but also for neighboring Azerbaijan. “With this railway, any rise in Armenia’s and Iran’s transit role would inevitably also raise the transit role of Azerbaijan’s Nakhchivan region,” he said, News Armenia reported.

According to caliber.Az, he also said, “As a result of opening regional communications, we will gain a railway connection to Iran, which will become a very important logistical route and significantly enhance the transport capacities of Armenia, Iran, and also Azerbaijan, since the railway will pass through all these countries.”

Pashinyan highlighted the inclusive nature of the regional initiatives, stating, “No plan should exclude any country in the region from the benefits of restored communication links. Such an approach is misguided, particularly in an environment of peace and regional cooperation.”

The prime minister also highlighted progress on the construction of the North-South highway project, saying, “We



have relevant agreements and projects aimed at deepening partnership with Iran.”

Postal cooperation MoU

The two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in UAE’s Dubai on Thursday to expand cooperation in postal services, including logistics, e-commerce and the volume of bilateral exchanges, IRNA reported.

The deal was signed on the sidelines of the 28th Universal Postal Union (UPU) Congress by Mohammad Ahmadi, CEO of Iran’s National Post Company, and Shushan Alexanyan, CEO of Armenia Post.

The agreement aims to strengthen and develop postal collaboration within the framework of the two countries’ social and economic development programs.

Both sides stressed the importance of safeguarding mutual interests, improving service quality, and making maximum use of existing capacities.

Under the terms of the MoU, cooperation will cover logistics for parcel distribution, policy exchange, development of e-commerce, and an increase in bilateral postal trade.

Chamber head: Shalamcheh can become strategic trade, tourism hub

Economy Desk

The head of Khorramshahr Chamber of Commerce said the Shalamcheh border crossing with Iraq should be developed from a local gateway into a national hub for trade and tourism, highlighting its potential to serve as an economic and diplomatic base in western Iran.

“Shalamcheh must be transformed from a local border into the country’s trade and tourism hub. If managed properly, it can become a base of economic diplomacy and tourism in western Iran rather than just a limited crossing point,” said Mostafa Mousavi, who also chairs the tourism commission of Iran’s Chamber of Commerce, ILNA reported.

The formal launch of the crossing with Iraq has drawn the attention of business leaders and tourism experts to its new opportunities, Mousavi said, adding that many argue Shalamcheh is more than a local passage and could be a strategic link in expanding Iran’s trade and tourism.

Mousavi said the crossing should be seen through a national lens and as part of the Seventh Development Plan’s wider goals. He noted that Iran’s challenge is not a lack of border points but high logistics costs and an imbalance between exports and imports. Shalamcheh, he said, can help address this by shortening the route to Iraq’s Basra port, reduc-



ing costs, time and risks. The plan also calls for raising Iran’s transit capacity to 200 million tons, and Shalamcheh could play a strategic role in meeting this national target.

Part of national roadmap

Mousavi said past experience shows that border markets generate little added value if they remain purely local. Instead, Shalamcheh should be developed as a multipurpose border services hub, combining standardized trade centers with accommodations, transport facilities, restaurants and tourism services.

“Such a model,” he added, “could attract pilgrims to Iraq’s holy sites, business travelers and shopping tourists simultaneously.” The Seventh Development Plan explicitly states that border terminals should be turned into regional

development centers, so Shalamcheh’s markets must be designed within a national framework, not just to meet local needs. From an infrastructure perspective, the border crossing could also be used for car imports, whether by road or via rail links. However, Mousavi stressed that vehicle imports depend less on logistics and more on national industrial, currency and environmental policies.

He said that if Iran is to meet the plan’s goal of modernizing the transport fleet and cutting emissions, Shalamcheh could serve as a terminal for bringing in specific vehicles such as fuel-efficient cars or public transport fleets. “The crossing has the capacity, but it must be integrated into national industrial policy rather than treated as a short-term trade opportunity,” he said.

Industry minister: Mining revenues must fuel local jobs, investment



Economy Desk

Iran’s Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Atabak said on Thursday that boosting the share of mining revenues in local development is a key priority, stressing that the proceeds should be directed toward job creation and investment in the same regions where resources are extracted.

Speaking at a meeting with a group of business leaders in South Khorasan Province, Atabak said under a decision by the Supreme Mining Council, and in order to accelerate exploitation and activate mining capacity, some authority over mining rights allocation will be delegated to provincial administrations to speed up decision-making.

He underscored that enforcing the mining act passed by Parliament and ensuring safety in coal mines are among the ministry’s top priorities.

The country is the 15th-largest mineral-rich country globally, and Iranian officials call mining the backbone of industrial development and say it should replace oil as the primary revenue generator.

According to the state-run Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the country exported \$4.1 billion worth of mining and mineral industry products in the first four months of the Persian calendar year (began on March 21, 2025), up about 14% in volume but down 4% in value compared with the same period last year.

The IMIDRO has also announced that last year nearly 600 mines were revived, activated, or developed, which represents the highest figure in mining revitalization. Atabak also noted that about 25% of the country’s industrial machinery has been modernized.

Tehran's priorities for implementing 25-year Iran-China agreement

ANALYSIS

Economic experts believe that within its responsibilities, Iran's Ministry of Economy and Finance must lay out five main priorities to put the comprehensive 25-year Iran-China deal into action. The first two priorities — “facilitating financial and banking infrastructure” and “securing and attracting foreign investment” — serve as the backbone for implementing the other parts of the agreement and hold a special place in the overall strategy. Experts agree that success in these two areas can directly influence the speed, quality, and breadth of the treaty's impact on Iran's economy.

First priority: facilitating financial, banking infrastructure

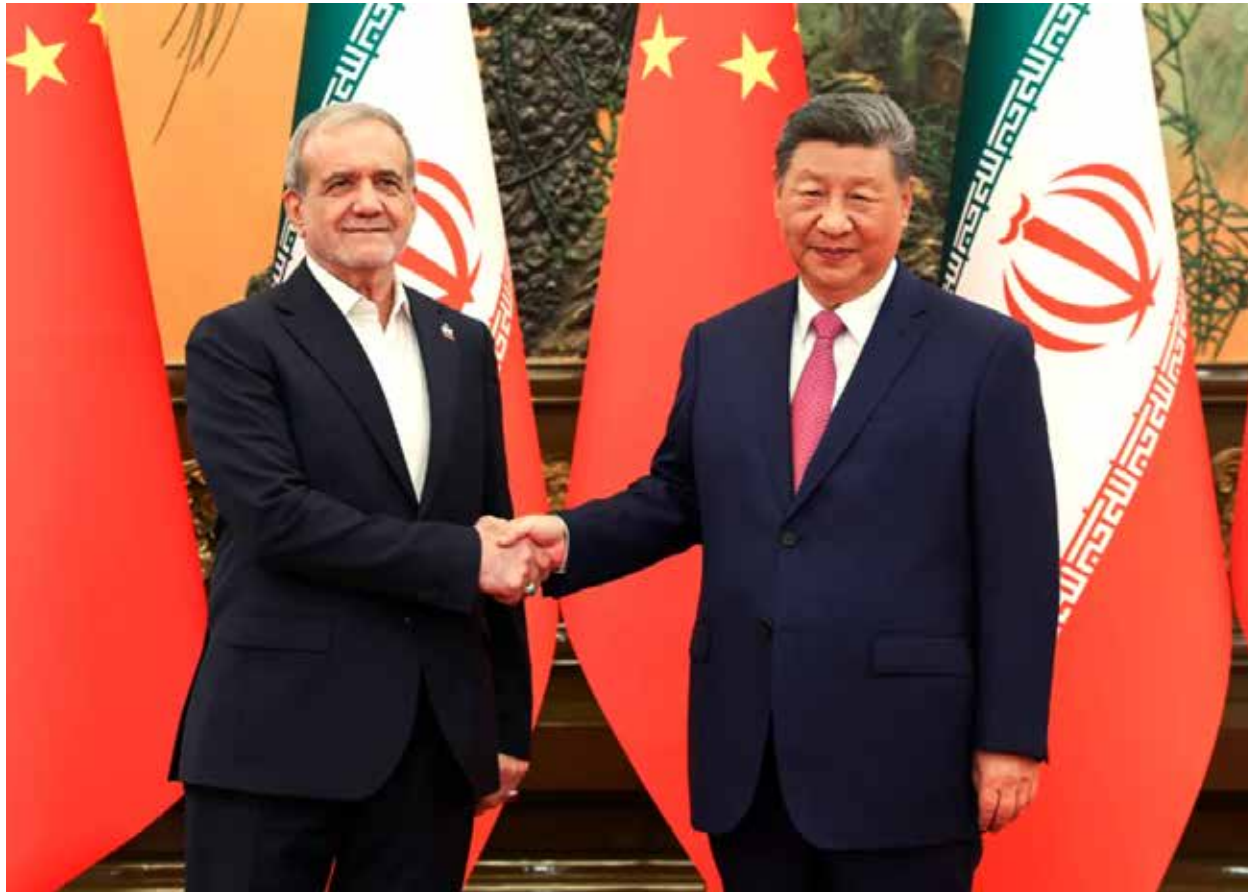
According to announced plans, the Ministry of Economy's first step in executing the agreement is to revamp the financial exchange system between Iran and China. This involves two key actions: eliminating reliance on benchmark currencies like the US dollar and euro, and setting up direct settlement mechanisms and banks based on the national currencies of the two countries.

Ministry officials argue that due to sanctions-related limitations, Iran is left with no choice but to lean on bilateral or multilateral currency swaps. China has a proven track record in this regard with countries like Russia, Brazil, and South Africa, and this experience can serve as a blueprint for Iran. On the operational front, negotiations are underway for a bilateral currency swap agreement between the Central Bank of Iran and the People's Bank of China to clear transactions in rial and yuan. Banking experts believe this deal will not only slash remittance costs but also act as a “shock absorber” against foreign exchange volatility in the open market.

This priority also includes establishing joint banks and opening bank branches in each country's capital. It's expected that upon final approval, two Iranian banks will open branches in Shanghai and Shenzhen's commercial zones, while Chinese banks will operate branches in Tehran and Iran's free economic zones. Experts think this move will streamline capital flows, project payments, and joint financing. Another technical piece involves creating international payment systems to step in for SWIFT. Since Iran currently lacks full access to SWIFT, the ministry is working on an infrastructure called “IranPay,” designed to connect with China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS). The former system is set for pilot operation by early 2027 and is seen by experts as a game-changer to neutralize global banking restrictions.

Further, Iran's Ministry of Finance is working to smooth out credit rating standards and facilitate opening Letters of Credit (LC) in joint projects. Many Iranian companies active in China currently face major hurdles due to a lack of credible banking credit. Working alongside development banks from both countries, the ministry has crafted a financing guarantee package for projects projected to be worth up to \$10 billion.

Mehdi Rastegar, an international economics professor, told Mehr news agency, “If this priority is pulled off correctly, Iran-China trade will not only get around sanctions but could also set the stage for similar financial cooperation with other Asian partners. This means the emergence of a parallel financial geography in the region.”



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) shakes hands with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in Beijing, China, on September 2, 2025.
● fjprc.gov.cn

Second priority: securing, attracting foreign investment

The second key task for Iran's Ministry of Finance under the 25-year agreement is to attract Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) targeted at energy, infrastructure, mining, transportation, technology, and agriculture sectors.

According to official sources, the ministry has been tasked to roll out a “one-stop investment window with China.” This center will handle all the hoops involved in licensing, company registration, land allocation, tax exemptions, and customs facilities in one place — eliminating the need to run around multiple agencies. The goal is to cut down the startup time of foreign projects from the current average of 18 months to less than six months.

Investment experts stress that the Chinese side is keen on legal stability and getting a guarantee of return on investment. Accordingly, the Iranian ministry has drafted a foreign investor protection law including government guarantees for infrastructure projects exceeding \$100 million.

Elham Naderi, an international economics expert, noted, “Chinese investors want to jump on board projects

that are both profitable and shielded from non-commercial risks. If Iran's Ministry of Finance can broker insurance and repayment guarantees through negotiations, we'll see a significant inflow of Chinese capital.”

In energy, the Finance Ministry coordinates with the Oil Ministry to hand over four mid-term oil and gas field development projects to Iranian-Chinese consortia, with estimated investments reaching around \$7 billion.

In transport infrastructure, two major projects stand out: the Tehran-Mashhad high-speed rail and a dry port in Qom province, requiring over \$3 billion in financing in total. The ministry's mandate is to line up long-term loans from Asian development banks, backed by credit guarantees from the Chinese government, to ensure these projects get off the ground.

In mining, preliminary talks have started for building a lithium processing complex in South Khorasan. The ministry's incentives to attract investment here include 15-year tax exemptions and the provision of needed energy infrastructure.

However, the investment attraction process will hit some bumps due to re-

gional competition. Some experts warn that rivalry from countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE for Chinese capital could cut into Iran's share.

Role of above priorities in overarching plan

Analysts believe that without substantial progress in the financial and investment priorities, the other three priorities of the ministry (project support, trade management, and transparency) will advance more slowly. Financial infrastructure is like the main artery of the body, feeding all the projects, while foreign investment acts as oxygen that breathes life into these initiatives.

In conclusion, Iran's Ministry of Economy and Finance must not only play the role of planner but also step up as negotiator and guarantor of national interests at this stage. The 25-year Iran-China agreement is widely seen as a turning point for Iran's economic relations with the East, and its success hinges on the effectiveness of the ministry's policies and dealings in these two key areas.

The article first appeared in Persian on Mehr news agency.



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The cargo train traveled from eastern China through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan arrives in the Iranian capital Tehran on September 3, 2016.
● [STRINGER](https://stringer.com)

China's middle corridor(s), east-west connectivity

By Ali Oskrouchi and Zenel Garcia
Scholars

The shifting geopolitical landscape of the 2020s has profoundly reshaped global trade corridors, particularly China's overland routes to Europe. The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war and the United States' turn toward economic nationalism, marked by escalating tariffs and strategic decoupling, have accelerated China's push to diversify its freight pathways beyond maritime and Russian-dominated routes. These developments have made overland rail infrastructure a central pillar of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), not only for trade facilitation but also for geopolitical resilience.

At the heart of this transformation lies a renewed emphasis on the so-called "Middle Corridor," a network of multimodal transportation routes linking China to Europe via Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Turkey. Each alternative route reflects a complex matrix of political risks, logistical trade-offs, and strategic recalibrations, from bypassing Russian territory to navigating US sanctions on Iran.

Middle Corridor I: China-Kazakhstan-Caspian-Azerbaijan-Turkey-Europe Route (Trans-Caspian Corridor)

Following the war in Ukraine, the supplementary position of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), or Trans-Caspian Corridor, gained strong support from the European Union, the United States, and Turkey. China found itself compelled to consider this corridor, though Beijing has significant concerns about over-dependence on Turkey, particularly due to its potential impact on China's Turkic and separatist-prone region, Xinjiang. While this route could potentially create a secondary, yet safer route by passing through Iranian territory and utilizing its natural and historical path towards Europe, Beijing opted to shift its focus to the Trans-Caspian Corridor. At this point, China abandoned the Iranian route to avoid exposure to the US secondary sanctions targeting economic relations with Iran.

In the meantime, the development of the Middle Corridor plays a crucial role in Kazakhstan's efforts to become a major transit hub in Eurasia. The corridor is aimed at achieving an annual cargo handling capacity of 10 million tons. Kazakhstan also hosts important sections of some other international corridors, including the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA), and the Northern Corridor (NELB) with its three passing major rail routes. However, in the aftermath of the Ukraine-Russia war, the Trans-Caspian Corridor gained strategic importance for China as transporting goods from China to Europe required bypassing both Russian and Iranian territories. Under these circumstances, across shipping the Caspian Sea became an essential component of the route.

Middle Corridor II: China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Europe Route (CKU)

In what became known as "Bloody January" 2022, Kazakhstan experienced a wave of political unrest tied to various speculative scenarios, ranging from internal power struggles and Russian expansionism to Western attempts to disrupt the BRI, Russian responses to developments in Ukraine, or even Moscow and Beijing's reaction to rising Turkic nationalism within Kazakhstan. Regardless of the cause, Kazakhstan was no longer seen as a reliable linchpin in China's mega-project. A color revolution would deeply unsettle Beijing, increasing the urgency for alternative routes. This time, Kyrgyzstan was brought into play.

The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU)



FOREIGN ANALYSIS

railway, first proposed in the 1990s, faced long delays due to financial, technical, and geopolitical challenges. Unlike Kazakhstan's flat, well-developed rail network, around 80 percent of the CKU route is mountainous and demands construction of 75 miles of tunnels and 16 miles of bridges, pushing project costs to an estimated \$10–12 billion. Moreover, gauge mismatches between Chinese and former Soviet rail standards add to the expense.

Despite the costs, shifting regional dynamics pushed China to revive the CKU project as a strategic new corridor linking China to Central Asia, with Kyrgyzstan playing a central role in connecting to Europe, reducing Kazakhstan's monopoly on Chinese rail links. The route also fosters economic ties between Xinjiang and the Fergana Valley, boosting trade and integration. Recognizing its significance, the CKU project officially broke ground in December 2024 in Jallal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan, expecting transit revenue, hails this as the "Project of the Century". The railway could potentially extend to Turkmenistan and Iran, offering routes to Europe and the Middle East. Iran's route has long been the most economically viable option for Chinese-European trade via the Middle Corridor, offering lower costs, faster delivery, and safer conditions. However, US secondary sanctions on Iran have repeatedly deterred investment, delaying these otherwise advantageous projects.

Middle Corridor III: China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey-Europe (KITI)

The CKU railway corridor may intensify regional competition and has raised concerns in Kazakhstan. Competing with the emerging China-Poland route via Iran (i.e., the Historical Middle Corridor), Kazakhstan has heavily invested in do-

mestic infrastructure to retain its role as a Eurasian transit hub. In a February 2025 bilateral meeting, Iran and Kazakhstan set a target to transit 5 million tons of cargo via Iran over five years. As the world's largest landlocked country, Kazakhstan views Iranian ports as vital trade routes. Iran may also serve as a corridor for Kazakh grain exports.

Construction of the 560-mile East Caspian railway linking Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran began in 2009 and became operational in 2014, with China later joining. Since 1996, the Sarakhs-Tajan-Mashhad line has connected Iran to Central Asia and Russia, but the new railway shortened the route by 370 miles. Turkmenistan's former president, Saparmurat Niyazov, noted that revenue from this line funded Turkmen construction projects.

To regain transit relevance amid the CKU challenge, Kazakhstan's KTZ Express partnered with China Railway Container Transport Corporation to launch a new route from China through Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Turkey, ultimately reaching Poland. This east-west freight line aligns with Iran-China cooperation, especially as Beijing counters US containment. Iran has proposed two freight corridors to Europe and the Persian Gulf, with entry points at Sarakhs and Incheborun, matching the CKU and KITI routes, respectively. The latter reduces shipping time by 200%, cutting transit from China to Poland to 40 days.

Following COVID-era suspensions, the China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway resumed in July 2024. On March 3, 2025, a new container rail service was launched from China to Poland. The corridor demands an \$8 billion investment. In May 2025, six-party talks in Tehran addressed tariffs and logistics, signaling a shift from route selection to building a world-class freight network. This route

bypasses Russia, reducing China's reliance on Russian infrastructure amid geopolitical tensions with the West. Additionally, these east-west routes could also link with the North-South International Transit Corridor (INSTC), which China has so far been reluctant to embrace.

Conclusion, Implications

The transformation of Eurasia's transport landscape underscores the strategic recalibration underway in response to shifting global power dynamics. With maritime routes increasingly vulnerable to US control and the Russia-Ukraine war disrupting northern land links, China is rapidly diversifying its logistical networks through the Middle Corridor. These projects are not merely economic in nature; They are embedded within broader geopolitical strategies aimed at reducing vulnerability, enhancing regional influence, and fostering multipolar connectivity.

The expansion of corridors through Central Asia and Iran realigns global freight logistics and places countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, and Turkey at the heart of 21st-century Eurasian trade. Each route reflects a careful balancing act: navigating US sanctions, domestic instability, and regional rivalries while preserving economic viability. In the longer term, these infrastructure investments may redefine global trade norms, with implications for EU-Asia commerce, US-China competition, and regional integration. They also invite new forms of multilateral diplomacy as corridor states become stakeholders in both economic and strategic dialogues. If successful, China's diversified rail strategies could cement its position as the central axis of a reconfigured Eurasian economic order.

The article first appeared on Eurasia Review.



Iran's route has long been the most economically viable option for Chinese-European trade via the Middle Corridor, offering lower costs, faster delivery, and safer conditions. However, US secondary sanctions on Iran have repeatedly deterred investment, delaying these otherwise advantageous projects.



The map shows some of the middle corridors connecting China to Europe.
● QAFSAM



FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship: Iran edge Philippines in epic five-set thriller to progress to last 16

Iran survived six match points for host in the nerve-wracking ending of their crucial match to advance to the round of 16 at the 2025 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship in the Philippines.

The epic five-setter finally went the way of the Iranians to place them second in the final Pool A standings and send them against the Pool H winners Serbia in Tuesday's first knockout round, while disappointing the home crowd that filled the stands in Pasay City on Thursday.

In this do-or-die battle, the Philippines were well in control of sets one and three and managed to step a set ahead twice in the match. Iran leveled up twice and pushed the game to a fifth set. The home team managed to recover from a 10-6 Iranian lead in the tie-breaker and was the first to reach match point. However, the much higher ranked Iranian team denied them as many as six opportunities to close the match.

To turn up the drama in Pasay City, when everyone thought that the sixth match point was finally converted to a 20-18 win and the Filipino victory party had already started, a successful net touch challenge by Iran brought every-



Iranian players celebrate after the five-set victory over the Philippines at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship in Pasay City, Philippines, on September 18, 2025.

● [MOJTABA ZAKIZADEH/volleyball.ir](https://www.mojtaba-zakizadeh.com/volleyball.ir)

fourth set, and also during the tie-breaker, when we lost some really easy balls, just because we were afraid to play those balls. We do not have a lot of experience because we changed a lot from last season, but experience cannot just be the reason," Iran's Italian coach Roberto Piazza told VBT after the game.

"Winning was really important and the only positive, because I know that we didn't play at our level at this tournament until now."

Philippines' outside and captain Bryan Bagunas also finished with 22 points. He spiked 18 points at a 60% success rate and added three blocks and an ace to his match-high tally. 22-year-old opposite Leo Ordiales scored 19 points in offense at 66% success to sign off with 21 total. The other outside, Marck Jesus Espejo, and middle blocker Kim Malabunga also reached the double digits with 15 and 10 points, respectively.

one back to square zero.

With the psychological advantage now to their side, the Iranians took control and triumphed with a 3-2 (21-25, 25-21, 17-25, 25-23, 22-20) victory on a monster block by 22-year-old middle Yousef Ka-

zemi at their second match point. In this nip-and-tuck five-set saga, Iran slightly edged the Philippines in attack by 63-62 in spike kills, and in serving by 6-5 in aces. Three players shared the top scorer honors with 22 points

each, and two of them were Iranian. 21-year-old outside hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh hit 19 points in offense at a 66% success rate and fired three aces. Opposite Ali Hajipour also produced 19 attacking points, at a

53% success rate, and put up three kill blocks.

"When you are playing with fear, it is difficult to play, because you are not able to analyze the situation. This is what I felt in the third set and in some moments of the

National squad drops to 21st in FIFA Men's World Ranking



● [MOHSEN DAVOUDI/FFIRI](https://www.mohsen-davoudi.com/ffiri)

Sports Desk

The Iranian national football team dropped by one spot to stand 21st in the latest FIFA Men's World Ranking – released by the international governing body of the sport on Thursday.

Team Melli collected 1622.61 points to remain second in the list of the AFC member states, following Japan, which fell down to 19th in the global ranking after a 2-0 friendly defeat against USA and a goalless draw against Mexico in September's international break.

Following Japan and Iran in the AFC standing are South Korea (23rd), Australia (25th), Qatar (53rd), and Uzbekistan (54th). Iran settled for a runner-up finish at the CAFA Nations Cup in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan earlier in the month – courtesy of an extra-time 1-0 loss to Uzbekistan in the final showpiece in Tashkent.

A mediocre campaign saw Iran beat Afghanistan (3-1) and India (3-0) before and then gave away a two-goal lead to share the spoils with another minnow opponent in Tajikistan in a 2-2 draw in

Group B of the competition and progress to the final.

Next for Amir Qalenoee's side, which will represent the continent in next year's FIFA World Cup in North America, is a friendly game against Russia in Volgograd on October 10.

Meanwhile, Spain moved atop the World Ranking for the first time in a decade, overtaking reigning world champion Argentina, thanks to back-to-back emphatic away victories over Bulgaria (6-0) and Türkiye (3-0) at the World Cup European qualifiers.

France, which defeated Ukraine and Iceland at the UEFA qualifiers, also jumped up to stand second, with Argentina dropping to third after a 3-0 win against Venezuela and a 1-0 loss to Ecuador in a couple of dead rubbers for the Albiceleste at the World Cup qualifiers in South America.

England, Portugal, Brazil, the Netherlands, Belgium, Croatia, and Italy complete the top 10 of the ranking, with European powerhouse falling to 12th, sitting behind Morocco.

Dorostkar eyes FS wrestling golds at L.A. Olympics

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Pejman Dorostkar hopes the country's freestyle wrestling team can build on winning the world title in Zagreb to enjoy a glory-laden campaign at the Los Angeles Olympics in three years.

Dorostkar's 10-man squad bagged seven medals, including double golds, to claim its first freestyle team trophy in 12 years at the Wrestling World Championships in the Croatian capital on Tuesday.

Having finished runner-up to the United States in the previous two editions, Iran topped the team standings with 145 points – 11 ahead of second-placed Team USA. Japan (111 pts) and Azerbaijan (83 pts) followed in third and fourth places, respectively, while the results of the Russian wrestlers, who competed as neutral athletes, were declared null and void by United World Wrestling.

"It used to be a three-horse race featuring Iran, the United States, and Russia for the freestyle crown, but it is fair to say that Japan and Azerbaijan joined the list of contenders this time. However, even after factoring in the Russians' results, Iran still managed to clinch the championship in commanding fashion," Dorostkar said upon arriving in Tehran on Friday.

Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) – silver medalists in last year's Paris Olympics – walked away with the ultimate prize in their respec-



Iran freestyle head coach Pejman Dorostkar carries Rahman Amouzad on his shoulder after he won the 65kg gold medal at the Wrestling World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, on September 16, 2025.

● [IAWFIR](https://www.iawfir.com)

tive weight classes in Zagreb, while Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan (61kg), and Amirali Azarpira (97kg) settled for a couple of silver medals.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Nakhodi (79kg), two-time world champion Kamran Qasempour (86kg), and Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg) finished with a consolation bronze, with Ali Mo'meni (57kg), Amirmohammad Yazdani (70kg), and Younes Emami (74kg) leaving Zagreb empty-handed.

Asked if his team can carry the momen-

tum into the L.A. Games in three-years' time, Dorostkar said: "The latest triumph must lead to success at the Olympics. I truly believe that Iranian wrestling's rightful place goes beyond just winning five or six gold medals in the history of the Games. I just hope this group of wrestlers can keep up the momentum to succeed in Los Angeles."

Wrestling sensation Hassan Yazdani remains the last Iranian win a freestyle gold at the Olympics – the 74kg title in Rio 2016.

Iran U23 crashes out of 3x3 Basketball World Cup

Sports Desk

Iran suffered four successive defeats to crash out in the pool phase of the FIBA 3x3 U23 World Cup in Xiongan, China.

The Iranian team – comprising Seyyed Mohammad Ghaffari, Piter Girgoorian, Alireza Sharifi, and Amirhossein Yazarlou – finished its Pool A campaign with a 15-10 loss to Germany on Friday, having suffered a 21-16 set-

back against Croatia earlier in the day. Iran began with a 17-15 defeat against Lithuania on Wednesday, and then fell short against Poland (21-20) in its second outing in the 20-team tournament later in the day.

Rural Heritage Museum celebrating Gilan's ancestral culture



● IRNA



● neshan.org



● IRNA

Iranica Desk

The Rural Heritage Museum, nestled within the lush forests of Saravan in Gilan Province, stands as a testament to the dedication of individuals committed to preserving the knowledge and culture of their ancestors. By meticulously recreating the lifestyle of northern Iranian villages from a century ago, the museum offers visitors a unique opportunity to savor the simple sweetness of life far removed from the noise and haste of urban environments. This immersive experience is enriched by the sounds of local music, the performance of traditional ceremonies — from baking local bread to practicing handicrafts — and the serving of authentic local dishes alongside the rhythms of traditional instruments and regional games. Visitors traveling along scenic routes bordered by rice paddies and flowing rivers are greeted by this living museum, which

gifts them the pleasure of stepping back in time for an hour to experience life as it was a hundred years ago. The absence of city noise brings a profound peace to the soul, and those who have embraced the museum's pure village atmosphere carry with them its joyful memory forever. A walk through the museum inevitably reveals the impact of modern technology and industry on our once-pure and joyful past, while inspiring the new generations to rekindle their spirit and genuinely connect with the true essence of rural life, IRNA wrote. The museum comprises several historic structures that were originally built many years ago by the thoughtful villagers of Gilan Province, known for their distinctive architectural style. These buildings were carefully relocated and reconstructed in the Saravan forest by skilled graduates who, driven by a deep love for their culture, customs, and the lives of their forebears,

have vividly brought to life the authentic architecture and lifestyles of nine distinct villages. This ongoing living exhibition continues to captivate visitors today, preserving the heritage in its authentic form. Babak Alidoust, Ph.D., an expert in Rural Tourism, highlighted in an interview with IRNA that rural tourism represents one of the most significant forms of sustainable tourism. It fosters economic growth while simultaneously safeguarding indigenous culture and reinforcing local identity. Through rural tourism, travelers gain firsthand familiarity with the lifestyle, customs, architecture, and traditional production methods of village communities, which plays a crucial role in preserving both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of rural areas. He emphasized that Gilan Rural Heritage Museum is a distinguished example nationwide. By authentically recreating the

lives of villagers from a century ago, the museum has established a remarkable tourist attraction and a vital educational platform for transmitting the genuine culture of Gilan Province to current and future generations. This museum not only revitalizes the rural identity of Gilan Province but also serves as an exemplary model for the development of rural tourism in other provinces across the country. Alidoust further explained, "Intangible cultural heritage encompasses all practices, ways of presenting, manifestations, knowledge, skills, tools, handicrafts, and related cultural spaces. It is a fundamental component of our national identity." He added, "Within the Rural Heritage Museum, alongside the faithful reconstruction of village life from a century ago — registered as a National Heritage Site — there has been a revival of local ceremonies, traditional games, regional foods, and tra-

ditional arts."

The museum site, set within Saravan Forest Park, spans an expansive 255 hectares. Following comprehensive studies of the cultural and architectural diversity among Gilan's rural regions, the broader cultural-architectural area of Gilan Province was divided into nine sub-regions, irrespective of administrative or political divisions. Each sub-region has been recreated within the museum as a village, composed of authentic architectural examples representative of that particular sub-region. These recreated villages are situated within the 45-hectare central portion of the museum site. Yousef Salmankhah, director general of Gilan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, remarked that establishing this museum represents one of the rare efforts focused on recording, documenting, and reconstructing both the tangible and

intangible heritage of the people of this region. Its creation aims squarely at protecting and preserving the rural cultural and architectural legacy of Gilan Province.

He told IRNA that from March 21 to September 12, the museum has welcomed 52,033 visitors, including 3,387 people who came during the recent holiday period from September 6 to 12.

The concept behind founding Gilan Province's Rural Heritage Museum arose from the necessity for people to understand themselves and their land. The museum's founder believes that one solution to cultural and social challenges lies in reconnecting the people of this land with their recent past. Through this process, they not only gain awareness of their ancestors' invaluable knowledge and technologies but also come to appreciate the cultural practices, ethics, beliefs, and values that shaped their heritage.

Gemstone mines fuel jewelry craftsmanship in Mashhad

Iranica Desk

There are many gemstone mines in Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi Province, and in its surrounding cities. This abundance is a major reason why one of the province's prospering handicrafts is jewelry made from gemstones, also known as "Mekhray Kari." Some of the most important gems include aquamarine, agates, various kinds of quartz, jasper, turquoise, garnet, and zircon, among which turquoise and agate are the most popular. Specialists believe that no two pieces of turquoise are alike — just like fingerprints, they are unique and do not match each other. An interesting fact about turquoise is that, until a few decades ago, they were used as seals. Today, the most important stone-cutting workshops in Iran are located in Mashhad, where tons of agate and turquoise stones are cut annually. Mashhad workshops operate using both traditional and modern methods. In the process of jewelry making from gemstones, all steps — including designing, manufactur-



ing, and other aspects — require both experience and skill. However, the majority of the work in creating a piece from metal and gemstone is the attachment of the stone to the base. This part of the craft is called "Mekhray Kari," "Morasa'e Kari," or incrustation. Mekhray Kari is the most important and sensitive part of jewelry making that involves gemstones. In Mekhray Kari, the stones are attached by different methods. To preserve the beauty and natural streaks of the gems, no glue

is used. The base is designed so that it does not damage the gems; even a bit of pressure can cause fracture, scratching, or breaking of the stones. Mekhray Kari is applied to pieces of jewelry such as earrings, necklaces, rings, brooches, and more. In 2018, Mashhad was registered as the global city of precious and semi-precious stones by the World Council of Handicrafts. There is also a strong artisan community in Mashhad that sustains an apprenticeship culture.



● visitiran.ir

Young makers often learn by observing seasoned Mekhray Kari specialists, then gradually take on small projects before handling more intricate pieces. This mentorship helps maintain high standards of craftsmanship and passes down nuanced techniques that aren't found in manuals. Local workshops frequently host open days where visitors can watch stone setting, ask questions, and gain a deeper appreciation for the artistry involved. Technology and tradition mingle

in Mashhad's stone workshops. While many craftsmen rely on time-honored hand-setting methods, modern precision tools and measurement techniques have been incorporated to ensure symmetry, balance, and durability. This hybrid approach allows for complex designs that honor traditional aesthetics while meeting contemporary tastes and market demands. The result is a dynamic craft sector that respects its roots yet adapts to new materials, fashions, and export

opportunities.

Beyond aesthetics, Mekhray Kari embodies a philosophy of harmony between natural forms and human artistry. Each stone's color, vein pattern, and texture influence the design of the metal base, and artisans often tailor settings to protect the stone's integrity while showcasing its unique beauty.

Such attention to detail contributes to the durability of the pieces, enabling them to be worn daily or saved as heirlooms. The practice also fosters a sense of identity and pride within the community, reinforcing social connections between miners, cutters, designers, and traders. In recent years, there has been growing interest in sustainable practices within the gemstone and Mekhray Kari sector. This includes responsible sourcing of rough stones, reducing waste in cutting and setting processes, and exploring ethical labor standards across workshops. Efforts are also being made to document and archive traditional designs, ensuring that regional motifs and historical patterns are preserved for future generations.



Minister: Shahriar bridged 'lofty language', everyday speech in Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi paid tribute to Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar at an international congress in Tabriz on Thursday, calling the late poet a bridge between "lofty language" and the everyday speech of ordinary people. The two-day gathering, held Sept. 17-18 to mark Iran's National Day of Persian Poetry and Literature, drew officials, writers and scholars from inside and outside the country, farhang.gov.ir reported. The date coincides with the anniversary of Shahriar's death in 1988, a day officially designated to honor Iran's centuries-old literary tradition.

Salehi told the audience he was attending on behalf of President Masoud Pezeshkian, who sent a written message describing Iran as "the land of poetry and thought, mysticism and epic." The president praised Shahriar as a poet who kept the "flame of the Persian ghazal" alive during turbulent times, while also uplifting his native Azarbaijani language with works such as the celebrated 'Heydar Babaya Salam'. Shahriar, who wrote in both Persian and Turkish, remains a rare figure in Iran's modern canon. Salehi noted that the poet's work combined high literary style with the language of the street, making him accessible to intellectuals and ordinary readers alike.



Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi speaks at an international congress in Tabriz, Iran, on September 18, 2025, commemorating the Persian poet Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar.
● IRNA

"He managed to link classical diction with the people's voice — something many tried but few achieved," the minister said. He also highlighted Shahriar's dual heritage, describing him as both a devout writer inspired by the Qur'an and a patriot deeply attached to his hometown of Tabriz. "For him, Iran and Azerbaijan walked hand in hand," Salehi said, adding that the poet treated both allegiances as equal parts of his identity.



● IRNA

'Alone Together' triumphs at Algerian festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Omid Mirzaei's short film 'Alone Together' clinched two major awards at the 5th Imedghassen International Film Festival in Batna, Algeria. The festival, held from September 10 to 16 at the historic Imedghassen monument, showcased 53 films from 27 countries, Mehr News Agency reported. Mirzaei's narrative earned the Best Director Award, while Iranian actor Alireza Sani Far received the Best Actor accolade for his compelling performance. The film delves into the complexities of human connection, resonating deeply with audiences and jurors alike. Also, the festival honored child actor Parham Gholamloo with a special mention for his role in the film. Previously, 'Alone Together' garnered an honorary award at the 47th Lucas Film Festival in Germany and a special jury prize at the Zoom Film Festival in Poland. It has also been featured in numerous domestic festivals, includ-



ing the Tehran International Short Film Festival, and was a finalist at the Fajr Film Festival and the Iranian Short Film Association (ISFA) awards. 'Alone Together' is set to participate in the 20th Batumi Art Festival in Georgia and the 10th Dalmatia Film Festival, further cementing its status on the global film circuit.

Iran courts foreign investment in health tourism

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is stepping up efforts to attract foreign investment in health tourism, Head of Investment and Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ali-Asghar Shalbafian said during the Tourism Investments Forum in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The forum, which was held with the participation of the UN Tourism, Shalbafian highlighted Iran's strategic roadmap for developing international partnerships in wellness tourism, IRNA reported. He outlined investment incentives designed to encourage overseas firms to tap into the country's growing health travel sector. The event drew tourism ministers, senior officials, and ambassadors from Russia, China, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, India, Pakistan, Czech Republic, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Austria, Montenegro and Australia. Shalbafian participated in a special-

ized panel on 'Investment Session: Healing Highlands: Investment Opportunities in Mountain, Health and Wellness Tourism,' sharing Iran's vision for regional cooperation and experience exchange. Describing Iran's health tourism potential as "outstanding," Shalbafian emphasized the country's readiness to leverage natural and regional assets, including highland therapeutic destinations, to attract international capital. He also presented recent incentives and policy measures aimed at facilitating foreign investment and streamlining partnerships in the sector. Iran's tourism industry has been gaining momentum, with 167 new projects worth \$166 million launched across 31 provinces in September, reflecting government efforts to expand infrastructure and diversify the economy beyond traditional energy exports. Authorities aim to double hospitality capacity under the country's Sev-



Ali-Asghar Shalbafian (2nd L, also seen C on the screen), head of investment and economic affairs at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, attends the Tourism Investments Forum in Dushanbe, September 17, 2025.
● IRNA

enth Development Plan, increasing accommodations from 1,843 to over 3,600 units and beds from 455,000 to 900,000 to host up to 15 million tourists. Shalbafian said Iran stands ready to roll out the "red carpet" for foreign investors seeking to capitalize on the sector's long-term growth potential.

BRICS sets up literary network in Brazil to boost cultural clout, Iran among participants

Arts & Culture Desk

Delegates from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Iran signed a declaration at the second BRICS Traditional Values Forum in Brazil to set up the BRICS Literature Network, an international platform for writers, scholars and publishers. The initiative, first proposed by China during talks with the China Writers Association in June 2025, is intended to broaden multilateral cultural exchange, IRNA reported. The new network underscores BRICS' effort to widen cooperation beyond trade and politics, creating space for cultural diplomacy and literary dialogue. Iran, which became a full member of BRICS in January 2024, is taking part

alongside Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia as newer voices in the grouping's cultural outreach. Russian Union of Writers co-chair Vadim Terekhin and Brazilian Academy of Letters president Marcos Freitas will head the network, joined by representatives from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia. The launch coincided with a round table on the BRICS Literary Award, first established in November 2024. Terekhin presented the longlist of nominees, which includes authors from Iran as well as other BRICS and partner states. Indian parliamentarian Hemang Joshi, a member of the award's orga-

nizing committee, called the prize "a new chapter in the world of literature." He added, "Art and literature know no boundaries. This platform unites communities and celebrates literature at an international level." Ethiopian lawmaker Zelalem Melak Bogale said the award offered a chance for nations to "get to know each other better through the prism of their culture and traditions." The award will move forward in three stages, beginning with a longlist in September in Brazil, followed by a shortlist in October in Shanghai, and ending with the winner's announcement in Moscow in November. The top prize, financed by the Eurasian Book Agency, is one million rubles (\$11,000).

Iranian rheumatologist Farhad Shahram wins APLAR Master Award in Japan

Social Desk

Iranian professor Farhad Shahram of Tehran University of Medical Sciences received the Master Award at the 27th Asia-Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology (APLAR) Congress in Fukuoka, Japan, the university said on Friday. The award is given annually to senior specialists across the Asia-Pacific region who have left a lasting mark on the field. Shahram, a leading figure in rheumatology research and training, was recognized for his decades of teaching and scientific



● IRNA

work. The "Master Award," one of APLAR's highest honors, underlines his standing among regional pioneers of the discipline. Shahram has built a career combining rigorous research with mentoring younger doctors. His work at the university's Rheumatology Research Center has shaped both clinical prac-

tice and policy. Colleagues describe him as a scholar who "opened doors" for the next generation while raising the profile of Iranian medicine abroad. The accolade places him among a select circle of regional specialists, including Iranian rheumatologists Fereydoon Davatchi, Mahmoud.