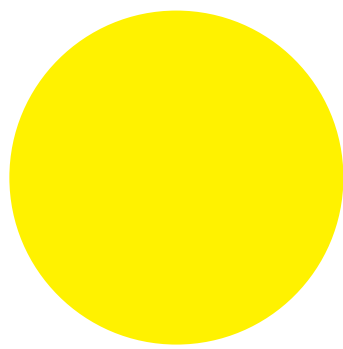


Tehran, Moscow to ink new nuclear plant construction deal:

Nuclear chief

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## VP highlights economic preparation for possible UN sanctions

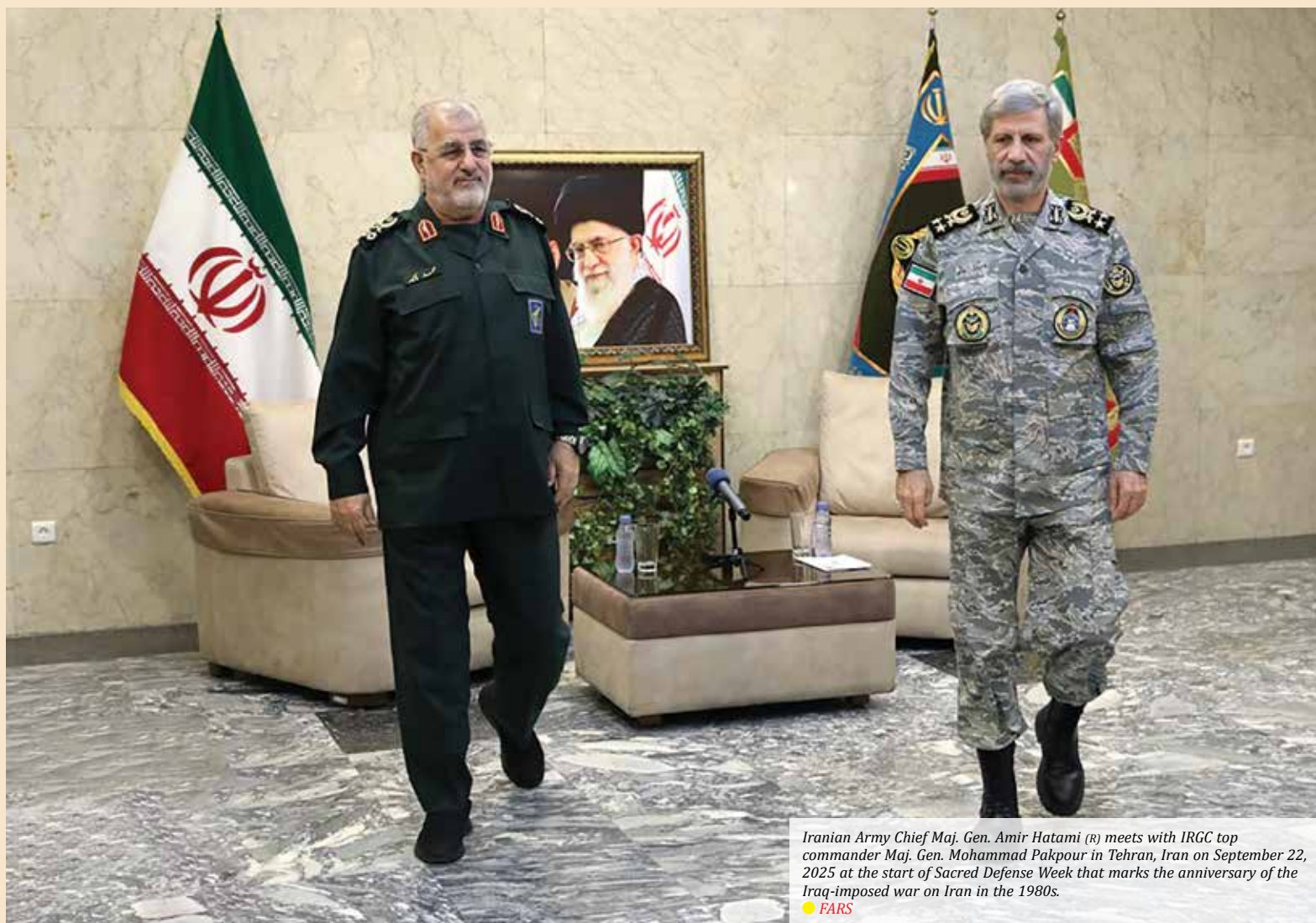
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'Unfathomable response':

## Top military brass warns of payback to anti-Iran threats

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Iranian Army Chief Maj. Gen. Amir Hatami (R) meets with IRGC top commander Maj. Gen. Mohammad Pakpour in Tehran, Iran on September 22, 2025 at the start of Sacred Defense Week that marks the anniversary of the Iraq-imposed war on Iran in the 1980s.

FARS

## UNGA chance for Iran's public diplomacy

Sideline talks in New York unlikely to deliver major breakthrough

### INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

President Masoud Pezeshkian and senior officials are heading to New York to attend the annual UN General Assembly meeting this week, a gathering that comes at a time of heightened tensions between Iran and the West over the nuclear file. The session follows the 12-day war waged by Israel against Iran in June, during which the United States also struck Iranian nuclear facilities. In the aftermath, the European trio—France, Germany and the United Kingdom—moved to trigger the return of UN sanctions against Iran. With the Security Council on Friday rejecting a resolution to extend sanctions relief, the likelihood of sanctions snapping back at the end of the 30-day deadline on September 28 has grown.

Against this backdrop, and amid reports of a possible meeting between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and European officials on the sidelines of the event, some observers see the Assembly as an opportunity to keep diplomacy alive and dial down tensions.

Iran Daily spoke with Afjeh Abedi, an expert on international affairs, for her take on the issue.

**IRAN DAILY:** To what extent can the UN General Assembly be viewed as a genuine opportunity for Iran to ease tensions and avert the full return of sanctions? Does the diplomatic arena still offer room for bargaining?

**ABEDI:** The attendance of Iran's president and foreign minister at the General Assembly provides a valuable chance to keep diplomacy alive. Yet caution is needed in defining whether such diplomacy will actually ease tensions. The main stumbling block is the absence of genuine political will from the United States and the European troika to reduce hostilities with Iran. It should be recalled that the Tehran-IAEA agreement reached in Cairo [earlier in September] created a real window to ease tensions and return to diplomacy after the 12-day US-Israeli war against Iran. But Europe's disregard for this major Iranian confidence-building step effectively stripped the Cairo accord of credibility.

Against this backdrop, sidebar talks in New York should not be expected to deliver a major leap, although the possibility of fresh initiatives surfacing at that level cannot be ruled out. Overall, Iran's participation in the General Assembly functions more as an instrument of public diplomacy—an opportunity to articulate its stances on US and European nuclear nitpicking, and to lodge protests against Washington's and Tel Aviv's unlawful strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

The diplomatic space still allows for bargaining, though more narrowly and under harsher conditions than in the past. The direct US involvement in Israel's military assault on Iran—backed and even facilitated by European powers—has eroded Tehran's trust in the West. Europe's handling of the Cairo agreement compounded that distrust and left Iran convinced that Europe's true intent in the nuclear file is more about obstruction and even paving the way for triggering snapback of sanctions than cooperation.

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‘Unfathomable response’:

# Top military brass warns of payback to anti-Iran threats

## National Desk

Iran's top military commanders on Monday warned the country's enemies of a "crushing and regrettable response beyond imagination" to any threat. Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, said that the country's Armed Forces are ready to confront any threats with a timely, decisive response beyond imagination. In a message to commemorate the Sacred Defense Week, which marks the anniversary of an eight-year imposed war on Iran by Iraq's Ba'ath regime in the 1980s. "We assure the noble and heroic Iranian nation that the Armed Forces are prepared to give a timely, decisive, regret-inducing, and unfathomable response to any threats by global bullying [powers] and oppressors through relying on [own devised] strategic surprises," Mousavi said. In the face of threats, Iran will

not remain passive and will turn every threat into an opportunity to display its power in the regional and international scene, he added. Pointing to Israel-US acts of aggression against Iran in June, he emphasized that the enemy failed to achieve its objectives during the 12-day war, thanks to the Islamic Republic's military and defensive power and its regional capabilities, as well as the strong and proportional response of the Armed Forces. In mid-June, Israel unleashed war on Iran, assassinating high-ranking military commanders, scientists, and civilians. Iran responded decisively by launching waves of ballistic and hypersonic missiles at sensitive Israeli targets in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and other occupied cities. Once the United States joined the Israeli aggression by striking Iran's nuclear facilities, the American air base of Al Udeid in Qatar was targeted by the Iranian Armed Forces. The White House then pro-



Iranian Army's chief Major General Amir Hatami (R) talks with Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Major General Mohammad Pakpour in a meeting in Tehran on September 22, 2025.  
● FARS

posed a cease-fire, which Israel accepted.

## Iran 'will not compromise' on national interests

Meanwhile, Iranian Army's chief Major General Amir Hatami and Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Major General Mohammad Pakpour in a meeting on the occasion of the Sacred Defense Week vowed that any act of aggression will be met with "a unified, swift, intelligent, and powerful response." Hatami highlighted the critical strategic alliance between the Army and the IRGC, describing their unity as "the solid pillar of national security" and "an iron shield" against conspiracies. He also pointed to the recent "12-day imposed war" as proof



that Iran "will not compromise on our national interests," vowing that the armed forces would "continue the path of the martyrs with authority." Addressing the enemies of the Iranian nation, Hatami declared

that any further miscalculation would bring a "firm and regretful response." Major General Pakpour, for his part, stated that the events of the recent US-Israeli aggression strongly recalled the national

unity and revolutionary spirit seen at the outset of the Iran-Iraq War, emphasizing that the same "exemplary cohesion" witnessed during the eight-year Sacred Defense was again evident throughout the country.

## Japan urges Iran to resume cooperation with IAEA

*Grossi: Iran nuclear diplomacy at 'difficult juncture'*



## International Desk

Japan on Monday expressed concern about suspension of cooperation between Iran and the UN atomic agency, calling on Iran to immediately resume the cooperation. "We attach great importance to the

(International Atomic Energy Agency) IAEA's efforts to verify Iranian nuclear activities," Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told a press conference. Japan is concerned about the situation, he said. His comments came after Iran's

top security body in a statement on Saturday said the hostile move by Britain, France and Germany to reimpose UN sanctions on Iran will "effectively suspend" Tehran's cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) condemned the "ill-considered" measures by the three European countries — known as the E3 — regarding the Islamic Republic's peaceful nuclear program.

"Despite the foreign ministry's cooperation with the (International Atomic Energy) Agency and the presentation of plans to resolve the issue, the actions of European countries will effectively suspend the path of cooperation with the agency," the SNSC said.

The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog, Rafael Grossi, told AFP Monday that diplomatic efforts to resolve the

dispute over Iran's nuclear program were at a "difficult juncture."

"It's obviously quite a difficult juncture. It's a very difficult situation we are facing right now," the International Atomic Energy Agency chief said, adding that talks between involved parties were planned in New York for Monday.

On Friday, the 15-member Security Council failed to adopt a resolution that would have prevented the reimposition of UN sanctions on Iran after the E3 triggered the "snapback" mechanism, accusing Tehran of failing to comply with the 2015 deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

A spokesperson for the European Union told IRNA on Monday that the three European countries' votes against a UN Security Council resolution aimed at halting the reimposition of sanctions on Iran do not mean the end of diplomacy.

"The submission of this draft was part of the formal process outlined in Resolution 2231 following the activation of the snapback mechanism, and all European members of the Security Council voted against it," the European official told IRNA on condition of anonymity.

"This is not the end of the ongoing diplomatic efforts. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, as the coordinator of the JCPOA, has once again emphasized the importance of utilizing the 30-day opportunity following the activation of the snapback mechanism for diplomacy, urging all relevant parties to make the necessary efforts in this regard."

Referring to the United Nations General Assembly annual meeting in New York, the European official noted that this week will provide a good opportunity to advance diplomatic efforts on the Iranian nuclear issue.

## Nuclear chief: Tehran, Moscow to ink new nuclear plant construction deal



Mohammad Eslami  
● AFP

## International Desk

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said on Monday that Tehran and Moscow will sign agreements on the construction of new nuclear power plants in Iran in the coming days. Mohammad Eslami, who arrived in Russia to participate in the events of the World Atomic Week in Moscow, told IRNA that the contract between the two

countries envisages the construction of eight nuclear power plants by Russia, four of which are in the southern city of Bushehr, the home to the nuclear power plant.

The Iranian nuclear chief noted that the negotiations and necessary studies for the implementation of the second part of the contract have been conducted and the location for the construction of the power plants has been specified, prepared, and equipped. After the agreement is concluded by the end of the week, the operational phase for design, engineering, and further actions will automatically begin, Eslami added.

## Iran-IAEA cooperation

In response to a question about the prospect of cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Eslami said Tehran has always

emphasized that the E3 group of Britain, France and Germany should not further damage the reputation of the United Nations and international organizations. The European troika should allow world bodies to fulfill their duties in a just and professional manner within the framework of regulations, he added.

He warned that as long as these countries continue their behavior, peace will not be established in the world since their performance runs counter to laws and regulations. He said the UN nuclear agency's refusal to condemn the US-Israeli attacks in June on three Iranian nuclear facilities, which were under the IAEA inspection, indicates that a "destructive influence runs deep in the Agency." Eslami reiterated Iran's compliance with the IAEA's Safeguards agreement and said the country would continue its peaceful nuclear activities.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist





# VP highlights economic preparation for possible UN sanctions



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (c) chairs a session of the Economic Council in Tehran on September 22, 2025.  
● [fypresident.ir](http://fypresident.ir)

**Economy Desk**

Iran is prepared for any attempt by European nations to reimpose United Nations sanctions, First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Sunday, stressing that the government has economic plans for “special circumstances.” Speaking at a session of the Economic Council, Aref said the country is not “volunteering for war or the return of sanctions,” but economic forecasts have been made in case a “trigger mechanism” is implemented, IRNA reported.

Britain, France and Germany launched a 30-day process last month to reimpose sanctions, accusing Tehran of failing to abide by the 2015 deal with world powers, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran has rejected their claims and says that it is Europe that failed to fulfil its commitments under the deal after the US unilaterally withdrew from the agreement in 2018. The snapback would reimpose an arms embargo, a ban on uranium enrichment and reprocessing, a ban on activities with ballistic missiles capable of delivering

nuclear weapons as well as a global asset freeze. Aref added, “Nation and government have performed well against the West’s unjust sanctions. Of course, we are not volunteering for sanctions to return and we hope European countries at least exercise reason and learn from their experience confronting our system and people.” Aref noted that the government had prepared programs for special situations from the start of its term, though the baseline approach is to govern the country under normal conditions. In addition to these or-

dinary operations, he said, “We also have plans for special circumstances, particularly in the economic sphere, which include targeted livelihood packages.” He also highlighted that governance frameworks for exceptional conditions have been established, citing the country’s experience during the 12-day Israeli-imposed war in June as an example. Strategic reserves are in “very good condition,” Aref said, ensuring that essential goods will last into next year, with even non-essential items stockpiled. The vice president underscored the role of the steering council for the Seventh Development Plan, saying its regular activity and inter-agency cooperation have successfully complemented government efforts. Moving forward, he said, “monitoring the implementation of the Seventh Development Plan must be pursued seriously,” adding that some revisions are needed and must be applied through a clear mechanism. Funding for the plan’s execution remains “the most important issue,” he said, noting that sources of financing must be clarified. Aref also spoke about next year’s budget bill (to start on March 21, 2026), emphasizing “the necessity of focusing on the government’s and the president’s priorities in the bill, including people’s livelihoods, structural reforms, reduction of overlaps, balanced budgeting, a stronger role for the private sector, governance of advanced technologies, and increased productivity.”

## Oil exports continue uninterrupted amid market disruption rumors, NIOC says



**Economy Desk**

Iran’s oil exports are continuing without interruption, the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Hamid Bovard, said on Monday, rejecting claims that changes in sales methods had caused losses. In an interview reported by IRNA, Bovard dismissed claims that the export and sales methods of oil products had changed and incurred losses, emphasizing, “We are pursuing both diversity and multiple supply channels for oil products in various markets, but I deny that this action has caused any loss.” The NIOC head highlighted that, “As part of determined efforts, the representatives of the Iranian nation in the oil sector are appropriately advancing the sale of oil and oil products.” He added that the company does not feel the need “to respond to all rumors,” stressing that it aims “to keep the country’s economic light on with double efforts.” Earlier, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad told reporters that the sale of Iranian oil has “never stopped” and, although fluctuating, continues strongly. He added that no oil shipments have been left unsold “on water or at sea.” On Wednesday, Reuters, citing six trade sources, reported that discounts for Iranian oil in China have widened on record stock levels at a major refining hub and as a shortage of import quotas towards year-end hindered buying by independent processors. Slowing demand from Chinese independent refiners in Shandong Province, known as tea-pots, adds to pressure on Iran to sustain its oil revenue amid Western sanctions aimed at its nuclear program, the report said. China has bought over 90% of Iranian oil exports in the past few years, with January-August imports at an average of 1.43 million bpd, up 12% annually, according to estimates by tanker tracker Vortexa. China defends its oil trade with Iran as conforming with international law, and describes unilateral US sanctions as illegitimate.

# Iran’s sophisticated pistachio processing tech boosting global demand: Association head

## Economic logic behind cultivation drives stable income

By Sadeq Dehqan & Zohreh Qanadi  
Staff writers

### INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran’s technological advances in pistachio processing are helping the country’s pistachio kernels shine in international food markets, generating higher income and supporting economic growth in key agricultural regions, Mohammad Salehi, head of the Iranian Pistachio Association, said in an interview with Iran Daily. Salehi noted that “the use of Iranian pistachio kernels in the world’s food industries is increasing,” attributing this growth to domestic innovations in processing that allow Iran to meet rising global demand. He noted that the share of pistachio kernel exports in total exports has been increasing due to strong sales and that “Iranian pistachio kernels have a wide variety of types, sizes, col-

ors, appearances, and prices, making them highly competitive in international markets.” The pistachio sector is witnessing robust growth, with the cultivation of the crop generating higher foreign exchange revenues and employment while strengthening the country’s position in global food markets, the head of the Iranian Pistachio Association said. Salehi provided details on export destinations, saying East Asia accounted for 26% of Iran’s pistachio exports, making it the largest market. Re-export markets, including Turkey and the UAE, also held a 26% share, followed by the Indian subcontinent with 19%, Commonwealth of Independent States countries 15%, the Middle East 10%, and the European Union 4%, which primarily imported pistachio kernels. According to Salehi, Iran exported 192,000 tons of pistachios this year (began on March 21), generating approximately \$1.7 billion in foreign revenue.

“Pistachio harvesting usually begins in early September and continues through the fall. This year, the harvest is expected to increase to around 240,000 tons nationwide, with 40% of the yield consisting of round varieties, and 60% elongated types. About 28,000 tons are consumed domestically each year,” he said.

### Key challenges

Salehi highlighted Iran’s high potential for expanding pistachio orchards but noted that summer water shortages and winter frost remain key challenges. According to him, the highest production is in Kerman province, followed by Razavi Khorasan, Yazd, Fars, South Khorasan, Markazi, Isfahan, Sistan and Baluchestan, Qom, Qazvin, and Tehran provinces. The cultivation of pistachios contributes to sustainable income in producing regions, Salehi said. “Evidence shows that currently, pistachio culti-



vation in the country is based on economic logic, and this development has generated more stable income and net benefits compared to other agricultural investment options in these regions, playing a positive role in improving development levels,” he added. The crop’s labor-intensive nature has also reduced unemployment in pistachio-producing areas. It is estimated that direct and indirect employment from pistachio cultivation supports about one million jobs. Considering an average family size of five, the sector contributes to the livelihoods of approximately five million people nationwide, making it a significant economic and social driver.

# Iran ranks 70th worldwide in 2025 innovation index; excels in domestic market, patents

**Economy Desk**

The latest 2025 Global Innovation Index (GII) showed that Iran ranks 70th among 139 countries worldwide, while achieving notable positions in specific indicators such as “domestic market size” at 8th and “patents relative to GDP” at 14th. In an interview with ISNA, Amir Abbas Mohammadi Koushki, an expert on the United Nations Innovation Committee said, “The Global Innovation Index (GII),

published annually by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), evaluated the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran among 139 countries in 2025. Based on the report, Iran ranked 70th globally in 2025.” The head of Iran’s national inventions and innovation team added that Iran’s innovation inputs ranked 109th, while outputs ranked 46th. “In other words, Iran has the capacity to produce innovative and creative outputs, but structurally it is

weak in creating the necessary inputs and infrastructure for innovation,” Koushki explained. With a population of 91.6 million and a GDP based on purchasing power parity of \$1,698.5 billion, Iran is classified as an upper-middle-income country, he said. The country’s per capita GDP is estimated at \$19,606. In the GII 2025 among 36 upper-middle-income countries, Iran ranks 17th, and among the 10 economies of Central and South Asia, Iran is in 2nd place.

### Analytical report

Also, Arnoush Shakeri, professor of Technology Management at the Science and Research Unit of Azad University, told ISNA that with a score of 28.5, the country has performed strongly in several indicators despite an average overall rank. These include domestic market size (8th globally), patents by origin (14th), scientific and technical articles (28th), knowledge impact (24th), and high-tech imports (23rd).





# Pezeshkian should head to UNGA with comprehensive proposal

## Repercussions of snapback could go beyond sanctions

*Activating the dispute resolution mechanism (also known as the snapback mechanism) in the JCPOA, made possible by the sabotage of the three European countries present in the agreement, has sparked one of the most significant challenges and disagreements between Iran and the West. The resolution to extend the lifting of sanctions on Iran failed to get the vote in the United Nations Security Council on Friday, September 19, and according to Security Council Resolution 2231, if, by September 26, there is no noticeable change in the course of events, previous Security Council resolutions passed between 2006 and 2010 against Iran will be reinstated. Among the key issues analyzed are Iran's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), relations with Europe, and the implementation method of this resolution.*

*To examine these issues and evaluate Iran's best and most effective response, Behzad Ahmadi, a University of Tehran professor and international affairs analyst, provided his insights in an op-ed piece. Below is the translation of his analysis:*



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian looks out the window of a plane.  
TASNIM



The Iranian president's presence at the UN General Assembly should be seized as an opportunity. The key issue now is reaching a proper understanding of the return of resolutions. The snapback should not be looked at simply as the return of sanctions; Rather, it should be seen as the risk of reverting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter as a threat to international peace and security. This could provide Europe, the US, or Israel with a perfect excuse to ramp up pressures or stir up conflict against Iran.



By Behzad Ahmadi

Scholar, int'l affairs expert

### OPINION

It should not be forgotten that Iran accepted commitments under the JCPOA and paid costs that have now come back into focus, taking us back to square one. It would have been better if, over the past few years, we had gone about understanding the situation more clearly and prevented the issue from coming to a head. Now, we must act wisely and navigate relations with Europe from the perspective of conflict management — that is, prevent escalation and the creation of crises. Cutting off cooperation with the IAEA or limiting ties and closing the Strait of Hormuz does not necessarily signal firmness and can backfire, leading to multiple, sometimes heavy consequences. True firmness lies in wisdom — precisely knowing national interests, properly understanding the necessities of the time, and applying active diplomacy with appropriate give-and-take and pure realism. The risks and consequences of withdrawing from the NPT, which some suggest in response to Europe's actions, are far heavier and cut deeper than the justifications put forward for this move. Exiting the NPT involves extensive and complex legal debates and processes, and the simple message it sends is a change in Iran's nuclear doctrine; Globally, it may be perceived that

Iran has obtained or will obtain a bomb, even though this is not the case in reality. This signal, coupled with strong Western reactions, will also prompt responses from Russia and China. Russia and China, as our most crucial supporters at the UN, always strive to preserve the current international order and the pivotal role of the UN as two key powers that hold the right to veto. Should international norms, standards, organizations, or regimes designed to uphold this order be set aside, in my view, these countries will also respond.

Exiting the NPT is an action that requires careful thought; Even using it as a threat against Europe and the US must be considered thoroughly. China and Russia do not dismiss the value or function of the UN or the nuclear non-proliferation regime because that would undermine their own legitimacy. Their interests lead them to want the international order and its institutions to stay intact. The Iranian president's presence at the UN General Assembly should be seized as an opportunity. The key issue now is reach-

ing a proper understanding of the return of resolutions. The snapback should not be looked at simply as the return of sanctions; Rather, it should be seen as the risk of reverting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter as a threat to international peace and security. This could provide Europe, the US, or Israel with a perfect excuse to ramp up pressures or stir up conflict against Iran. Such a situation presents multiple consequences not only economically but also psychologically, politically, and in terms of security. To prevent this, we must



China's permanent representative to the UN Fu Cong (R) talks to Iran Ambassador Amir Saeed Iravani at the United Nations Security Council in New York, US.  
EDUARDO MUNOZ/REUTERS

move beyond the notion of "mere sanctions" and focus on stopping such an occurrence from playing out. Therefore, Iran must take a diplomatic initiative and act decisively, using this limited window as a "golden hour".

If the Islamic Establishment's decision is to prevent snapback and the return of the resolutions, President Pezeshkian must show up in New York armed with a defined, comprehensive package based on a full understanding of the consequences. Mere consultations or negotiations just for the sake of negotiation or repeating past positions will not cut it. Success depends on having a practical, dynamic, and proactive plan, and what that plan should entail, its scope, limits, and floor must be set by the government and experts who are fully versed in the country's statistics and societal data.

Regarding the extent to which China and Russia enforce sanctions and resolutions against Iran, two points stand out: First, in those years when we were still subject to these resolutions, China and Russia never openly declared they did not recognize them. Second, China and Russia do not reject the UN or the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime because it would undermine their own credibility. Their interests lie in maintaining the international order and its institutions. It is important to note that the main force weakening the UN is the US itself, and naturally, China and Russia do not want to be drawn down the same path.

Whether China and Russia enforce resolutions as harshly as the West is a different matter. These two countries support Iran, and naturally, the degree of enforcement will vary, but we should not rest easy thinking their support cancels out all consequences. Should Iran return to being under Chapter VII, a committee would be formed requiring countries to report on it.

The psychological and social impacts of sanctions go far beyond their direct economic effects. These influence not only the Iranian people but also Iran's trade partners. Even companies currently doing business with Iran might halt their activities if they sense a return under Chapter VII and lack full legal clarity about the future. This suspension of activity would bring additional costs to Iran and could lead to relatively higher inflation. In short, psychological effects make working with Iran harder for international partners and have internal repercussions that are sometimes even stronger than the actual effects. Therefore, the government and Mr. Pezeshkian must take the reins with a proactive, innovative package. So far, government negotiations have yielded no results, and further delay is not a solution by itself. There might be military preparations or other specific goals behind this policy, but given current circumstances, the best way is to prevent snapback, the return of sanctions, and rising tensions.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



# New York last exit off sanctions highway

## Will Pezeshkian keep final window of diplomacy open at UN?

PERSPECTIVE

On Friday, September 19, 2025, the UN Security Council turned down South Korea's draft resolution to extend the suspension of international sanctions on Iran. This move effectively paves the way for the so-called "snapback mechanism" to kick in on September 26, which could bring back all previously lifted Security Council resolutions, reverting Iran to its pre-JCPOA status.

This decision came just as Masoud Pezeshkian, Iran's president, takes his scheduled trip to New York to make a speech on Wednesday at the UN General Assembly — an event many analysts are describing as the "last open window of diplomacy".

Under such circumstances, the notion of a "powerful engagement," recently brought up by some Reformists and even critical factions within Iran, has taken center stage in Iran's foreign policy rhetoric. This keyword serves both as a response to hardliners at home and a clear message to foreign parties.

Significance of Pezeshkian's trip to New York

Pezeshkian's presence in New York is not his first international appearance as president, but it certainly marks the first major test of the incumbent government's foreign policy.

This visit comes at a time when Iran faces its most severe diplomatic threat since years of sanctions and maximum pressure. The return of UN sanctions could mean broader political isolation and intensified economic pressure — a path difficult to pull back from once taken.

From this perspective, Pezeshkian's New York trip is far from a mere ceremonial event; It is the stage where the government's ability to navigate through one of the toughest diplomatic crises of the past decade must be measured. Many diplomats believe that at such crossroads, diplomacy can step in to replace threats and confrontation and even open doors to new agreements.

How much time left?

Political analyst Ahmad Zeidabadi wrote in Persian in a Telegram post, titled "A Vital Week," "I believe Western powers fast-tracked the vote on the snapback resolution a week early at the UN Security Council to cram this upcoming week into a last-chance opportunity for a possible agreement with Iranian officials during their New York visit." He emphasized that "reaching a compromise is neither impossible nor too costly at this point, but the moment UN sanctions are enforced, the entire story will flip." He added, "The issue isn't just economic repercussions; It's the political and international space Iran will find itself in... There's no room for wishful thinking once you cross that line, whether from the regime's staunch backers or its sworn opponents."

Senior foreign policy expert Morteza Makki shares a similar view: "If a temporary deal happens within the next eight days or if a meeting between Europe-



Iran's flag (front 2nd-R) waves in the wind in front of the United Nations' headquarters in New York, US.

● IRNA

an and Iranian delegations occurs during the annual New York summit, miracles may break out and delay the snapback for six months."

Former Iranian ambassador to Norway and geopolitics professor Abdolreza Faraji-Rad recently stressed, "Not all doors have slammed shut." He noted that "since there's still a week to work on the snapback issue, it can't be said with certainty that the case is closed. Some of Emmanuel Macron's recent statements hinted at the potential for a minimal agreement. The president's presence in New York could lead to new openings."

This outlook contradicts the image painted by certain domestic media emphasizing closed doors and inevitable confrontation. Yet, the track record of nuclear negotiations shows that even in the final moments, sudden turn-arounds and unexpected breakthroughs can pop up.

Domestic divide

Inside the country, the political scene remains split. Reformists and parts of the moderate camp stress the urgent need for direct talks and reviving diplomatic channels.

Azar Mansouri, head of the Reformist Front, tweeted: "Critics of the JCPOA haven't yet said what their alternative was — more confrontation? Leaving

the NPT? Or war until victory? Solutions that ignore the people's will! Dr. Zarif opened a path that safeguarded national interests without Iran surrendering. Powerful engagement, not extremism, is Iran's way out."

The phrase "powerful engagement" is catching on as a political buzzword, signifying both dialogue from a position of strength and an effort to find a middle ground between negotiation and resistance.

In contrast, hardline factions continue to push for "active resistance" and even "exit from the NPT," believing any negotiation now is a retreat and that Westerners are only out to extract more concessions. However, as Mansouri pointed out, these factions lack any "alternative plan," whereas the concept of "powerful engagement" has lined up a fresh approach.

To go beyond symbolic gestures

Many experts view the use or loss of this New York window as a decisive factor shaping Iran's future. Failure to succeed risks deeper economic restrictions and increasing diplomatic pressure.

Former diplomat Fereydoon Majlesi recently stressed that Pezeshkian's presence should go beyond symbolic gestures. "What we need now is not just

a speech at the UN but a start that breaks through the current stalemate. The American side is seeking face-to-face talks, which can't be ignored. Past experience shows indirect messages and middlemen don't cut it in critical moments."

Pezeshkian's New York trip is more than an international appearance; It is a make-or-break test. Should this trip kick off a fresh path for talks, Iran might ward off the sanctions' return or minimize their impact. Miss this chance, and the country will enter a phase with far fewer, far costlier options.

Majlesi warns the West's demands extend beyond the nuclear file to Iran's regional ties and military arsenal. He notes that prolonging the current status quo means missed chances and rising costs. "Time in foreign policy is crucial. If we don't grasp initiative today, tomorrow we may be forced to choose from far more limited and expensive options."

Pezeshkian government's approach

Following the Security Council vote, Iran's Foreign Ministry laid into the three European countries involved, calling their move "destructive" and "unlawful," while asserting Iran's "right to respond." Still, the statement stressed pursuing the country's



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd-R) and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron (2nd-L) hold talks on the sidelines of the previous United Nations General Assembly summit in New York, US, on September 25, 2024.

● LUDOVIC MARIN/AFP

rights and interests, "including through diplomacy," signaling Pezeshkian's government intends to keep negotiation channels open.

Moreover, the presence of Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Iran's UN envoy Amir Saeed Iravani alongside the president signals a serious plan for the trip. Iravani said after the Security Council meeting that multiple meetings between the president, foreign minister, and European counterparts in New York have been scheduled. This indicates the government is aiming to make the most of the short window left — an interval that now ticks down like a clock.

External, internal pressures

Iran and Europe's current issues go beyond the nuclear dossier. Western countries repeatedly bring up Iran's regional role and missile capabilities. They see no lasting deal without resolving these areas. Conversely, a large domestic faction treats entering these subjects as a national security red line. This contradiction stacks the deck against Pezeshkian's diplomacy, which must strike a balance between international demands for flexibility and hardliners' cries of "betrayal" against any retreat.

Now, more than ever, Iran needs a "courageous decision" that may carry domestic costs but ultimately serves national interests. Hence, the key phrase "powerful engagement" has become crucial: negotiating from strength to untie complex knots and avoid a historic deadlock.

Recent Israeli and US strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities add a new layer of complexity. Tehran's Foreign Ministry called these attacks a "blatant violation of the UN Charter," accusing Europeans of turning a blind eye and effectively applying double standards.

Given all this, many observers now see Pezeshkian's New York visit as the final window of diplomacy for Iran at this critical juncture.

If Iran and the West fail to hammer out an agreement in this brief window, by September 26, all Security Council sanctions will automatically snap back — sanctions that will be far harder to lift later.

Iran now stands at a crossroads, with every choice carrying long-term historical implications. The past two decades show that pressure, sanctions, and confrontation have never guaranteed the country's sustainable development and security. But whenever diplomatic doors have been cracked open, pressure has eased, and political and economic opportunities have blossomed.

Ultimately, as a Reformist analyst put it, "there's no way but powerful engagement" — a path that means preserving national interests while opening the door to dialogue with the world.

The vital point is that the window for diplomacy is still wide open, but it likely won't stay that way forever — and dragging feet won't do Iran any favors.

The full article first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper Tose'e Irani.



# Wrestling World Championships: Esmaeili wins 67kg gold, rounds off historic campaign for Iran

## Sports Desk

Olympic champion Saied Esmaeili brought the curtain down on a memorable campaign for Iran at the Wrestling World Championships by grabbing the Greco-Roman 67kg gold in Zagreb, Croatia, on Sunday.

Esmaeili's gold, along with a silver and bronze medal on the final day of competition, helped the Iranian squad dominate the standings with 180 points – courtesy of a remarkable four golds, two silvers, and two bronzes across 10 weight classes – lifting the Greco-Roman trophy for the first time since 2014, with Azerbaijan (89pts) and Uzbekistan (72) in the following spots.

Alireza Mohmadi had to settle for a silver medal in the 87kg division after a final heartbreak against Serbian Aleksandr Komarov, while Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar defeated Russian former world champion Sergey Emelin, who competed as a neutral athlete, 6-4 to finish with an impressive 63kg bronze on his debut at the Wrestling Worlds.

The Greco-Roman crown saw Iran complete a first-ever men's team title double at the World Championships – a feat previously achieved only by the Soviet Union and Russia.

## Leader lauds wrestlers

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, was full of praise for the national



Greco-Roman wrestler Saied Esmaeili celebrates with members of the Iranian coaching staff after winning the 67kg gold medal at the Wrestling World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, on September 21, 2025.

● IAWFIR

Greco-Roman team after the historic achievement in the Croatian capital, extending his congratulations in a message on Sunday night.

"The resolute determination and arduous efforts of you and your brothers in the freestyle team brought joy to the nation and honor to the country."

"I pray to God for your dignity and victory, and commend the athletes, coaches, and the officials," the statement added.

## Back-to-back titles

Esmaeili became the second Iranian wrestler in as many nights

– after Mohammad-Hadi Saravi – to follow last year's Olympic triumph with a senior world gold medal.

In his showdown against reigning European champion and Paris Olympic bronze medalist Hasrat Jafarov of Azerbaijan, the 22-year-old Iranian sensation got a stepout to start the bout, which proved the difference in a hard-fought 2-1 victory.

"With a smart plan, I beat him 2-1 and became the champion of this weight class," said Esmaeili, who won the gold in his senior world debut.

Each wrestler had a chance in par terre, but neither could turn the other, giving Esmaeili his closest victory of the tournament. He had cruised into the final with four consecutive wins by technical superiority.

"Anyone who makes it to the final is obviously a good wrestler, but I didn't want to take unnecessary risks in the final," Esmaeili said. "We had a clear plan to win, and thank God it worked out – we came out on top."

Esmaeili has been on quite a run in recent years. He has suffered just one loss since 2021, a 9-7

defeat at the hands of Cuba's Luis Orta in the semifinals of the Budapest Ranking Series event in June 2024.

His accolades, in addition to the Paris gold, include back-to-back Asian titles in 2024 and 2025. Having already won golds at the world U17 and U20, he needs just the world U23 to complete a "Golden Grand Slam," which includes the Olympics.

"This was my first time competing in the [senior] World Championships," Esmaeili said. "Before this, I had competed in the Olympics, where thankfully I won gold, and here I was able to repeat that Olympic gold to prove myself once again."

However, the Iranian party was spoiled later on the night, when Mohmadi fell to a 4-3 loss in the very last bout of the nine-day tournament at the Arena Zagreb.

The difference came down to what each wrestler did from par terre. Mohmadi could only manage a stepout on a throw attempt, while Komarov, on the other hand, got the traditional roll, which put him up 3-2 in the second period. The key moment of the contest came in the final minute, when the Iranian pressed forward in a tackle position and had Komarov backpedaling out of the ring.

But the stepout – nor a potential fleeing point – was not awarded when it was determined on a lost Iranian challenge that Mohmadi's hands had dropped below Koma-

rov's waist, which made it 4-2.

Mohmadi needed a takedown to win, but could only manage a late stepout. At the final whistle, he dropped to the mat in total despair and dejection, though he still secured a third silver medal in as many major tournaments – following the runner-up finishes at the 2023 World Championships and the Paris Olympics.

Sunday's results came after Saravi (97kg), Gholamreza Farrokhi (82kg), and Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg) had walked away with the ultimate prize in their respective classes, while Payam Ahmadi, 19, finished with a 55kg silver in his Senior World Championships debut.

Danial Sohrabi (72kg) was the other Iranian Greco-Roman bronze winner at the competitions.

The Iranian freestyle team had bagged seven medals across 10 weight classes to claim a first team trophy in 12 years at the Wrestling Worlds last week.

Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) grabbed golds, with Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan (61kg) and Amirali Azarpira (97kg) settling for a couple of silvers.

Mohammad Nokhodi (79kg), Kamran Qassempour (86kg), and Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg) added three bronzes to Iran's medal haul as the country finished atop the freestyle standings with 145 points – 11 ahead of the United States, with Japan in third place on 111 points.



● IRIHFH

## Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship: Iran routs Qatar, sets last-four date with Bahrain

## Sports Desk

Iranian boys continued their perfect run at the inaugural Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship, hammering Qatar 46-25 for a sixth victory in as many outings in Amman, Jordan, on Sunday.

The victory saw Iran finish atop the main round's Group 2 table and set up a semifinal clash with Group 2 runner-up

Bahrain at the Jordan capital's Princess Sumaya Hall today. Hassan Joudaki and Shayan Sousani each scored a game-high six goals for Iran, with the former awarded with the Man of the Match prize.

Meanwhile, Iranians Darnial Mirhosseini, Mohammad-Pouya Parouhan, Amirhossein Nikeqbal, and Farshad Nowruzpour each contributed with five goals,

with Rashid Madadi and Alan Almbarek jointly topping Qatar's scoring chart with four goals apiece.

South Korea and Qatar will square off in the other semifinal today, with the two last-four winners heading into Wednesday's final showpiece, while securing a spot at the 1st IHF Men's U-17 Handball World Championship – starting October 24 in Morocco.

Iran began its campaign in Amman with a 65-4 hammering of Maldives, and then went on to defeat Syria (44-22) and South Korea (31-25) to win Group D in the preliminary round.

The first game in the main round saw Iran beat Asia's traditional handball powerhouse Kuwait 35-30, before sweeping the host team 42-22 on Saturday.

## Persian Gulf Pro League: Hosseinzadeh at the double as Tractor sinks Sepahan

## Sports Desk

Iran international striker Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh scored twice, including a 96th-minute winner, to help Tractor beat Sepahan 2-1 at the Persian Gulf Pro League in Isfahan on Sunday.

The victory saw the defending champion move atop the Iranian top-flight table – equal on seven points with Golgozar Sirjan and Khaybar Khorramabad after four rounds of matches – while Moharram Naividkia's Sepahan – yet to win a game in the new campaign – remained third from bottom with two points.

Hosseinzadeh, the leading marksman in the Iranian league last season, put the visitors in front from the spot just before halftime at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium,

only to see his goal canceled on the hour mark by Mohammad-Mahdi Lotfi's side-footed strike from inside the box.

Just when the two sides looked set for a stalemate following a quiet closing stages, Hosseinzadeh head home the winner on the rebound after substitute Odildzhon Khamrobekov's effort from outside the box was kept out by former Tractor goalkeeper Mohammadreza Akhbari. Elsewhere, Esteghlal came from behind twice to salvage a point in a 2-2 draw against Paykan, which played with 10 men for the best part of game in Tehran.

Iran U23 striker Kasra Taheri gave Paykan a shock lead midway through the first half at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium, before his teammate Milad Baqeri received his marching

orders for a harsh challenge on Moroccan midfielder Munir El Haddadi.

Albanian winger Jasir Asani drew the Blues level with a sublime curling effort in the seventh minute of added time in the first half, but the home side was stunned again three minutes after the break.

Taheri intercepted a back pass by Esteghlal center-back Aref Aqasi and then went past goalkeeper Habib Farabbasi before rolling the ball into an empty net for his fourth goal of the season.

Asani bagged a second equalizer with a VAR-awarded spot-kick in the 80th minute as it finished 2-2, leaving Esteghlal eighth in the table with five points, with Paykan in fourth on six points.

Tractor striker Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (bottom) celebrates a goal during a 2-1 win against Sepahan in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Isfahan, Iran, on September 21, 2025.

● FFIRI



## AFC Futsal Asian Cup qualifiers: Iran marches past UAE, stays on perfect run in Group G

## Sports Desk

Iran made it two wins out of two following its 10-0 defeat of the United Arab Emirates in Group C of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup qualifiers in Kuantan, Malaysia, on Monday.

Masoud Yosef scored twice, with Behrouz Azimi, Hossein Tayyebi, Mahdi Karimi, Amirhossein Dehqani, and Ali Khalilvand also on the score-

sheet as Vahid Shamsaei's men took a commanding 7-0 lead in the first half.

Azimi, Yusef, and Mahdi Ros-tamiha added three more goals in the second half as the Asian powerhouse, having hammered Bangladesh 12-0 in the group opener, remained on course for a place in January's finals in Indonesia and a bid for a record-extending 14th title in 18 editions of the Asian Cup.



● AFC



# Bandar Anzali welcoming tourists with unique attractions

Iranica Desk

Every Iranian who has traveled to the western part of Gilan Province has also visited Bandar Anzali, a city renowned for its unique attractions, including the international wetland, coastal boulevard, breakwaters, the place of musical melodies, the clock tower, the Mian Poshteh Palace, and the free zone — features that have placed this city among the country's top tourist destinations.

Bandar Anzali, once known as the gateway to Europe, is the second most populous city in Gilan, with around 140,000 inhabitants and 26 villages. The city stretches along a 47-kilometer coastline on the Caspian Sea, bordered on one side by the sea and on the other by the valuable ecosystem of the Bandar Anzali Wetland, IRNA wrote.

The Anzali International Wetland covers approximately 20,000 hectares and is bordered to the north by Anzali, to the south by Soumehsara, to the east by Khomam, to the southeast by Rasht, and to the west by Kapurchal and Abkenar. It is among the most important tourist attractions in Gilan Province and Bandar Anzali, welcoming countless tourists every year.

This wetland is one of Iran's most significant and largest natural habitats for wildlife, annually hosting numerous birds migrating from neighboring northern countries. From late June each year, its water lilies emerge above the surface and float on the water.

The water lily is one of the many unique beauties of the Anzali International Wetland. It is a perennial plant with large, round, heart-shaped leaves that rise above the water, with thick, abundant pink petals. The lagoon is also home to many aquatic species that spawn here.

Many rare native and migratory bird species choose this area as their permanent residence or temporary resting place. Every summer, numerous tourists select this lagoon and its exceptional beauty for their visits.

The head of Bandar Anzali's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts,



Anzali Wetland  
● kojara.com



Ghazian Bridge  
● khaneanzali.com

and Tourism Department told IRNA that the Anzali Wetland, with its special natural attractions, draws visitors from across the country to this city. The wetland's presence has facilitated the growth of the water lily, a flower considered sacred in ancient Iranian civilization.

Esmail Saheli added that the presence of this valuable flower led to the establishment of the annually held Water Lily Festival, organized with the municipality's efforts in Bandar Anzali; this festival is nationally registered. He emphasized, "Next year, with proper planning, we will bring domestic and international tours to view the wetland."

He stated that life in the wetland and the city of Anzali are interdependent, adding that the water of this vital resource is highly valued. Therefore, many local family names have

a deep connection to water, such as Qayeqrn (boatman), Saheli (coastal), Mahigir (fisherman), Bahri (marine), and others.

The Anzali Port Complex, with a history spanning 300 years, is recognized as one of Iran's oldest and best-equipped ports on the Caspian Sea coast, playing a crucial role in maritime transport with Caspian littoral and European countries.

He described the Anzali Port Complex as the most important port in northern Iran, noting that the port has existed since the Safavid era, while the historic urban fabric of the city took shape from the mid-Qajar period.

He added that the rise of shipping in the Caspian Sea during the Safavid era brought fundamental changes to the country and doubled the performance of port cities like Anzali. The expansion of commercial exchanges greatly increased the number of buildings in the city.



Mian Poshteh Palace  
● wikimedia.org



Anzali Free Zone  
● moroor.org

Saheli referred to the attention of England and Russia from the early Safavid period, emphasizing that due to trade relations with Russia, this port complex significantly influenced the city's architecture, structures, and buildings. Most of Bandar Anzali's historic buildings were constructed in the style of Eastern European architecture.

The Bandar Anzali Palace Museum, also known as Mian Poshteh Palace, is located between the Anzali and Ghazian bridges on an extensive site. It is another relic from the Qajar era that was restored during the Pahlavi period. The palace museum overlooks the sea and tall cypress trees, offering visitors a unique and beautiful experience.

Bandar Anzali features two beautiful historic bridges in Ghazian and Anzali, both overlooking the sea and wetland. These bridges are registered as

cultural heritage sites and are nearly 100 years old.

The historic Ghazian Bridge was one of the world's most advanced bridges and is recognized as one of Iran's historic bridges; it was put into operation in 1938.

From this beautiful bridge, visitors can see the sea and wetland, flying seagulls, colorful recreational boats passing by, small and large ships unloading and loading at the port docks, the wetland's reed beds, huts built along the lagoon, and boatmen practicing on the water.

The Bandar Anzali Clock Tower, a Qajar-era structure, is located on Sepah Street in Anzali. Historically, it served as a watchtower for the armory and military facilities, as well as a lighthouse.

Built during the Qajar period, it functioned as a watchtower. In 1929, German engineers rebuilt the tower with cement

and bricks and installed a clock on top, after which it became known as the Clock Tower. Following restoration in 1928, a four-faced clock was mounted at its summit.

Currently, Bandar Anzali has 25 registered heritage sites, with 13 more eligible for registration. It is the destination for 40 percent of travelers visiting Gilan Province. Saheli added that during Nowruz, Anzali welcomed marine tourists from the wetland and sea with four marine vessels and passenger boats. There were 17,459 maritime movements and 94,500 marine tourists recorded.

Beyond the city's beautiful landscapes and unique nature, the Anzali Free Zone — located 30 kilometers from the city — serves as a comprehensive tourism complex that annually welcomes millions of Iranian and foreign travelers.

The numerous shopping centers in this area are a major tourist attraction in Gilan Province. Additionally, one of the largest tourism projects in the trade and tourism phase of the Anzali Free Zone is the region's aquarium complex.

This aquarium houses over 2,000 unique aquatic species from five continents. Its key features include cylindrical and wall-mounted tank aquariums with various designs, as well as the largest aquarium tunnel. The Marina Complex and the beach sports complex are other tourist attractions in the Anzali Free Zone, hosting many sports competitions annually.

Head of the Anzali Free Zone Organization, Mostafa Ta'ati Moghadam, said that since the beginning of this year, the Anzali Free Zone has hosted about 5.1 million tourists.

He explained that organizing diverse and attractive cultural, artistic, and sports programs, which led to increased tourism, made this September one of the most memorable tourism seasons.

He emphasized that the region experienced a large influx of travelers during the last days of the summer holidays, and according to statistics from the organization's cultural, social, and tourism department, from September 1 to 20, the area hosted over one million tourists.

## Enjoy rich tradition of Khoresh-e Mast cooking

Iranica Desk

Khoresh-e Mast, or Yogurt Stew, is a celebrated traditional dish from Isfahan Province, known for its distinctive taste and cultural significance. Typically served cold, either before or after the main course, this dish exemplifies the rich culinary heritage of the region. Its key ingredient is tender lamb neck, which imparts a deep, savory flavor.

The preparation of Khoresh-e Mast is a meticulous process that showcases the craftsmanship behind Iranian cuisine. The lamb neck is slow-cooked until it becomes exceptionally tender. It is then carefully deboned and mashed in a copper dish, a

technique that helps achieve a smooth, paste-like consistency unique to this stew. Separately, egg yolks are mixed with a lump of sugar and fresh yogurt, then heated gently to just before boiling. The mashed lamb is combined with this yogurt mixture, along with brewed saffron — a spice that lends a golden hue and subtle aroma — and rose water, which adds a fragrant floral note. This blend is gently simmered, allowing the flavors to harmonize perfectly.

During the Qajar era (1789-1925), variations of Khoresh-e Mast included additional spices such as aniseed and roasted nigella seeds, which introduced a mild licorice-like and nutty flavor,

respectively. Chopped walnuts were also commonly added, providing a pleasing crunch and earthy depth to the stew. Garnishing with sliced almonds, pistachios, and barberries adds not only a vibrant color contrast but also a complex interplay of textures and flavors — sweet, tart, and nutty.

Khoresh-e Mast is embedded deeply in the social and ceremonial fabric of Isfahan. It is often prepared for special occasions, such as weddings, religious festivals, and other celebrations, symbolizing hospitality and the region's rich culinary artistry. The dish's cooling nature makes it especially favored in warmer seasons, offering a refreshing complement to

heavier, spiced main courses. In modern times, chefs and home cooks alike continue to cherish Khoresh-e Mast, sometimes experimenting with additional herbs or adjusting sweetness levels to suit contemporary palates, yet always respecting the traditional methods that have been passed down through generations. This stew remains a beloved culinary treasure that tells the story of Isfahan's history, culture, and the artistry of Persian cooking.



● express.snapp.market





# First Iran-Tajikistan joint feature film unveiled

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Tajikistan launched their first co-produced feature film 'Fish on the Hook' at a Sunday evening ceremony in Tehran, attended by senior cultural and political figures from both countries. The event at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) International Conference Center brought together IRIB chief Peyman Jebelli, Persian Language Academy head Gholamali Haddad-Adel, Tajikistan's Ambassador Zohidi Nizomiddin Shamsiddinzoda, and the film's Tajik director Muhiddin Muzaffar. The unveiling of the family-oriented drama is a tangible step in Tehran's push for cultural partnerships with Persian-speaking nations, IRNA reported. Officials hailed the \$2m production, financed partly by Iran's private Sikaap Holding alongside broadcasters IRIB's iFilm channel and Tajikfilm, as

evidence of what one speaker called "brotherhood" and a shared cultural heritage that continues to drive artistic ventures across the region. Jebelli described the work as the "first joint output" of iFilm with Tajikistan and said such ventures would not be one-offs. "We promised when season seven of the popular TV series 'Paytakht' (Capital) aired that we would continue joint projects with nations bound to us by language and history," he told the gathering. He praised Muzaffar's storytelling, which he said shows a child who refuses to remain "caught on the hook" and instead moves forward with "courage and confidence". Haddad-Adel recalled his own presence in Dushanbe more than three decades ago, when Tehran and the newly independent Tajikistan re-established diplomatic relations. He likened the two nations' cultural proximity to "breathing the same air". He noted that



Tajikistan's Ambassador to Tehran Zohidi Nizomiddin Shamsiddinzoda speaks at the unveiling of the Iran-Tajik film 'Fish on the Hook' at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) International Conference Center in Tehran on September 21, 2025. [defapress.ir](#)

Persian literary giants from Rudaki to Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani remain touchstones in Tajik life. Tajik envoy echoed that view, citing Rudaki's lines as he called the premiere a "day of closeness and friendship". He urged that cultural common ground should serve as a "foundation" for political and economic cooperation. Behind the camera, Muzaffar credited "the affection of Iranian colleagues" for enabling a smooth shoot in Tajikistan's landscapes. Producer Amir Tajik said the cross-border project was proof that an "international film" could be made with a modest budget. "This was built on mutual trust," he said, adding that despite changes in management, the project was never



derailed. Industry executives presented the work as both an artistic milestone and an economic test case. Sikaap Holding chair-

man Hossein Hamedanizadeh said his group had "a decade of producing for families" and that the Tajik collaboration opened a "new window" after

audiences in Cannes and Busan responded positively. He voiced hopes that future co-productions would also "be monetized" at the box office.

## Iran aims to attract more Chinese tourists, eyes share of growing outbound market

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, And Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri on Sunday said the country is seeking a larger share of the growing Chinese outbound tourism market, which is expected to reach 200 million travelers annually by 2030. Speaking at the 21st strategic council meeting in Tehran, Salehi-Amiri said attracting foreign visitors is crucial to safeguarding 1.6 million jobs linked to 22,000 hotels and guesthouses, 6,000 travel agencies, 15,000 licensed tour guides, and 3,000 eco-tourism sites. Iran received 6.2 million foreign

tourists in 2023 and nearly 7.4 million in 2024. Arrivals dipped in June and July, 2025, following a brief 12-day war, but the sector is "regaining ground," he said. The government's Seventh Development Plan sets a long-term target of 15 million foreign visitors, requiring an average annual growth of around 19.5%. While China is a priority, officials also highlighted Central Asia, the Caucasus, Persian Gulf neighbors including Iraq, and major Muslim nations such as Egypt and Indonesia as key markets. Salehi-Amiri said attracting these groups is "vital" for revitalizing an industry still recovering from

shocks. The minister also stressed the potential of Iranians living abroad, describing them as the nation's "greatest asset." Encouraging the diaspora to return could drive social, cultural, and economic development, he added. The foreign ministry has established a body to engage Iranians abroad, a move seen as central to long-term recovery. At the same session, Babak Negahdari, head of parliament's research center, said his office has partnered with a Chinese academy to broaden joint studies. He pledged practical policy "packages" to support the tourism ministry in navigating post-conflict challenges.

## Nine Iranian artists named winners at Belgrade illustration contest

### Arts & Culture Desk

Nine Iranian illustrators were among 83 winners announced on September at the 2025 Belgrade International Illustration Competition, staged alongside the 53rd Golden Pen and the 18th biennial showcase in the Serbian capital. The Belgrade contest, held every two years by the Association of Designers and Artists of Serbia, is regarded as one of the most prestigious gatherings for book and media illustration in eastern Europe, inn.ir reported. It draws submissions across publishing houses, maga-

zines, newspapers, animation and digital platforms, providing a springboard for emerging and established artists alike. The Iranian laureates were named as Raha Amini, Salimeh Babakhan, Mahshid Raghemi, Shideh Sekhavati, Ghazal Fat'hollahi, Maral Forouzes, Hajar Moradi, Maryam Mahmoudi-Moghadam and Najla Mahdavi-Ashraf. Two entries that drew particular attention were Mahdavi-Ashraf's 'Sun in the Turkmen Desert' and Raghemi's 'Tick-Tock,' both produced by Tehran's Institute for the Intellectual Development of

Children and Young Adults. The organizers said the 2025 selection represented a "crossroads" of global talent, underscoring how illustration continues to straddle art and publishing markets despite economic headwinds. For Iranian publishers, securing recognition in Belgrade is seen as a way to break into international circuits and ink new deals in children's and educational segments. The winning works will go on public display in Belgrade from early November, with collectors and editors expected to attend the opening to scout for fresh talent.

## DoE to establish four new biosphere reserves

### Social Desk

Iran will designate at least four new biosphere reserves to expand its protected network, Vice President Shina Ansari told the 5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in China on September 22, saying the current coverage of "less than 4%" of national territory was not enough. The pledge comes as Tehran faces mounting ecological pressures from climate change, water shortages and recent regional hostilities, IRNA reported. Ansari, who also heads Iran's Department of Environment (DoE), said the expansion would strengthen the country's 13 registered sites, which already include wetlands, mountain ranges, deserts and coastal areas. Since June 13, she said, Israeli strikes had hit Iranian civilian infrastructure, from hospitals and fuel depots to water distribution plants. These attacks, she warned, had worsened carbon emissions and "severely" damaged ecosystems. "The consequences extend beyond

national borders," Ansari told delegates, calling the raids both "unprovoked" and a threat to food security and public health across the wider Middle East. Iran's biosphere zones, she noted, are often tied to the ancestral lands of nomadic and rural communities, whose traditional livelihoods embody "unique strategies" for sustainable living. Long before the idea of sustainable development was globalized, she argued, these groups had devised ways to cope with droughts, heatwaves and other environmental hazards. Their knowledge, she said, is "a valuable and inspiring capital" for the world. Ansari confirmed Tehran was ready to align with the so-called Hangzhou Action Plan, a United Nations framework launched in 2023 to step up climate cooperation. She proposed "twinning" projects between Iranian reserves and foreign counterparts to foster joint research, technology exchange and specialist visits. Such peer-to-peer mechanisms, she added, could ripple outwards and "inspire" sur-

rounding landscapes. Yet many of Iran's existing reserves are already reeling from record temperatures and water stress. "More than ever," Ansari cautioned, "we need solidarity, experience-sharing and support from the global biosphere network to boost resilience." She argued that UNESCO members have the capacity to counter unilateralism and reinforce multilateralism in defending what she called the "common home" of humanity. The reserves, she said, are not only sanctuaries for biodiversity but symbols of peaceful coexistence between people and nature, and a bridge between modern science and indigenous wisdom. The Hangzhou Action Plan underscores urgent collective action to cut greenhouse gases, mobilize green finance and accelerate renewable technologies in line with the Paris Agreement. The four-day Beijing congress, which runs through September 26, seeks to align biosphere priorities with international accords such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

## UNGA chance for ...

Despite such limits, experience has shown that even at the height of tension, limited-scope, temporary, issue-specific agreements remain possible. Iran is clearly seeking to tap into this path, while making sure its willingness for such engagement is not taken advantage of by Western capitals.

### Does Iran have any legal or political instruments at its disposal to halt or at least soften this trajectory?

Legally, Iran can resort to dispute-settlement mechanisms within international bodies, including filing a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice over US and European violations of their commitments and making use of statutory mechanisms at the IAEA to formally register objections against breaches of agreements. While these measures may not yield immediate tangible results, they achieve three critical goals: Officially documenting Western breaches in international records; raising political and reputational costs for violators within the international system; and creating a legal basis for demanding compensation for Iran's

economic and human losses. Politically, several levers remain at Tehran's disposal: suspending or redefining its level of cooperation with the IAEA to enhance bargaining power; leveraging regional partnerships, particularly with Russia, China, and neighboring states, to deepen political, security, and economic ties; and tracking and capitalizing on emerging regional and international processes as bargaining chips when the timing is right.

### In light of recent Western positions, what reaction should be expected toward Iran's diplomatic efforts? Could scenarios such as invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter be on the table?

The most likely scenario is a continuation of the current situation, coupled with political pressure and the possible activation of snapback or even referral [of Iran's nuclear dossier] to the Security Council. Although implementing such a course would be costly for all parties, given its security implications and Tehran's potential response, the West continues to keep this option as a stick on the table. Therefore, the possibility of a gradual return to diplomacy can-

not be completely written off. Shifts on the ground or changes in political calculations may yet open new windows for talks.

### Could regional states such as Qatar or Oman play a role in mediating or facilitating dialogue? And would Iran be willing to rely on these regional capacities?

Countries like Qatar and Oman have effectively become official channels between Iran and the West. They have already mediated in sensitive matters such as prisoner exchanges and the release of Iranian frozen funds. Thanks to their relative neutrality and balanced relations with Washington, Tehran, and Europe, these states have significant potential to facilitate dialogue. Iran has already shown practical willingness to make use of these channels—as seen in the recent talks mediated by Oman. But these capacities, too, have been partly constrained. Of particular note is the Israeli strike on Doha carried out with US backing, which has also dented Qatar's and Oman's trust in Washington. This development could weaken, or at least redirect, their mediating role moving forward.