

India signals return to Iran oil after \$111m June purchase

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## Pezeshkian: Policies to shift if 'snapback' moves ahead

Solution 'within reach' but hinges on fairness

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The combo shows Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L, top photos; R, bottom photos) meeting world leaders on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, on September 24-25, 2025, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres (top R), French President Emmanuel Macron (top L), Swiss President Karin Keller-Sutter (bottom R) and Finnish President Alexander Stubb (bottom L).

● president.ir

World Tourism Day

### Tourism fuels cultural connection, sustainable future

By Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey  
Iran's deputy tourism minister

OPINION  
EXCLUSIVE

September 26, World Tourism Day, reminds us of the unique and irreplaceable role of tourism in connecting nations, fostering cultural understanding, strengthening social cohesion, and driving economic prosperity. Today, tourism is not merely a recreational or economic activity; it is a strategic instrument for sustainable development and for building a greener, more humane future for all societies.

This year's UN Tourism theme, "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation," underlines once again that the future of this industry depends on respect for nature, protection of the environment, wise use of resources, and responsibility toward the needs of future generations. Moving toward green tourism and harnessing innovation to reduce the environmental footprint of travel is no longer optional—it is a shared global necessity, and Iran is fully committed to this path.

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# Pezeshkian: Policies to shift if 'snapback' moves ahead

Solution 'within reach' but hinges on fairness



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets his Bolivian counterpart Luis Arce on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 25, 2025.  
● [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)

## International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian warned Thursday that Tehran will recalibrate its policies if European powers push ahead with triggering the "snapback" mechanism

to restore UN sanctions, even as he voiced hope the process would not go through.

"The type of engagement and our policies will be adjusted to the new situation," Pezeshkian said during a meeting with Bolivian President

Luis Arce on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The Iranian president slammed Washington's unilateral approach, saying it targeted not only Iran but any country unwilling to toe the line. "In such circumstances, nations

seeking independence must boost their scientific and professional capacities in order to safeguard their sovereignty," he argued.

Following a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron a day earlier, Pezeshkian stressed that Iran has "no intention whatsoever of building a nuclear bomb" and is ready to talk with Europe within a framework that addresses "European concerns while ensuring Iran's interests". On his X account, he later described the exchange as "frank and detailed," adding that "a definitive solution is within reach" if the other sides act with fairness.

In other bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the assembly, Pezeshkian repeated that Tehran's nuclear program has never been aimed at weapons, blaming Western mistrust on "misunderstandings" and Israeli "propaganda". He told Norwegian

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre that Western countries must stick to their commitments for any deal to hold water.

"The current situation is the result of the Western parties' failure to uphold their commitments."

The president told Swiss counterpart Karin Keller-Sutter that Iran is ready to prove the peaceful nature of its nuclear work "within international law and its rights," but warned: "If snapback is activated, dialogue will lose its meaning." Meeting Finnish President Alexander Stubb, Pezeshkian admitted relations with Europe had not gone as planned, citing "broken promises" by the West and even military strikes on Iran during negotiations earlier in June. Still, he said, diplomacy is "the only way to overcome this mistrust".

He also told European Council President António Costa that Tehran is prepared to cooperate on transparency to disprove what he called "false narratives". Responsibility for the current crisis, he added, lies with those who "violated their commitments and walked away from the [2015 nuclear deal]."

Pezeshkian accused world powers

of a double standard: "They raise an outcry over minor issues in Iran, while staying silent on Israel crossing every red line. Did we assassinate the scientists of other countries — or are we among the greatest victims of terrorism?"

France, Germany, and Britain launched the snapback process on August 28, setting off a 30-day countdown to the automatic return of UN sanctions lifted under the 2015 deal. They accused Iran of violating its commitments, whereas Iran's measures were a response to the US unilateral exit from the deal in 2018 and the subsequent reimposition of sanctions, as well as the European parties' failure to offset the effects of those restrictions.

The European trio considered Iran's agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency in Cairo inadequate and continued to push for activation of the snapback mechanism. Sanctions are due to come back into force as early as September 28 unless a compromise is found.

Pezeshkian also met UN Secretary-General António Guterres, signed the UN memorial book, and penned a note sharply critical of Israel and its supporters.

## UNSC votes on Russia-China bid to extend Iran nuclear resolution



A general view of the United Nations Security Council  
● [AFP](https://www.afp.com)

The UN Security Council was set to vote on Friday on a draft resolution tabled by Russia and China that sought a technical extension of Resolution 2231, in a last-ditch effort to prevent the automatic return of international sanctions on Iran.

Under UN rules, any resolution requires at least nine votes from the 15-member Council and no veto from its five permanent members — the United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China — to pass.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for Legal and International Affairs, had also described the Russia-China draft resolution as "the last opportunity to prevent the escalation of self-inflicted European-American tensions".

In a post on X, he warned that Iran would respond appropriately to any hostile measures, including the reinstatement of "expired UN Security Council resolutions," adding that the first step would be to terminate the Cairo agreement between Iran and the IAEA. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, posting on X ahead of the vote, described the moment

as "a fleeting opportunity" for the Council to say 'No' to confrontation and 'Yes' to cooperation, allowing diplomacy the time and space it needs to succeed. He noted that Iran had submitted several proposals aimed at preserving the diplomatic track, while accusing the E3 of failing to respond in kind and criticizing the US for intensifying its unilateral demands. The Russian-Chinese proposal came just days before the "snapback" mechanism was set to take effect on September 28 — 30 days after it was triggered by Britain, France, and Germany. It was stipulated that if no agreement is reached during this month-long window, sanctions that were lifted under the 2015 nuclear accord would automatically be reimposed. Moscow and Beijing had called for a six-month technical rollover of Resolution 2231, with the possibility of further extensions, to allow parties to the deal to hammer out a diplomatic solution.

The vote followed an earlier failed attempt to secure broader relief for Iran. On September 19, a draft submitted by South Korea, as the rotating Council president,

to permanently lift sanctions in line with paragraph 11 of Resolution 2231 was voted down. That proposal received only four votes in favor, with nine against and two abstentions.

Resolution 2231, adopted unanimously in 2015, had endorsed the landmark nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers — the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China. It provided for the lifting of UN sanctions in exchange for intrusive inspections and substantial curbs on Tehran's nuclear program. The text envisioned a permanent lifting of sanctions after 10 years.

But the deal unraveled after the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump and reimposed sweeping sanctions. Tehran, after a year of waiting for European powers to compensate for the loss, began rolling back its nuclear commitments as a retaliatory measure.

Tensions further escalated after an Israeli aggression in June this year, where the US also carried out strikes on Iranian nuclear sites. In response, Iran suspended cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). On August 28, Britain, France, and Germany initiated the snapback procedure, arguing that Iran had failed to comply with its obligations. They dismissed as insufficient a framework reached in Cairo between Tehran and the IAEA for renewed cooperation.

The three European governments have since doubled down on their push to restore UN sanctions. They urged Iran to grant unrestricted access to UN nuclear inspectors, promptly return to the negotiating table, and clarify the status of its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

## Iranian FM urges fair burden-sharing on Afghan crisis

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Thursday called on the international community to ensure that the burden of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan does not fall disproportionately on a handful of neighboring states.

Speaking at a four-party meeting with China, Pakistan, and Russia on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Araghchi said Iran has shouldered the heavy responsibility of hosting millions of Afghan nationals, often "with little or insufficient international assistance".

He stressed that the burden has imposed billions of dollars in costs on Iran's economy and security, while the country itself faces "the most severe unilateral sanctions, in violation of international law". "We have sought to ensure that the return of Afghan nationals takes place with full respect for their dignity. However, it should not be expected that Iran bears this burden alone," he said.

Turning to security concerns, Araghchi warned that the continuing presence of extremist and terrorist groups in Afghanistan remains a serious threat to neighbors and the wider region. He urged the Taliban authorities to take "transparent, verifiable, and decisive measures" against such dangers.

The minister cautioned that sanctions should not become a tool to block Afghanistan's economic recovery or legitimate engagement with Kabul. "We reiterate that Afghanistan's assets frozen abroad must be released unconditionally to revive the country's economic stability and serve the Afghan people," he said.

Araghchi reaffirmed Tehran's firm adherence to the



● [IRNA](https://www.irna.ir)

principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states and voiced support for the inherent right of the Afghan people to determine their own political, economic, and social future, in line with the UN Charter and recognized norms of international law. He delivered a sharp rebuke of Washington's record in Afghanistan. "US intervention and two decades of military presence brought nothing but misery and insecurity," he said, adding that the 2021 withdrawal was "not an end to responsibility but rather a disgraceful retreat that left Afghanistan and its neighbors to face the consequences." He stressed: "The fact is that the United States and NATO remain responsible for many of the challenges Afghanistan and the region are facing today."

Araghchi reiterated that Tehran categorically rejects any foreign political or military interference and any exploitation of Afghanistan's plight for geopolitical purposes. Above all, he warned, "the re-establishment of foreign military bases inside or around Afghanistan would violate its sovereignty, threaten regional peace and security, and fuel extremism and instability."

**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist





# Iran, Russia sign \$25b deal to build nuclear power plants

Economy Desk

Iran and Russia inked a \$25 billion agreement for the construction of four new nuclear power plants as part of a long-term partnership deal aimed at consolidating ties between Tehran and Moscow in various fields.

The executive agreement was concluded in Moscow on Friday between Iran Hormoz Company and Russia's Rosatom Project Company for the construction and establishment of four advanced third-generation nuclear power plant units in the coastal town of Sirik in the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan.

Nasser Mansour Shariflou, representing Iran Hormoz Company on behalf of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), and Dmitry Shiganov, representing REP Company, a subsidiary of the state-owned Rosatom, inked the 25-billion-dollar deal in the presence of Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia.

The mega project, which is to be implemented in the Kuhestak district of the Sirik region on a 500-hectare plot of land, will have the capacity to produce a total of 5,020 megawatts of nuclear power.

In the signing ceremony, it was announced that the agreement was inked between the two friendly countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, to develop joint cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.



Nasser Mansour Shariflou (R), representing Iran Hormoz Company, and Dmitry Shiganov (L), representing Rosatom's REP Company, hold a signed agreement to build nuclear power plants in Iran, in the Russian capital of Moscow on September 26, 2025.

● IRNA

Reports said the site selection studies have been completed, and engineering and environmental studies, along with a portion of site preparation activities, are in the process of being finalized.

Under an intergovernmental agreement, Russia is contracted to build eight nuclear power plants in Iran, including four in Bushehr.

AEOI head Mohammad Eslami had earlier announced the commencement of the project after a meeting with Rosatom CEO Alexey Likhachev in Moscow on Wednesday, emphasizing the strategic cooperation between Tehran and Moscow in nuclear energy development.

"We have good relations with Russia regarding cooperation in the construction of nuclear power plants," Eslami said after the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the construction of small-scale nuclear power plants (SMRs) in Iran.

"It was necessary to review and strengthen this process and also to take a new step in line with the Organization's 20-year strategic plan."



Highlighting Iran's plans to generate 20,000 megawatts of electricity through the development of nuclear power plants, the AEOI chief told reporters that the construction of the second

and third units of the Bushehr nuclear power plant is currently underway by Russia.

Eslami underlined that the project is a priority for both Tehran and Moscow,

adding that the emphasis of the two countries' presidents has accelerated its progress, and ongoing negotiations will help facilitate and advance these joint efforts.

## India signals return to Iran oil after \$111m June purchase



The photo shows the Kharg Island oil terminal, southern Iran.

● FATEMEH BAHRAMI/ANADOLU

Economy Desk

India has called for resuming crude oil imports from Iran amid trade tensions with Washington, while official data shows India imported a \$111 million shipment of Iranian crude in June.

Indian officials have again told the Trump administration that a significant reduction in Russian oil imports by the South Asian nation's refiners would require Washington to instead allow crude purchases from sanc-

tioned suppliers Iran and Venezuela.

A delegation visiting the US this week reiterated the request in meetings with American officials, a person with knowledge of the discussions said but asked not to be identified as the talks are private, Bloomberg reported.

Indian representatives have emphasized that simultaneously cutting off Indian refiners' supply from Russia, Iran, and Venezuela — all major oil producers — could lead to a spike in global prices, people familiar with the

negotiations added.

A spokesperson for the US Embassy in New Delhi declined to comment on private diplomatic conversations but added that India's imports of Russian crude undermined American efforts to counter what it called Russia's "harmful" activities. India's Commerce and Oil Ministries didn't respond to requests for comment.

Meanwhile, Iran's Mehr news agency cited the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry as showing the country imported a \$111 million shipment of Iranian crude in June.

The data also showed India bought \$94 million worth of petroleum products from Iran between January and July this year. That brought total Iranian oil and petroleum product exports to India in the first seven months of 2025 to \$205 million, accounting for 54% of India's overall imports from the Islamic Republic.

India had halted Iranian oil purchases in 2018 after the United States withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran and pressured buyers to cut imports.

New Delhi's representatives traveled to the US for talks after Washington

imposed crushing tariffs on the country in punishment for its oil trade with Russia. Despite the levies, the South Asian nation has maintained its crude imports from the OPEC+ producer, albeit at a lower rate.

Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said this week that the country wanted to increase its purchases of American oil and gas, adding that "our energy security goals will have a very high element of US involvement." He made the remarks in New York.

Russia was forced to discount its crude after many others shunned trade with Moscow due to the war in Ukraine. Almost 90% of India's oil needs are met by imports, and cheaper Russian barrels have helped to reduce the burden on its import bill.

Iranian and Venezuelan oil would also be similarly discounted.

India stopped buying Iranian oil in 2019, and the South Asian nation's largest private refiner — Reliance Industries Ltd. — halted purchases of Venezuelan crude this year as the US tightened sanctions. Processors can shift to buying more Middle Eastern barrels, but it would come at a higher cost and inflate the overall import bill.

## IMIDRO to double gold output to 25 tons by 2029, plans \$30b mining investment



Economy Desk

Iran plans to double its annual gold production to 25 tons by the end of its seventh five-year development plan (2029) while investing \$30 billion in expanding its mining sector, a senior official said on Friday.

"Ores production in the country currently stands at more than 500 million tons," said Omid Emami, deputy for Mining and Mineral Industries Development at the state-owned Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

"If we focus on gold, it is important to note that mines are usually assessed by contained metal. At present, about 12 tons of gold are extracted from Iran's mines," he told Mehr news agency.

Emami said the government's development plan includes raising annual gold output to 25 tons. "Particularly, the development of the Zarshouran mine is on the agenda, which will add at least three tons to national capacity," he said.

He added that the Golojeh mine and other deposits in the Sistan and Baluchestan Province are expected to contribute about one ton. "In total, IMIDRO projects that at least four tons will be added to the country's gold capacity."

On financing, Emami said the \$30 billion needed to achieve the plan's targets will come from a mix of bank resources, foreign investment, private sector capital, and government funding. "Government resources will play a smaller role in this sector," the IMIFRO official noted.

## Free trade zones 'gateways' for BRICS economic integration: Iranian envoy

Economy Desk

Iran's representative at the 2025 BRICS summit, Esfandiar Shah-Mansouri, on Friday stressed the role of the country's free trade zones in strengthening economic integration among BRICS members, calling these zones "economic and logistics gateways" that play a key role in boosting international corridors.

"Iran, given its unique geographic position as the crossroads of East and West, and its free trade zones with access to major CIS and Eur-

asian markets, has the capacity to become one of the region's most important logistics and economic hubs," said Shah-Mansouri, IRNA reported.

He pointed to the strategic role of the country's southern free trade zones — such as Kish, Qeshm, Chabahar, and Arvand — in providing access to the open seas and Persian Gulf markets, and northern zones — including Anzali, Aras, and Maku — in linking Iran to Russia and the broader Eurasian market. This, he said, positions Iran as a strategic

bridge between the Global North and Global South.

"The rail network connecting these zones offers the fastest and most cost-effective route for moving goods between northern and southern countries," he added.

Shah-Mansouri, who also serves as the deputy for Economic Development and Investment at the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones, listed Iran's proposals for expanding cooperation with BRICS, including developing joint



A view of Anzali Free Trade Zone

transport corridors, establishing shared free trade zones, investing in energy projects, bunkering, fostering knowledge-based

industries and innovation centers, as well as partnerships in medical tourism and facilitating financial and banking exchanges.



## From petrodollars to nuclear shield

## Birth of new security axis in Asia



The illustration shows Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (C-R) embracing Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during a meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on September 17, 2025.

● FT

By Hoda Yousefi  
Mideast affairs expert

## OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The signing of the strategic mutual defense agreement between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan on September 17, 2025, in Riyadh marks a turning point in the security architecture of the Middle East and South Asia. This pact, based on the principle of “mutual defense,” treating any aggression against one party as an aggression against the other, at first glance, comes in the wake of rapid and critical regional developments, especially the Zionist regime’s aggressions and the security gaps caused by the shifting policies of the United States. However, a deeper analysis shows this agreement is the product of a long history of close cooperation and, at the same time, the last piece in a domino effect falling amid a new global and regional order.

### Historical roots of alliance: linking power, capital

The recent defense pact is not a spur-of-the-moment decision but has grown out of decades of strategic, economic, and military relations between the two countries.

Riyadh and Islamabad’s relationship has always hinged on a strategic equation: Saudi Arabia, relying on its oil wealth, has played the role of financial and economic backer for Pakistan, while Pakistan, with its military strength and strategic depth, has acted as a security pillar for Riyadh. The Brookings Institution estimates that since the 1960s, Pakistan has drawn the most financial support from Saudi Arabia. This backing, albeit indirectly, allowed Pakistan to push through its nuclear program despite severe international sanctions in the 1990s. Conversely, Pakistan has always stood by Saudi Arabia at critical security junctures — from deploying forces on Saudi Arabia’s northern borders during the Iran-Iraq war to acting as a mediator supporting Afghan mujahideen — creating the trust necessary for signing a defense pact now.

### Regional catalysts

The past two years, especially following Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, have seen a surge in unprecedented tensions and military aggressions by Israel. The Gaza war and repeated attacks on neighboring countries, climaxing with the September 9, 2025, attack on Doha, set off alarm bells for all regional countries, including Saudi Arabia.

This attack near Saudi borders laid bare the reality that the US security umbrella, once the guarantor of stability in the Gulf, can no longer be solely relied on. This “security vacuum” and the recognition that America is unwilling or unable to shield its traditional allies from existential threats pushed Riyadh to look for more dependable security partners.

### Riyadh’s nuclear ambitions

Saudi Arabia has long been aiming for nuclear capabilities. In 2018, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman openly stated that if Iran obtains a nuclear bomb, Riyadh would “immediately” follow suit. Saudi efforts to convince the US to cooperate on uranium enrichment, even as a precondition to normalizing relations with Israel, came up short.

Under these circumstances, Pakistan, the only nuclear power in the Islamic world, with an arsenal of over 170 nuclear warheads, emerged as an ideal and accessible option for Riyadh. Although Islamabad has previously rejected Saudi requests to directly transfer “technical knowledge,” the new defense deal could effectively serve up a proxy “nuclear shield” for Saudi Arabia, establishing necessary deterrence against regional threats.

### Mutual interests in sensitive situation

Pakistan signed this agreement amid critical conditions as well. Severe tensions with India, which nearly escalated into full-scale war in May, alongside an urgent need for foreign investment to tackle the economic crisis, brought Islamabad closer to Riyadh than ever. Saudi Arabia’s announcement to consider increasing investment to \$25 billion in Pakistan and extending a \$2 billion deposit in Pakistan’s central bank highlights the strong economic element underpinning this strategic pact. In reality, this agreement carries through both economic security for Pakistan and strengthens its regional position against India. This convergence of interests, at a critical juncture, has drawn the two countries together tighter than before.

### Message to Washington, Tel Aviv

This pact rings an alarm for Washington. Saudi Arabia, through this move, has shown it is shedding its exclusive reliance on the US and is branching out its security portfolio by strengthening ties with powers such as China, Russia, Egypt, and now Pakistan. The agreement poses serious challenges to US



Under the current circumstances, where America is unwilling or unable to shield its traditional allies from existential threats, Pakistan, the only nuclear power in the Islamic world, with an arsenal of over 170 nuclear warheads, emerged as an ideal and accessible option for Riyadh. Although Islamabad has previously rejected Saudi requests to directly transfer “technical knowledge,” the new defense deal could effectively serve up a proxy “nuclear shield” for Saudi Arabia, establishing necessary deterrence against regional threats.

plans for the region, including the nuclear deal with Riyadh as a complement to normalization with Israel and the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) expected to run through Saudi Arabia. For Israel, this deal is a strategic setback; It shifts the balance of power by indirectly introducing a nuclear power into Gulf security dynamics, throwing Tel Aviv’s calculations off course.

### Formation of new bloc, idea of ‘Islamic NATO’

Although the term “Islamic NATO” may seem exaggerated, this agreement clearly has the potential to kick off a new military-security axis composed of Muslim countries. Defense cooperation between the wealthiest Arab country and the most militarily powerful Muslim country could serve as a model for others, gradually leading to a regional power bloc operating independently of the West. India’s cautious reaction, calling for “mutual sensitivities” to be considered by Saudi Arabia, indicates that regional powers have picked up on this paradigm shift.

### Operational, symbolic dimensions of deterrence

While full details of the agreement remain undisclosed, the mutual defense clause has operational and symbolic dimensions. Operationally, in the event of threats such as missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, we can expect to see intelligence collaboration, logistical support, and even symbolic or advisory Pakistani troop presence. More importantly, symbolically and strategically, the very existence of such a pact ramps up Saudi Arabia’s deterrence considerably. Although Pakistan may not directly use its nuclear weapons to defend Saudi Arabia, the shadow of this capability weighs heavily on any potential aggressor’s calculations, complicating their plans.

The Saudi-Pakistan defense pact is more than an immediate reaction to regional crises; It marks a defining point in the transformation of the Middle Eastern security order. This agreement results from a convergence of strategic interests amid dwindling trust in a declining US hegemony, unchecked Israeli aggressions, and regional powers’ efforts to redefine their global roles.

With this move, Riyadh has not only set up an effective deterrent shield but also demonstrated its independence in foreign policy, sending a clear message to Washington and Tel Aviv. This pact ushers power equations in the Arab world and the region into a new phase and could lay the foundation for a homegrown security architecture independent from extra-regional powers.

For the Islamic Republic of Iran, this development calls for careful and smart monitoring. While the decline of US influence and Israel’s isolation could be seen as an opportunity, the formation of a powerful military bloc next door also brings along new challenges that demand active diplomacy and a reassessment of regional strategies. The world is undergoing a transition, and the Riyadh-Islamabad pact is one of the most conspicuous signs of this fundamental change.



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi (2nd-L) visits Saudi nuclear facilities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on December 14, 2023.

● spa.gov.sa





# Pakistan-Saudi pact reveals growing distrust of US-led security architecture

By Mohammad Salami  
Pakistan-based expert  
on Mideast policy

OPINION

The Israeli attack on Qatar on September 9, 2025, failed to kill Hamas leaders but may have catalyzed a “Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement” (SMDA) between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the first between key countries in South Asia and the Middle East since the Cold War. The decision by the two countries to sign a joint defense pact on September 17 reflects growing unease among wealthy Arab petrostates about the willingness of the United States to defend them against what they see as an increasingly unconstrained Israel, which has attacked multiple Arab countries and Iran since the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have long-standing military ties, with an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 Pakistani troops currently stationed in the kingdom. Under a 1982 agreement, Pakistan has provided military training to more than 8,000 Saudi military personnel. The new agreement intensifies these ties and, in language reminiscent of the NATO alliance, defines any attack on either country as an attack on both.

Pakistan, a nuclear-armed country with pan-Islamist aspirations but mounting economic difficulties, has an opportunity to broaden the security architecture of West Asia with this agreement. It offers significant benefits to Islamabad, including financial gain and prestige. Saudi Arabia is home to more than 2.5 million Pakistani immigrants, and Riyadh has pumped more than \$30 billion into Pakistan’s economy since the 1980s. The new agreement allows Pakistan to reinforce its image as the protector of the Muslim world, a role it claimed after nuclear tests in 1998.

In return, Saudi Arabia gains access to a nuclear umbrella and potentially nuclear weapons, a



Pakistan Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir (L) meets Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister Prince Khalid Bin Salman (R) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 6, 2024.  
● ISPR

shift that gives Riyadh leverage in a post-October 7 regional order centered on US-backed Israeli military might. The Saudis also may acquire nuclear technology for civilian use and diversification from fossil fuels. In January, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz Bin Salman announced Riyadh’s readiness to enrich and sell uranium as part of a growing nuclear program. Although the agreement does not explicitly mention nuclear weapons, the history of the development of Pakistan’s program is replete with reports of Saudi financial assistance and quid pro quos. The Brookings Institution reported that in May 1998, when Pakistan was deciding how to respond to India’s testing of five nuclear weapons, the Saudis promised to give the Pakistanis 50,000 barrels of free oil a day. This significantly mitigated the effects of subsequent US and European sanctions against Pakistan, imposed as

punishment for its own nuclear testing. Saudi Arabia is reported to have obtained implicit nuclear guarantees in return. In his book, War, journalist Bob Woodward recounts a conversation in which Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman allegedly told US Senator Lindsey Graham that Riyadh planned to enrich uranium only for energy purposes. When Graham expressed concern about the prospect of a Saudi bomb, Salman is said to have replied: “I don’t need uranium to make a bomb. I will just buy one from Pakistan.”

**Islamic or Arab NATO?**

Israel’s attacks on Gaza, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and most recently Qatar, have shown Arab and other regional countries that the current security architecture, based on US promises of assistance against external attacks, may not only be insufficient but detrimental to their

interests. The idea of forming an “Islamic or Arab NATO” would oblige Israel and the US to plan for a world in which attacks on the region could lead to a conventional or nuclear response not from Iran, but from countries with long-standing US ties. In addition to Pakistan, Egypt or Turkey could be hubs for such a new military alliance. Following Israel’s strike on Qatar, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi proposed the formation of a rapid reaction force that could be deployed in the event of an attack on any Arab state and said Egypt would be willing to contribute 20,000 troops. However, at the moment, such a major shift remains unlikely due to the outsized role the US has played in terms of arms sales and troop deployments in the region. Pakistan has not ruled out the possibility of other Arab countries joining the defense pact with Saudi Arabia. In the wake of the new agreement, Ishaq Dar,



Israel’s attacks on Gaza, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and most recently Qatar, have shown Arab and other regional countries that the current security architecture, based on US promises of assistance against external attacks, may not only be insufficient but detrimental to their interests. The idea of forming an “Islamic or Arab NATO” would oblige Israel and the US to plan for a world in which attacks on the region could lead to a conventional or nuclear response not from Iran, but from countries with long-standing US ties.

Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (L) and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani (R) talk to US President Donald Trump at the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar on May 15, 2025.  
● BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP

Pakistan’s deputy prime minister and foreign minister, welcomed the notion of forming a joint Arab security force. “Why not? What’s wrong with that? They should [have such a force]. And according to their own capacity, their own strength, they should create some [defense] mechanism,” he said. Dar added that Islamabad would stand with Arab countries and “discharge its duty” toward the Muslim community. Rivalries among Muslim states make collective action hard to implement. However, the anger against Israel and the United States, nearly two years into the Gaza war, is real.

## China the quiet winner

The US has been the guarantor of security in the Persian Gulf since Britain stepped back from that role in the early 1970s. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the takeover of the US embassy led to the creation of a Rapid Deployment Force that evolved into what became known as the Central Command, comprising Muslim countries from Egypt to Pakistan. In 2021, Israel — which had been part of the US European Command (EUCOM) — was incorporated into CENTCOM in what was seen by some as a major step toward Arab-Israeli peace in the aftermath of the Abraham Accords. Under those accords, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan formally recognized Israel, joining Egypt and Jordan. It was anticipated that Saudi Arabia, too, would become a party to the agreement, but the Hamas attacks and the brutal Israeli response have alienated Arab public opinion and made the Saudis condition any deal with Israel on an end to the Gaza war and a credible path to an independent Palestinian state — something Israel has vehemently rejected even as more and more Western countries have recognized Palestine.

With the Pakistan deal, Saudi Arabia is sending a clear signal to Washington and Tel Aviv that it is diversifying its security alliances. Washington now faces the difficult task of maintaining relations with Israel, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India, which view each other with increasing suspicion.

The new agreement also appears to boost the power of China, a long-time ally of Pakistan, and possibly Russia as well. China has invested billions of dollars in infrastructure and energy projects under the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and is Pakistan’s largest trading partner, with bilateral trade of more than \$25 billion annually. China also accounts for 81% of Pakistan’s arms imports. At the same time, the Pakistan-Saudi defense agreement could pose risks if it embroils Pakistan in unending Middle Eastern conflicts or causes a rift between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan’s historic rival, India. The hope is that the agreement will induce Washington to push its closest ally in the Middle East to de-escalate the conflict rather than further expand the two-year-old war on its multiple enemies.

The article first appeared on the Stimson Center.





# Pakistan-Saudi pact reveals growing distrust of US-led security architecture

By Mohammad Salami  
Pakistan-based expert  
on Mideast policy

OPINION

The Israeli attack on Qatar on September 9, 2025, failed to kill Hamas leaders but may have catalyzed a “Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement” (SMDA) between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the first between key countries in South Asia and the Middle East since the Cold War. The decision by the two countries to sign a joint defense pact on September 17 reflects growing unease among wealthy Arab petrostates about the willingness of the United States to defend them against what they see as an increasingly unconstrained Israel, which has attacked multiple Arab countries and Iran since the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have long-standing military ties, with an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 Pakistani troops currently stationed in the kingdom. Under a 1982 agreement, Pakistan has provided military training to more than 8,000 Saudi military personnel. The new agreement intensifies these ties and, in language reminiscent of the NATO alliance, defines any attack on either country as an attack on both.

Pakistan, a nuclear-armed country with pan-Islamist aspirations but mounting economic difficulties, has an opportunity to broaden the security architecture of West Asia with this agreement. It offers significant benefits to Islamabad, including financial gain and prestige. Saudi Arabia is home to more than 2.5 million Pakistani immigrants, and Riyadh has pumped more than \$30 billion into Pakistan’s economy since the 1980s. The new agreement allows Pakistan to reinforce its image as the protector of the Muslim world, a role it claimed after nuclear tests in 1998.

In return, Saudi Arabia gains access to a nuclear umbrella and potentially nuclear weapons, a



Pakistan Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir (L) meets Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister Prince Khalid Bin Salman (R) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 6, 2024.  
● ISPR

shift that gives Riyadh leverage in a post-October 7 regional order centered on US-backed Israeli military might. The Saudis also may acquire nuclear technology for civilian use and diversification from fossil fuels. In January, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz Bin Salman announced Riyadh’s readiness to enrich and sell uranium as part of a growing nuclear program. Although the agreement does not explicitly mention nuclear weapons, the history of the development of Pakistan’s program is replete with reports of Saudi financial assistance and quid pro quos. The Brookings Institution reported that in May 1998, when Pakistan was deciding how to respond to India’s testing of five nuclear weapons, the Saudis promised to give the Pakistanis 50,000 barrels of free oil a day. This significantly mitigated the effects of subsequent US and European sanctions against Pakistan, imposed as

punishment for its own nuclear testing. Saudi Arabia is reported to have obtained implicit nuclear guarantees in return. In his book, War, journalist Bob Woodward recounts a conversation in which Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman allegedly told US Senator Lindsey Graham that Riyadh planned to enrich uranium only for energy purposes. When Graham expressed concern about the prospect of a Saudi bomb, Salman is said to have replied: “I don’t need uranium to make a bomb. I will just buy one from Pakistan.”

**Islamic or Arab NATO?**

Israel’s attacks on Gaza, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and most recently Qatar, have shown Arab and other regional countries that the current security architecture, based on US promises of assistance against external attacks, may not only be insufficient but detrimental to their

interests. The idea of forming an “Islamic or Arab NATO” would oblige Israel and the US to plan for a world in which attacks on the region could lead to a conventional or nuclear response not from Iran, but from countries with long-standing US ties. In addition to Pakistan, Egypt or Turkey could be hubs for such a new military alliance. Following Israel’s strike on Qatar, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi proposed the formation of a rapid reaction force that could be deployed in the event of an attack on any Arab state and said Egypt would be willing to contribute 20,000 troops. However, at the moment, such a major shift remains unlikely due to the outsized role the US has played in terms of arms sales and troop deployments in the region. Pakistan has not ruled out the possibility of other Arab countries joining the defense pact with Saudi Arabia. In the wake of the new agreement, Ishaq Dar,



Israel’s attacks on Gaza, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and most recently Qatar, have shown Arab and other regional countries that the current security architecture, based on US promises of assistance against external attacks, may not only be insufficient but detrimental to their interests. The idea of forming an “Islamic or Arab NATO” would oblige Israel and the US to plan for a world in which attacks on the region could lead to a conventional or nuclear response not from Iran, but from countries with long-standing US ties.

Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (L) and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani (R) talk to US President Donald Trump at the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar on May 15, 2025.  
● BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP

Pakistan’s deputy prime minister and foreign minister, welcomed the notion of forming a joint Arab security force. “Why not? What’s wrong with that? They should [have such a force]. And according to their own capacity, their own strength, they should create some [defense] mechanism,” he said. Dar added that Islamabad would stand with Arab countries and “discharge its duty” toward the Muslim community. Rivalries among Muslim states make collective action hard to implement. However, the anger against Israel and the United States, nearly two years into the Gaza war, is real.

## China the quiet winner

The US has been the guarantor of security in the Persian Gulf since Britain stepped back from that role in the early 1970s. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the takeover of the US embassy led to the creation of a Rapid Deployment Force that evolved into what became known as the Central Command, comprising Muslim countries from Egypt to Pakistan. In 2021, Israel — which had been part of the US European Command (EUCOM) — was incorporated into CENTCOM in what was seen by some as a major step toward Arab-Israeli peace in the aftermath of the Abraham Accords. Under those accords, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan formally recognized Israel, joining Egypt and Jordan. It was anticipated that Saudi Arabia, too, would become a party to the agreement, but the Hamas attacks and the brutal Israeli response have alienated Arab public opinion and made the Saudis condition any deal with Israel on an end to the Gaza war and a credible path to an independent Palestinian state — something Israel has vehemently rejected even as more and more Western countries have recognized Palestine.

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# FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship: Iran's last-four dreams shattered by Czechia heartbreak

## Sports Desk

Iran's fairy tale run at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship came to an end following a last-eight defeat against Czechia in Pasay City, Philippines, on Thursday.

Roberto Piazza's men gave away a one-set lead to suffer a 3-1 loss (22-25, 27-25, 25-20, 25-21) and miss out on a maiden semifinal spot at the flagship international event of the sport.

Czechia managed to recover from Iran's fiery start to the first set that got the Asian powerhouse to an early five-point advantage, but still made far too many unforced errors that allowed Iran to come out as set winner with opposite Ali Hajipour pounding the closing point from the back row.

The defining moment of the contest perhaps came in the closing stages of the second set when Iranian captain and outside-hitter Morteza Sharifi, with his team leading 22-20, missed an absolute sitter, spiking the undefended ball wide, and Czechia capitalized to level the match at 1-1. That completely shifted the momentum in Czechia's favor as the European side went on to win the next two sets to set up a last-four date with Bulgaria, which pulled off a sensational comeback to beat USA in a five-set thriller (21-25, 19-25, 25-17, 25-22, 15-13) later in the day.

When asked what made the difference between the two sides at end, Piazza said: "I think everyone in the team exact-



ly know about that moment. We have to grow up a lot on the mental side, I knew that before and I know it now. We have to improve the technical aspect of our game, we need to be better on serving, we need to be better everywhere. The most im-

portant thing is that when you are leading in a game, you need to be able to finish off the game. This is the lesson that we need to understand. After that, they deserved it because they played an amazing game, on block, defense, transition. They were

really good after that moment.

"I'm still so proud of my guys, because there are 11 new players in the team, but I know we have to work a lot."

Asked if the whole campaign makes him exited for the future of his team, the Ital-



Iranian players are dejected after a last-eight defeat against Czechia at the FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship in Pasay City, Philippines, on September 25, 2025.

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

ian replied, "I was excited when I decided to take this job, and I'm excited now. I know exactly that there are a lot of talents, but that is not enough to reach any goal. We need to work hard, and we also need to be patient, and at the same time strong, on the court."

Czechia outperformed Iran in attack by 56-54 in spike kills and in net defense by 7-5 in kill blocks, but the biggest difference came from the fewer unforced errors – 25 against 31. Opposite Patrik Indra showed a great efficiency in offense, swinging at a 69% success rate. He also fired a couple of aces towards a match-high total of 22 points. Outside hitter Lukas Vasina came a close second with 21 points, including one ace and one kill block. He registered a 61% success rate in attack.

Iran delivered seven aces in the match, against Czechia's five. Young outside Pouriya Hosseinkhanzadeh authored three of those and spiked at a 54% success rate towards a team-high 18 points to match the tally of Hajipour, who signed off with three kill blocks and a 65% success rate in attack. Sharifi also reached the double digits with 11 points, including two aces.

## Sports Desk

Iran defeated South Korea 28-25 in the final showpiece on Thursday to be crowned the champion at the Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan.

The victory rounded off an emphatic run for the Iranian boys, who celebrated an eighth win in as many games at the inaugural edition of the tournament in the Jordanian capital.

The two teams had already secured a spot at the 1st IHF Men's U-17 Handball World Championship – starting October 24 in Morocco – by progressing to the final.

Arshia Javidi and Amirhossein Nikeqbal scored a joint-high

six goals for Iran in Thursday's showdown at the Princess Sumaya Hall, with Mohammad Keshavarz, Ali Ghayouri, and captain Mahdi Ahmadi contributing four goals apiece.

South Korean Kang Dongho captain scored a match-high nine goals, while Seong Jiseong added six, though it proved not enough as the traditional Asian handball powerhouse suffered a second defeat against Iran in the tournament, following a 31-25 setback in the preliminary round.

There was further glory for Iranian players in the awarding ceremony as Keshavarz and Nikeqbal were joined by teammate Mahdi Ahmadi in picking up the individual awards.

Iran began its campaign in Am-

man with a 65-4 hammering of Maldives, and then went on to defeat Syria (44-22) and South Korea to win Group D in the preliminary phase.

The first game in the main round saw Iran beat Kuwait 35-30, followed by a 42-22 rout of the host team, and a commanding 46-25 win against Qatar on Sunday for a top-spot finish in Group 2.

Iran then hammered Bahrain 37-19 in the semifinals on Tuesday.



Mahdi Ahmadi (14) lifts the trophy as the Iranian team celebrates winning the title at the Asian Men's U-17 Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan, on September 25, 2025.

● [IHf](https://www.ihf.com)

## Invincible Iran crowned Asian U17 handball champion



## Four Iranians among nominees for AFC Awards

### Sports Desk

Olympiacos striker Mahdi Taremi was nominated for the Asian International Player of the Year prize at the upcoming AFC Awards Riyadh 2025.

The Asian Football Confederation announced the highly anticipated list of nominees – including six Iranians – for 29th edition of the gala ceremony, which will be staged in the Saudi

capital on October 16, on Thursday. Taremi, who made it to the UEFA Champions League final with Inter last season before suffering a 5-0 defeat against Paris Saint-Germain, will be joined by South Korean winger Lee Kang-in – a treble winner with PSG – and Real Sociedad's Japanese winger Takefusa Kubo in vying for the men's prize. Meanwhile, Iran international teammates Moslem Oladqobad and Salar Aqapour were shortlisted for the

Futsal Men's Player of the Year after helping the country lift a record-extending 13th Asian Cup trophy last year, with Thailand's Muhammad Osaman-musa also nominated.

Marziyeh Jafari was nominated for the Women's Coach of the Year.

Jafari led Bam Khatoon to an 11th Iranian top-flight title, as well as an impressive last-eight spot at the AFC Women's Champions League, last season, and was also in charge of the national team when Women's Team Melli won Group A of qualifiers – thanks to a sensational final-day win against host Jordan – in July to book a place in March's AFC Women's Asian Cup finals in Australia. The Iranian Football Federation will be among the three nominees for the AFC Member Association of the Year (Platinum) award – alongside the Saudi and Japanese national governing bodies.



Iran and Olympiacos striker Mahdi Taremi was nominated for the Asian International Player of the Year prize at the 2025 AFC Awards.

● [khabarvarzeshi.com](https://khabarvarzeshi.com)



### Persian Gulf Pro League:

## Persepolis left frustrated by winless streak at home

### Sports Desk

Persepolis failed to secure a first home victory at the new Persian Gulf Pro League season, settling for a drab goalless stalemate against Malavan FC at Tehran's Shahr-e Qods Stadium on Thursday.

A third home draw meant the Tehran Reds, seven-time Iranian top-flight champion over the past nine seasons, have only managed one victory in five outings, heaping pressure on head coach Vahid Hashemian, who took his first managerial role in July after replacing former Turk-

ish boss Ismail Kartal. The Reds' sole victory of the campaign came against Sepahan (1-0) at Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium on August 25, as Persepolis celebrated a first top-flight victory in the so-called 'Iranian Clasico' in 1,335 days.

Next for Persepolis and Hashemian is another home fixture against Golgozar Sirjan on Friday, while Malavan will host Khaybar on Thursday. Elsewhere, defending champion Tractor dominated for the best part of the home game against newly-promoted Fajr Sepasi but still failed to capitalize as

it finished goalless at Tabriz's Bonyan Diesel Stadium.

Croatian striker Domagoj Drozdek thought he had given Tractor the lead, when his effort from inside the box found the bottom corner on the half-hour mark, only to see strike chalked off by the VAR due to teammate Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh committing a handball in the buildup.

Tractor will visit Ahvaz to face Foolad Khuzestan next Saturday, with Fajr – yet to concede a defeat on return to the Iranian Pro League – will host Esteghlal Khuzestan on Thursday.



# Yunesi Bridge draws tourists through restoration efforts



● wikipedia.org



● reiseniran.de

## Iranica Desk

Yunesi Bridge, located in the village of the same name in Bajestan, Khorasan Razavi Province, is considered one of the most important and outstanding architectural works of the Safavid era. This bridge, featuring nine spans and a sturdy design, is constructed over the seasonal river Kal Shur and historically played a crucial role in facilitating transportation and trade as part of the historic road known as the “Iraq Road.” The Yunesi Bridge is also recognized as a key site in the history and culture of Iran, particularly during the Safavid Period. Due to its strategic geographical location, the structure served as a vital crossing point for caravans and merchants traveling along major routes. At that time, roads and bridges were essential to trade and economic communication, with the Yunesi Bridge being one of the significant infrastructure elements supporting these activities, ISNA wrote.

Mehdi Zolfaqari, head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Office of Bajestan, said that this valuable and beautiful bridge, dating back to the Safavid era, is situated in Yunesi village and is officially registered as one of Iran’s national heritage sites. He explained that the bridge was constructed using local materials such as brick, stone, and plaster, and its design not only lends a unique aesthetic appeal but also ensures technical strength and durability. He added that the bridge’s piers are triangular in shape to reinforce resistance against floods. These structural features not only enhance the bridge’s beauty but also reflect the engineering expertise and artistic skills of the architects of that era. Zolfaqari further emphasized that the Yunesi Bridge is adorned with exquisite decorations, including linear inscriptions, embossed floral patterns, and intricate arabesque motifs. These embellishments not only increase the bridge’s visual ap-

peal but also showcase the refined taste and craftsmanship of Iranian artisans during the Safavid period. Describing this historic monument, he noted that it represents both the architectural style of the Safavid era and the cultural interactions within Iran. He acknowledged that over time the bridge suffered damage such as erosion and decay, but in recent years, recognizing its historical and cultural significance, efforts have been undertaken to restore and preserve it. “Given its historical and cultural value, the Yunesi Bridge has been restored in recent years and is now attracting attention as a prominent tourist destination,” Zolfaqari said. “These restoration efforts enable us to promote the site as a valuable resource for tourism.” He emphasized that today the Yunesi Bridge is one of the popular tourist attractions in Bajestan. Thanks to these restoration efforts, tourists can easily visit the historic monument and en-

joy its beauty firsthand. Zolfaqari described the bridge as a milestone in Iranian architectural history, noting that visiting it allows tourists to gain deeper insight into Iranian history and art. He also underscored the bridge’s importance in attracting tourists, stating that the surrounding area includes other historical and natural attractions that can appeal to visitors. Among these are ancient caravanserais, historic cisterns, and pristine natural landscapes. He stressed that these sites do not only offer visual appeal but also provide valuable opportunities to learn about the history and culture of the region. The Yunesi Bridge stands as a symbol of Iran’s rich cultural and historical heritage. He further noted that attracting more tourists requires providing appropriate welfare and service facilities. Additionally, there are plans to hold cultural and artistic festivals in the area, which would help better introduce the bridge and the

region’s history to visitors. Zolfaqari added that due to the bridge’s geographical and historical significance, it could be promoted as the primary tourism hub in the region. Plans are also underway to collaborate with travel agencies and local organizations to organize special tours focused on visits to the Yunesi Bridge, neighboring attractions, and other destinations throughout the county. He explained that the Yunesi Bridge is not only a historic monument but also a symbol of Iran’s rich culture and history, and it serves an educational role in introducing Iranian history and art to future generations. With continued efforts, the bridge is expected to become one of the main tourist destinations in Khorasan Razavi Province. Through cooperation at both local and national levels, it is possible to better preserve and promote these cultural treasures, establishing the Yunesi Bridge as an important tourist attraction on national

and international stages. The official described the bridge as a reflection of the artistry and engineering knowledge of Iranian architects during the Safavid era. He stressed that it also symbolizes cultural interaction and exchange throughout Iran’s history. Zolfaqari strongly emphasized that the bridge deserves ongoing attention and protection so that future generations can continue appreciating its beauty and historical importance. He noted that preserving this cultural heritage not only helps maintain national identity but also fosters the growth and development of cultural tourism in the region. Bajestan serves as the land gateway to Khorasan Razavi Province from the provinces of South Khorasan, Kerman, Yazd, Isfahan, Fars, and Hormozgan. Located approximately 300 kilometers from the holy city of Mashhad, Bajestan is home to 58 nationally registered heritage sites as well as one UNESCO World Heritage Site.

# Khameh Duzi weaves tradition with silk in Sistan and Baluchestan Province

## Iranica Desk

Khameh Duzi is a distinctive form of traditional embroidery originating from Iran, predominantly practiced in the city of Zabol within the Sistan and Baluchestan Province. The term Khameh derives from the word kham, meaning raw, highlighting the use of raw, undyed silk yarns in crafting this embroidery on soft, white fabrics. The silk yarn, renowned for its unique sparkle, is employed to create intricate geometric motifs such as squares, diamonds, and paper windmill patterns against a white, matte background. This not only results in a visually stunning effect but also contributes to the durability and strength of the delicate fabric on which it is embroidered. Khameh Duzi is commonly used to adorn clothing, men’s headwear, tablecloths, and various other textiles.



● visitiran.ir

Also known as Kham Duzi, this craft is characterized by its use of raw silk yarns, which forms the basis of its name. While bearing some resemblance to Baluch embroidery, Khameh Duzi is distinct in its exclusive use of usually all-white silk yarns. The craft’s

history runs parallel to the development of silk work and has evolved impressively over time. Today, it is primarily practiced in the villages surrounding Zabol, where it features cursive motifs that decorate a wide array of objects including prayer rugs,



● chtn.ir

clothing busts, handkerchiefs, vests, tablecloths, beddings, blankets, cushions, and more. Popular motifs in Khameh Duzi include Hasir Duzi, Toor Duzi, Khameh Keshi, Nargesi, Goli, paisley, stars, geometric shapes, various stitch types, cursive

forms, and patterns resembling seeds and fishtails. Among these, Hasir Duzi and paisley patterns are typically centered, while other motifs are arranged along the margins in strip forms. Flowers and bushes often embellish the central areas of the fabric. Oc-

asionally, patterns are printed using wooden blocks or outlined with pencils and carbon paper before embroidery. Though rooted in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Khameh Duzi is also practiced as a domestic craft in Yazd and Taft. To create Khameh Duzi, essential materials include satin or cotton fabric, needle, mirror, and white silk yarn. This delicate needlework requires precision and patience, with thin, ornate stitches that form elegant, refined designs. In clothing, Khameh Duzi is often paired with Siah Duzi, an embroidery technique using black yarn. For instance, buttonholes may be stitched with black yarn, while collars and cuffs are enhanced with black decorative stitches, providing a striking contrast to the white silk embroidery. This combination enriches the clothing’s aesthetic and highlights the intricate craftsmanship involved.





# Iranian director Mokri wins Busan festival's Vision Asia Award

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Shahram Mokri clinched the Vision Asia Award at the Busan International Film Festival for his surreal drama 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit,' marking the movie's international debut. The prize, carrying a cash grant of \$7,300 funded by India's National Film Development Corporation, was handed out at the festival's closing night. Jurors praised the work for its "visual creativity" and distinctive narrative that

blends mystery with a fractured sense of reality.

Co-written by Mokri and screenwriter Nasim Ahmadpour, the feature follows a woman who, after a car accident, discovers her surroundings have been altered in unsettling ways. The film was shot in Tajikistan with a cast drawn from both Iran and the Central Asian republic, including Babak Karimi and Hasti Mohammadi.

Produced by Negar Eskandarfar, the picture will head next to Britain for its European premiere at the BFI London Film Festival in early October, extending its festival circuit only weeks after debuting in Busan, which ran from Sept 17 to 26.

Mokri, known for experimental narratives in Iranian cinema, said the recognition underlined how stories from the region could "resonate widely" when framed with fresh techniques. He has previously screened at Venice and other European festivals.

The Busan event, regarded as Asia's most influential film showcase, draws filmmakers and distributors scouting new titles across the continent.



## Archaeologists uncover Parthian-Sassanid settlement in Iran's NE



ISNA

## Arts & Culture Desk

A significant archaeological site, believed to be the largest Parthian-Sassanid settlement in north-eastern Iran, was uncovered near the town of Faruj in North Khorasan Province.

The discovery was made during archaeological surveys for the Imam Morshed site, led by Iranian archaeologist Meysam Labbaf-Khaniki and a team from the University of Turin, ISNA reported.

The site, known locally as Imam

Morshed, spans approximately 50 hectares and comprises numerous mounds and archaeological layers.

Surface surveys revealed a high concentration of pottery fragments, indicating extensive human activity. Subsequent excavations identified the earliest habitation layers dating back to the Parthian period, with continuous occupation extending into the Seljuk era.

Notable finds include kiln-fired pottery characteristic of the Parthian era, such as glazed ceram-

ics with underglaze incisions, turquoise-glazed fragments, and painted pottery.

These artifacts confirm the site's significance as a major settlement during the Parthian and Sassanid periods. The presence of these materials also suggests that the site may have been a center for pottery production and trade.

The Imam Morshed site is situated in the Atrak River valley, an area historically known for its strategic importance and cultural exchanges. The settlement's extensive size and the diversity of artifacts uncovered underscore its role as a significant urban center in the region's ancient history. Given the site's continuous use over several centuries, it offers valuable insights into the socio-economic and cultural developments of the region. Plans are underway to establish part of the site as an open-air museum, aiming to promote public awareness and appreciation of Iran's rich archaeological heritage.

## Iranian artisans bag top prizes at Uzbekistan handicrafts festival

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian artisans Zahra Aslani and Karim Shirdareh Haghighi took home top awards at the third Kokand International Crafts Festival and the second International Festival of Handicrafts in the Uzbek ceramics hub of Rishtan.

Aslani, a potter from the north-western Iranian city of Ardabil, was named the festival's "most skilled woman ceramist", while Haghighi, a tile painter from Fars Province in southern Iran, secured second place among the world's leading craftsmen, IRNA reported.

Both were recognized at the biennial gathering that ran from September 18 to 20 and drew delegates from more than 70 countries.

The Rishtan festival, regarded as one of the world's foremost handicrafts events, is staged alongside the World Potters' Congress in the centuries-old Uzbek town known for its ceramics. This year's edition brought together over 250 international participants and some 400 local artisans, according to the organizers.

Aslani, attending the festival for the second time on an official invitation from Uzbekistan's Ministry of Culture, received a \$1,500



IRNA

award. Haghighi was handed a \$1,000 prize for his painted tile work. Both artists described their recognition as a chance to showcase Iran's "authentic traditions" on the global stage.

Recent projects have ranged from registering lands around Persepolis, the Achaemenid capital, to restoring the ancient Gorgan Wall and staging folk festivals in the Caspian province of Golestan.

Majid Salimi, head of handicrafts in Fars Province, said the success of Iranian artists in Uzbekistan "demonstrates their potential" and could open more doors for traditional crafts. "This platform gives us the chance to present our heritage to a wider audience," he said.

## Persian miniature art on display in Russia

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Center for Visual Arts opened a week-long program September 26 in St. Petersburg and Moscow, bringing master miniaturist Hossein Esmati to Russia for a series of workshops, exhibitions and talks on the country's centuries-old tradition of manuscript painting.

The project, dubbed 'Iranian Miniature Week', is organized jointly by Tehran's Ibn Sina Foundation, National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Moscow's Tikhon's Orthodox University of the Humanities in Moscow, Mehr New Agency reported.

The events run from Sep-

tember 26 to 29 in St. Petersburg and continue in the Russian capital from October 1 to 3.

At the heart of the program is Hossein Esmati, a leading contemporary painter in the delicate craft of miniature art. His original works are being displayed alongside interactive masterclasses designed to give Russian audiences an insight into the "secrets and subtleties" of a discipline rooted in Persian manuscripts and courtly traditions.

Beyond the studio sessions, the program features scholarly lectures on the history and cultural standing of Iranian miniature, together with screenings of art documentaries.

Organizers say the aim is to provide both an edu-



MEHR

cational platform and an encounter with what one academic called "a living heritage."

The National Library of Russia, one of Europe's largest, is hosting three days of exhibitions and classes on September 26,

28 and 29.

The Moscow leg will follow at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Moscow's Tikhon's Orthodox University of the Humanities from October 1 to 3.

## World Tourism Day ...

With its unparalleled diversity of climates, rich cultural heritage, unique natural attractions, and a tradition of warm hospitality, Iran offers vast potential for tourism development. The cultural expressions of our diverse ethnic groups, ancient traditions, local and national festivals, and vibrant artistic events provide valuable opportunities to present the depth of Iranian identity while reinforcing social solidarity. Strengthening domestic tourism around these cultural resources not only stimulates economic growth but also nurtures social vitality, hope, and national cohesion. In line with these principles, the ministry is

pursuing its programs through three key priorities:

- Advancing green and sustainable tourism – protecting natural resources and safeguarding our national heritage.  
- Expanding smart tourism -using new technologies to enhance travel experiences and improve efficiency.

-Empowering local communities – leveraging festivals and cultural events to enable meaningful participation in both domestic and international tourism development.

The realization of these goals calls for synergy and cooperation among all actors—government bodies, the private sector, civil society organizations, academic

institutions, and, above all, active citizen engagement. By joining hands, we can shape a bright future for tourism in Iran: A future in which this ancient land once again stands as an inspiring destination for the world, and as a symbol of peace, friendship, sustainability, and transformation.

On the occasion of World Tourism Day, I extend my sincere appreciation to all those working tirelessly in this field. I invite every stakeholder to contribute, with shared determination, to advancing "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation," and to play their part in building a greener, more dynamic, and more hopeful tomorrow for our nation.