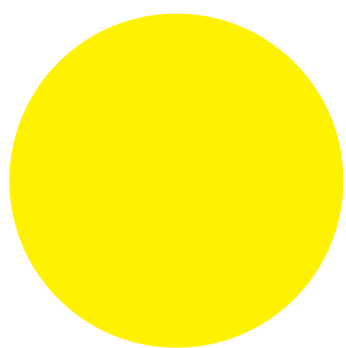


Over 80% of Iran-Russia trade now settled in local currencies, says Russian official

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> irandaily.ir

newspaper.irandaily.ir

IranDailyWeb

Pezeshkian urges elites to help foil enemy plots



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a ceremony to mark the beginning of the new academic year in Tehran on October 20, 2025.

● president.ir

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday called on Iranian universities and scientific centers to take the lead in solving the country's mounting challenges, saying that reliance on experts and scholars, not slogans or directives, is the only way to steer the nation out of its current difficulties.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2025–26 academic year at Tarbiat Modares University in Tehran, Pezeshkian said Iran's problems, from water scarcity to land subsidence and pollution, could only be overcome through the knowledge and determination of specialists "regardless of their dress, manners or appearance," president.ir reported.

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'Well-structured' security ties to drive Iran-Iraq economic stability: Larijani

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India's tactic against Trump; oil pivot from Russia to Iran

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'I won't get carried away': Faraji unfazed after stunning Asia's elite

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'KEEP DREAMING'

Leader rejects Trump's claim of dismantling Iran's nuclear program

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Young athletes of the ancient Persian sport of Zurkhaneh perform before Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution as Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei meets with Iranian sportspersons and medalists from various sports and international scientific Olympiads in Tehran on October 20, 2025.

● leader.ir

Iran nuclear case reveals opposition to system of global management

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



On October 18, Iran, Russia, and China submitted a joint letter to the United Nations declaring that Resolution 2231, which enshrined the 2015 nuclear agreement (JCPOA), had expired, and that Iran's nuclear case should therefore be removed from the Security Council's agenda.

The letter directly challenged the actions of France, Germany, and Britain, which had triggered the so-called snapback mechanism to reinstate UN sanctions previously lifted under the resolution. The trio dismissed the European move as lacking any "legal or procedural legitimacy." Yet how far these legal and diplomatic maneuvers can offset or offset the impact of the council's decisions remains a matter of debate.

Abbas Aslani, an international affairs analyst, believes that the world today is divided, not only over Iran's nuclear issue, but also over the broader question of Western-imposed policies. In an

interview with Iran Daily, he elaborated on the dimensions of this divide.

IRAN DAILY: Considering the legal and diplomatic actions by Iran, China, and Russia about Resolution 2231 and their rejection of the snapback mechanism, can it be said that a united Eastern front has emerged against the West's hegemonic policies?

ASLANI: What has taken place is not limited to Iran, Russia, and China. Even the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), comprising around 120 member states, expressed support for this position and for the expiration of Resolution 2231 in its recent summit in Uganda. These nations include several geopolitically and demographically significant states. China and Russia are permanent members of the UN Security Council, while NAM itself represents a large portion of the global community. This indicates the emergence of a major divide, one that arguably has few precedents in recent decades. At the very least, it shows that the world has split into two camps over this issue.

This division, however, extends far beyond Iran's nuclear file or Resolution 2231. It reflects two competing worldviews regarding global governance. On one side are those clinging to Cold War

era mentalities, trying to impose unilateral dictates through outdated rules and norms. On the other side are countries, notably Iran, Russia, China, and members of NAM, that insist such an order no longer works and that the system of global management must be reformed. The confrontation between these two visions is quite significant.

To what extent can these measures undermine the legitimacy of the re-instated UN sanctions and encourage other countries to disregard them?

Such actions, coupled with the backing of NAM members, could significantly cast doubt on the legitimacy of decisions made by the US and European countries. They may also affect both the implementation and effectiveness of those measures. Russia's Foreign Ministry, currently presiding over the Security Council, issued a detailed statement declaring that Resolution 2231 had "expired," along with all its provisions and restrictions related to Iran's nuclear program. It also urged the UN Secretariat to correct its official website accordingly. Given Russia's current chairmanship of the council, this statement carried weight. China's stance is also noteworthy, given its strong economic capacity and crucial role in Iran's trade relations. Both posi-

tions effectively undermine the credibility and impact of the Western sanctions, not to mention that other nations, including members of NAM, have similarly voiced support.

At a broader level, this episode highlights growing rifts in how global issues are handled. Beyond the nuclear dispute, differing visions among Russia, China, and several independent nations vis-à-vis Western powers mark a deeper structural shift in international politics — one that deserves close attention.

Could these efforts eventually pave the way for a new Security Council resolution lifting sanctions on Iran altogether?

While such a scenario might be conceivable, these efforts would not necessarily entail a new resolution. Passing any resolution at the Security Council requires at least nine affirmative votes and no veto from permanent members. Therefore, achieving that would depend on reaching a consensus with Western states, something currently out of reach given their existing positions in the nuclear talks. Although this possibility cannot be entirely ruled out in the future, under current circumstances it seems premature to talk up such prospects.

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'KEEP DREAMING'

Leader rejects Trump's claim of dismantling Iran's nuclear program



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with Iranian athletes and medalists from various sports and international scientific Olympiads in Tehran on October 20, 2025.

● [khamenei.ir](#)

tion during a Monday meeting with hundreds of Iranian athletes and medalists from various sports and international scientific Olympiads. Since the US bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities on June 22, Trump has repeatedly claimed that the US strikes have "totally obliterated" the three flagship nuclear facilities in Iran.

"Fine, keep dreaming!" Ayatollah Khamenei said. "But who do you think you are to make any prescriptions about whether a country can or cannot have a nuclear industry?"

Ayatollah Khamenei also condemned the bullying and baseless rhetoric of the US president, saying his recent behavior aimed to "raise the spirit of the Zionists and make himself look power-

ful through lies about Iran, the region, and its people."

"If he is truly powerful, let him calm the millions of people in all US states who are chanting against him."

"Trump says he is a dealmaker, but if a deal is accompanied by coercion and its outcome is predetermined, it is not a deal but rather an imposition and bullying," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Tehran and Washington engaged in five rounds of indirect nuclear negotiations that ended with the 12-day war in June in which Israel and the US bombed Iranian nuclear sites.

Last week, Trump told the Israeli parliament that it would be great if Washington could negotiate a "peace deal" with Tehran.

Ayatollah Khamenei also called Trump's claims that the US is at war with terrorism yet another example of his lies.

"More than 20,000 children and infants have been martyred in the Gaza war. Were they terrorists? The real terrorist is America, which created Daesh,

unleashed it on the region."

He also described the killing of about 70,000 people in the Gaza Strip, as well as the killing of over a thousand Iranians in the 12-day war, as clear evidence of the terrorist nature of the US and Israel.

He also noted that in June's illegal aggression against the Islamic Republic, Iran delivered an "unbelievable" slap in the face of the Zionists and drove them to despair.

"The Zionists did not expect that Iranian missiles, with their flames and fire, could penetrate deep into their sensitive and vital centers, destroy them, and turn them into ashes," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

He further emphasized that Iran did not buy or rent its missiles from anywhere, but manufactured them by its youth.

"These missiles were prepared and used by our armed forces and military industries, and they still have them. If necessary, they will use them again at another time," he said.

National Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei rejected remarks by US President Donald Trump

that the United States has destroyed Iran's nuclear capabilities during its June's aggression, saying, "Keep dreaming!"

Ayatollah Khamenei made the asser-

'Well-structured' security ties to drive Iran-Iraq economic stability: Larijani

International Desk

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Larijani said on Monday that Iran and Iraq should pay more attention to security issues if they want to have more stable economic relations.

Ali Larijani was speaking to reporters after a meeting with Iraqi National Security Advisor Qassem al-Araji in Tehran.

"We discussed a range of security and economic issues. For our economic ties with Iraq to remain stable, our security cooperation must also be well-structured."

The Iranian official also pointed to the US and Israel's use of Iraq's airspace to launch strikes on Iran in June, saying that as the Iraqi official said Baghdad has repeatedly opposed to the issue but it is an example of how the United States behaves with independent countries, including Iraq.

"Iraq is an independent country that has maintained this independence years after dictatorship, but the United States and the Zionist regime do not allow this independence to be preserved," Larijani told reporters.

Araji, for his part, underlined that the Iraqi government is fully committed to the security agreement with Iran, saying that, "Baghdad has repeatedly stressed that it will not allow its airspace to be used against Iran."

On June 13, Israel launched an unprovoked aggression against Iran, triggering a 12-day war that killed at least 1,064 people in the country, including mil-



Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani (R) and Iraq's National Security Advisor Qassem al-Araji take part in a press conference in Tehran on October 20, 2025.

● [IRNA](#)

itary commanders, nuclear scientists, and civilians. The United States also entered the war by bombing three peaceful Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of international law.

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories as well as the al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia.

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, effectively halted the ongoing terrorist assault.

spect for each other's rights and concerns, and engage in dialogue on equal footing," the spokesman said.

"We are not at that stage, and as long as there are excessive demands and expectations, there will be no basis for negotiation and understanding," he added.

Referring to the efforts of some countries for mediation over the past year, Baqaei said, "It is natural that countries which have tried to play a role in solving the problems during this period will continue to pursue this process."

Iran and the US started nuclear



negotiations in April and held five rounds of talks to resolve a decades-old dispute over Iran's nuclear program.

However, military aggressions by the US and Israel on Iran in June led to the collapse of the negotiations.

Russia ready to expand Iran ties in all areas: Kremlin

International Desk

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday that Russia is prepared to expand cooperation with Iran in all areas.

Asked by reporters how Russia saw the development of events around Iran's nuclear program and if Moscow would deepen ties with Tehran, Peskov said, "Russia is definitely ready to expand cooperation with Iran in all areas. Iran is our partner, and our relations are developing very dynamically."

Peskov said European countries were putting "excessive pressure" on Iran in regards to negotiations over its nuclear program, adding



Dmitry Peskov

that the situation was "very complicated."

Moscow has close relations with Tehran and condemned US and Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear sites earlier this year.

Iran's huge payback in 12-day war served as future deterrent: Top general

National Desk

Iran's top military commander said on Monday that the Islamic Republic's enemies received a haunting blow at the hands of the nation and its Armed Forces during the 12-day war, making it highly unlikely for them to resort to another miscalculation. Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi made the remarks during a webinar, basing his forecast on the quality of the country's defensive and retaliatory response to the unlawful war that was imposed on the

country by the Israeli regime and the United States in June. "By their own admission, they (the adversaries) had been planning for 15 years, arming, preparing, organizing infiltrators, and rehearsing their plans multiple times," he said. "They believed they had chosen the best possible moment and [believed they had] executed their scheme with precision," he added. "Yet, under the command of Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei], with divine grace, the vigilance of the nation, and the courage of our Armed Forces, this proud nation served them an unforgettable slap."

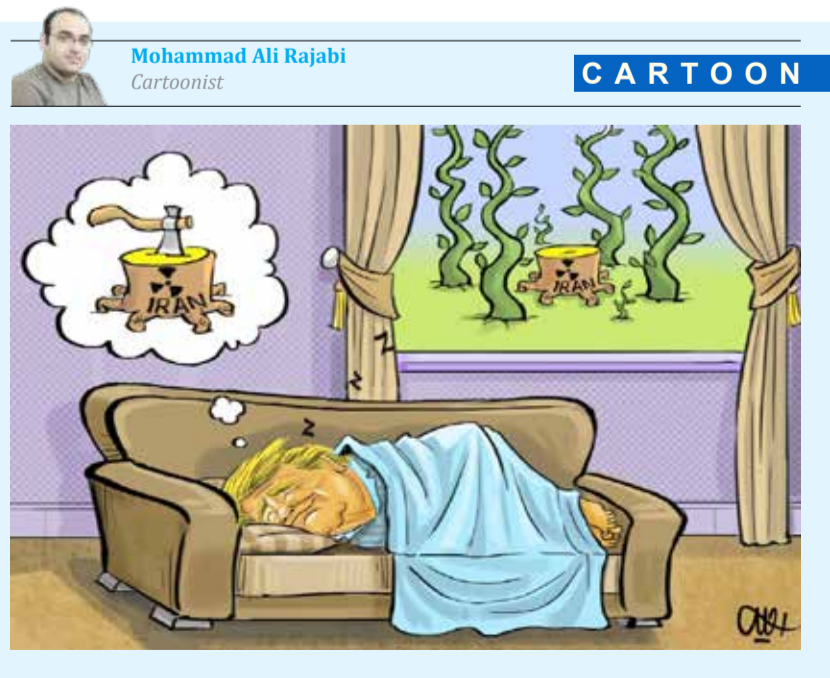
FM spox: Mediated Iran-US contacts not viewed as 'negotiation phase'

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Monday that Iran and the United States are in contact through intermediaries but this does not mean "entering a negotiation phase."

Baqaei made the comment in response to a question about recent remarks by the US president's special envoy Steve Witkoff claiming that Washington is "getting calls" from the Iranian officials.

"Negotiations make sense when the parties reach a consensus and a mutual understanding about re-



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

Over 80% of Iran-Russia trade now settled in local currencies, says Russian official



Economy Desk

More than 80% of trade between Iran and Russia is now being conducted in national currencies, the rial and the ruble, reflecting expanding financial cooperation between the two countries, Alexey Lojenko, head of the Russia-Iran Business Council, said at a Mon-

day meeting in Tehran. At a joint meeting of business representatives from the two countries, Lojenko said the council is pursuing strategic bilateral cooperation, prioritizing joint projects in advanced technologies, telecommunications, medicine, and cybersecurity, Mehr reported.

"The increase in trade volume between Russia and Iran is of special importance to us," he said. Russia mainly exports grains, timber, oilseeds, chemicals, aluminum, coal, and steel to Iran, while Iran supplies spare parts, energy products, ceramics, cement, and agricultural goods to Russia, according to the of-

ficial. About 60% of total trade between the two countries, he added, consists of agricultural products.

Emphasizing the need to remove trade barriers, Lojenko said that one of the council's main tasks is to "simplify regulations within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union" and to amend cumbersome laws that currently hinder the realization of the full potential of Iran-Russia trade. Representatives from Russia's ministries of industry, economy, and agriculture attended the meeting, along with customs officials.

He invited Iranian business leaders to hold direct meetings with Russian officials and noted that "the presence of representatives from Russian and Iranian banks at this meeting can further facilitate banking and financial cooperation."

"We are working seriously to eliminate legal barriers so that trade between Iran and Russia can achieve genuine growth," the official said.

Trade potential seen at \$15b

In a related comment to Tasnim

news agency, Lojenko said bilateral trade could rise to between \$10 billion and \$15 billion if proper conditions are established in banking infrastructure, transport links, and the harmonization of technical and trade standards — a goal he described as both "realistic and attainable."

According to the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, the country's trade with Russia during the first five months of the current Iranian year, which began on March 21, has been on a sharp upward trajectory, with exports approaching the \$1 billion mark — a year-on-year increase of more than 30%.

In another sign of growing economic and trade cooperation, banks in Russia have started processing letters of credit (LCs) issued by Iranian banks.

Central Bank of Iran's deputy governor for foreign exchange operations, Alireza Gachpazadeh, said on Sunday that two banks in Russia had agreed to accept Iranian-issued LCs to help facilitate trade between Iran and Russia. He said a third Russian bank may follow suit and start processing LCs issued by Iranian banks in the near future.

Industry ministry targets 50% solar supply for industrial parks

Economy Desk

Iran's industry ministry plans to supply 50% of electricity for its industrial parks from solar energy, Reza Ansari, CEO of Iran's Industrial Towns Company said on Monday, highlighting efforts to secure stable power for the country's industrial sector.

Ansari, who doubles as deputy minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, said that one of the main challenges facing Iranian industry is ensuring reliable electricity. During the summer, some industrial parks experienced power outages up to three days per week, leading to roughly a 10% increase in production costs, which was ultimately passed on to consumers, he said.

Ansari noted that while the Ministry of Energy is legally responsible for electricity provision, the Ministry of Industry has actively supported the initiative.

"To date, more than 1,200 megawatts of solar energy have been installed within industrial parks and on the rooftops of industrial units, of which 120 megawatts are currently operational. The goal is to expand solar power capacity to 2,000 megawatts in the coming years," Ansari said.

He explained that, at peak consumption of around 4,000 megawatts, half of the electricity used by industrial parks will eventually be supplied by solar energy, enhancing grid stability and preventing losses caused by power outages.

As recently confirmed by the Supreme Energy Council, the share of government offices in renewable power supply has increased from 20% to 40%.

Under the Seventh National Development Plan, Iran aims to add 12,000 MW of new renewable capacity over five years, with President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration having set a more ambitious goal of 30,000 MW within four years.

TPO to form task forces for top partners to boost trade diplomacy

Economy Desk

Head of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced on Monday that the agency plans to establish dedicated task forces for the country's top 20 trading partners to develop roadmaps aimed at expanding exports and strengthening trade diplomacy. Speaking at the 6th session of the "Seven Days with Export" forums, Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi emphasized that every trade delegation abroad must be backed by "precise planning" and clear objectives, Mehr reported. He said the working groups will coordinate with joint chambers of commerce and commercial attachés to draw up detailed trade strategies. "Successful countries view commercial diplomacy as a key instrument of economic development, with their heads of state personally involved in major trade nego-

tiations," he said, adding that Iran is currently in talks with five to six countries to sign preferential and free trade agreements.

"A significant portion of Iran's political relations now revolves around trade," the deputy minister of Industry, Mine and Trade noted. Dehnavi also highlighted President Masoud Pezeshkian's strong emphasis on using foreign visits to expand trade and exports, stressing that the Foreign Ministry is actively pursuing this policy. "Chambers of commerce can play an effective role in realizing this goal, and closer cooperation between them will help boost non-oil exports," he said. The deputy minister further noted that private-sector representatives have played a visible role in advancing Iran's trade diplomacy, adding that business forums held during the president's visits have led to new cooperation

agreements. "Expectations of the private sector from the Foreign Ministry, the Industry Ministry, and the Trade Promotion Organization must be clearly defined to make Iran's economic cooperation with target countries more effective," Dehnavi said. He also underlined that Iranian ambassadors will be evaluated based on the progress of the country's exports, saying, "Export performance is one of the main criteria for assessing their mission."

Trade centers lagging behind

Addressing the status of Iran's overseas trade centers, Dehnavi said many of them have yet to mature and nearly half have not been renewed, calling on the private sector to propose plans to enhance their performance. Earlier this month, Amir Roshanbakhsh Qanbari, deputy for the Promotion of Interna-



tional Businesses at the TPO, said Iran once had about 57 trade centers abroad, but the number has now fallen to 27, adding that the country currently has 19 commercial attachés, with plans to raise the number to around 25. Trade centers serve as support hubs to promote their respected country's export capabilities, identify target markets, connect business

communities, and facilitate the export of goods and services.

Commercial attachés also act as official trade representatives, gathering market intelligence, following up on economic agreements, and directly assisting exporters. Such initiatives form a vital bridge linking a country's public and private sectors with global markets.

Iran nuclear case ...

If international sanctions lose their effectiveness, what would be the strategy of Iran, Russia, and China to counter US secondary sanctions?

Page 1 >

The overextension of US sanctions and Washington's excessive reliance on this tool will gradually blunt their edge. The more countries are placed under such measures, the greater the likelihood of an emerging anti-sanctions front, making it harder for the US to achieve its desired foreign policy outcomes. This expansion also increases the chances of creating independent financial mechanisms detached from Western systems, while eroding the legal, moral, and conventional legitimacy of sanctions themselves.

To curb the effects of secondary sanctions, developing such independent financial and economic frameworks is essential. Some progress has been made, but more work lies ahead. In the long run, if Washington continues to lean on coercive policies, it will only push other nations toward strengthening these parallel systems. This could, over time, take the sting out of secondary sanctions.

In the short term, sanctions may prompt countries to team up to circumvent them. However, a more comprehensive and institutional approach is needed to build sustainable, independent financial mechanisms. The idea has been discussed before, but only recently has it gained serious traction among several states. If the US persists with its pressure tactics, it might corner its adversaries in the short term, but in the long run, such moves could backfire, threatening Washington's own strategic interests by accelerating the rise of alternative, non-Western economic systems.

Deputy FM calls for proactive strategy in BRICS, SCO to unlock membership benefits



Kazem Gharibabadi
IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi on Monday called for a clear and proactive strategy to take full advantage of the country's memberships in the BRICS group and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), stressing that waiting for initiatives from their secretariats would limit Iran's potential gains. Speaking at the first meeting of the "Headquarters for Coordination of SCO and BRICS Affairs," Gharibabadi said every govern-

ment body should define specific goals and projects to pursue within the two organizations, IRNA reported.

"We should not wait to see what events or meetings are announced by the secretariats. Instead, an annual plan should be drawn up from the beginning of each year," he said, urging ministries to prepare such plans for the remaining five months of the current Iranian year.

He underlined that Iran faces unilateralism and "unjust, illegal sanctions," and that leveraging multilateral institutions like BRICS and the SCO could help

counter such pressures.

"What can help us demonstrate that the world is no longer under the dominance of a few countries and that there are abundant opportunities elsewhere is precisely the effective use of these organizations' capacities," he added. Iran officially became a full member of BRICS on January 1, 2024. The bloc includes five major emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The country also joined the SCO as a full member in September 2022 during the organization's summit hosted by Uzbekistan.

India's tactic against Trump; oil pivot from Russia to Iran

INTERVIEW

Not long ago, Bloomberg ran a report revealing New Delhi's eagerness to get oil imports from Iran rolling again. For decades, Iran stood as one of India's key economic partners, ranking second among its crude suppliers — a trend that came to a screeching halt when the Trump administration clamped down with punitive mechanisms on nations buying oil from Iran and Russia. Now, India's plan hinges heavily on getting Washington on board. Against this backdrop, Amin Rezaei Nejad, an expert on South Asian affairs, shed light on the current situation in an interview, translated below:



Oil trucks are parked outside of an oil refinery operated by Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd. (BPCL), in Mumbai, India, on April 4, 2025. BPCL was annually taking 2 million tons of Iranian crude oil on average when Tehran was not under US sanctions.
● DHIRAJ SINGH/BLOOMBERG



Amin Rezaei Nejad



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hold talks during the 16th annual BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, on October 22, 2024.
● IRNA

Given India's push to restart oil imports from Iran and the long history of Tehran-New Delhi energy ties, is there any chance of returning to the old setup?

REZAEI NEJAD: The reality is that some Indian refineries are built in such a way that they can't process crude from anywhere except Iran, Russia, or Venezuela. Considering the US tariffs slapped on Russian oil imports as a form of punishment, India is left with little choice but to turn to Iranian crude. If India decides to steer clear of supplies from all three — Iran, Russia, and Venezuela — global oil prices will shoot up, hurting oil-importing countries, India included. Otherwise, it has to transform its refinery structures, which would set India back in both time and money. Given rising oil demand among India's middle class — chiefly in the form of petrol and refined products — the country can't afford to switch gears now. Replacing current suppliers isn't something that can happen overnight; It takes a lot of behind-the-scenes diplomacy to win over new sellers who can fill a share of India's oil needs. That's also a time-consuming process because producers themselves need breathing space to ramp up output. This mix of constraints means India will likely weather the economic storm triggered by punitive US tariffs just to keep its oil lifeline open through Iran. Apparently, New Delhi had already scaled back oil imports from Russia under US

pressure to stay in the game for tariff negotiations with Washington. So, the notion that India can further restrict imports from Iran simply doesn't hold water.

If we ask whether things will go back to the way they were, the answer is no. The United States no longer calls the shots as it did before; Washington can't just shut down Iranian oil sales or block off India's Iranian crude purchases. With India's domestic demand skyrocketing, any dip in consumption would drag down its GDP growth.

Given current tensions between India and the United States, will India's tilt toward Iran last?

Whenever New Delhi runs into trouble with Western powers — especially Washington — it pivots eastward. Owing to its vast ability to soak up resources, India tends to tap into eastern energy sources like Iranian hydrocarbons and branch out across other domains to beef up its strategic leverage vis-à-vis the West. The Indians even dub this policy "strategic autonomy". They've resorted to this policy more than once in the past. Frankly, it's more of a balancing game. Think tanks close to the Bharatiya Janata Party are currently pushing for this posture only until President Trump's current term runs its course. So, it doesn't seem this realignment is here to stay.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on the ANA news agency.



This mix of constraints means India will likely weather the economic storm triggered by punitive US tariffs just to keep its oil lifeline open through Iran. Apparently, New Delhi had already scaled back oil imports from Russia under US pressure to stay in the game for tariff negotiations with Washington. So, the notion that India can further restrict imports from Iran simply doesn't hold water.

History, current state of India-Russia relations



By Chietigj Bajpae
Senior research fellow at Chatham House



By Lisa Toremark
Comment Editor

ANALYSIS

The two countries established diplomatic relations in April 1947, shortly before India gained independence. India was on a quest to achieve economic self-sufficiency, so the then-Soviet Union was an important partner in terms of providing support for the country's heavy industry, with investment in mining, energy, and steel production. India's economic planning model was also based on the Soviet five-year plan. There is a high degree of histor-

ical affinity towards Russia in India, particularly among the older generation of policy elites. This is because the Soviet Union supported India during the Cold War, notably during the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, in which the US and China sided with Pakistan. This was arguably the peak of the Indo-Soviet relationship and also the year that the two countries signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation. But even before that, the Soviet Union had supported India. During the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, the USSR played a mediating role and hosted the so-called Tashkent summit in 1966, where a peace treaty was signed. The Soviet Union also used its

UN Security Council veto several times in support of India, half a dozen times between 1957 and 1971. This was usually on the issue of Kashmir and once with respect to India's military intervention in Goa to end Portuguese rule. It was also routine for the Indian prime minister to stop over in Moscow on the way back from Washington. The relationship has continued into the post-Cold War period. Annual summits have been held since 2000, when a strategic partnership was signed (and subsequently upgraded in 2010). India and Russia have also been holding so-called 2+2 meetings — joint meetings with foreign and defence ministers — since 2021. India's External Affairs Minister

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has referred to the India-Russia relationship as the one constant in global politics over the last half-century.

What about current relationship between India, Russia?

Russia remains a key strategic partner for India for both practical and ideological reasons. On the practical side, India benefits significantly from access to discounted Russian crude oil, which has increased from less than 2 per cent of India's total imports before the Russian attack on Ukraine to over 40 per cent in June 2024. Indian companies have also benefitted from exporting refined Russian oil products, some

of which have found their way onto Western markets. But energy cooperation is not confined to oil. It also includes cooperation in the nuclear space, where there is a strong historical foundation. When India conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, the Soviet Union did not shun cooperation with India — unlike the US. Compared to the US, Russia has also been able to better navigate India's civil nuclear liability law, which was put in place in 2010. In February 2024, India and Russia upgraded an agreement to build six civil nuclear power plants in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The other area of practical cooperation is defence. Russia accounts for over 50 per cent of In-

dia's in-service military platforms. India is also the largest recipient of Russian arms exports, including the S-400 missile defence system. There has been joint production of several platforms, such as the Brahmos supersonic cruise missile, which has been exported to third countries, starting with the Philippines. Russia has been a preferred arms supplier for India for many years because it provides arms at reasonable prices without end-user constraints, and is often able to supply sensitive technologies, which other countries are not. There is also a long-standing economic relationship. India and Russia aim to increase bilateral trade from \$68 billion to \$100 billion by the end of this decade.

Connectivity initiatives include the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor and the International North-South Transport Corridor. There are regular interactions between the leaders of the two countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin have met 17 times in the last decade and have held annual summits since 2000, with a few exceptions — and a notable gap following Russia’s attack on Ukraine. There is also a push to try and negotiate bilateral visa-free access for Indians to increase people-to-people and tourism exchanges between the two countries.

There is also an ideological component to the relationship, which is often overlooked. One aspect is that India has a long-standing commitment to strategic autonomy in its foreign policy, which means engaging all major poles of influence in the international system — including Russia. There is also the aforementioned historical affinity due to Soviet support for India during the Cold War. But the relationship is undergoing a managed decline. It does not have the same level of strategic importance as it did during the Cold War.

Although India still depends on Russia for a large proportion of its military hardware, since the 1990s, there has been a push to diversify. As part of the “Make in India” campaign, there is an attempt to strengthen domestic defence production as well as diversify to other countries. Between 2009 and 2013, 76 per cent of India’s arms imports were from Russia, but this has dropped to 36 per cent between 2019 and 2023, according to SIPRI.

While this trend predates the war in Ukraine, it has been accelerated by the war. There has been a delay in the delivery of several defence platforms, most notably the S-400 missile defence system, as well as spare parts for fighter jets. The prolonged war of attrition in Ukraine has also undermined Indian confidence in some Russian military hardware.

There is decline on the ideological side too. India is trying to project a worldview that is non-Western but not explicitly anti-Western. This puts it out of sync with Russia’s worldview, and that of countries like China and Iran.

India is increasingly aloof or estranged from forums where Russia plays a prominent role, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Modi did not attend the July 2024 SCO summit. When India held the presidency of the SCO in 2023, it was a low-profile presidency, and there was a virtual summit. In contrast, India’s high-profile G20 presidency in 2023 was framed as the country’s “coming out party”.

While Modi and Putin met in July 2024, it was the first time that



The illustration shows Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (l) and Russian President Vladimir Putin.
● ANTHONY GERACE/THE ECONOMIST

they had met since September 2022, a significant gap. What is more, their economic interactions are highly skewed. There is roughly \$68 billion in trade between the two countries, but \$60 billion of that is oil imports. India’s large share of Russian crude imports also means that Russia holds a surplus of Indian rupees, which has caused some friction in terms of rouble-rupee trade.

On the Indian side, there have also been concerns about a number of Indian nationals who have been “duped into fighting” for Russia in the Ukraine conflict. But although the relationship is not what it once was, Russia will remain a key strategic partner for India for the foreseeable future.

Does India support Russia’s war on Ukraine?

India has neither condoned nor condemned Russia’s actions. The Indian government has been vocal in expressing its displeasure with the war, and Modi has said that now is “not an era of war”. He has also expressed sorrow for the bombing of a children’s hospital, hit by Russian air strikes in July 2024. During his August 2024 visit to Ukraine, Modi said that India’s position is not neutral, but that it stands on the side of peace.

But there is a gap between rhetoric and reality. India, in fact, maintains quite a neutral position. It has abstained in UN General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia’s actions. It did not endorse the joint communique produced at a peace conference in Switzerland in June 2024, which Modi also did not attend. And the G20 leaders’ declaration that was concluded under India’s G20 presidency had no mention of Russian actions in Ukraine.

India has also emerged as the second-biggest supplier of restricted critical technologies to Russia (behind China), helping to fuel Russia’s war machine. This reflects India’s practical or pragmatic considerations, including its dependence on Russian military hardware and access to discounted Russian crude. But there is also a degree of sympathy in New Delhi for the Russian narrative of the war, that Moscow’s actions were sparked by NATO expansion into Russia’s self-perceived sphere of influence.

In theory, India is well-positioned to play the role of a potential mediator. It maintains close ties with both Moscow and Washington, unlike other countries that have close relations with Russia, such as China, Iran, and North Korea. The West has been understanding of India’s strategic constraints in terms of its dependence on Russian military hardware and its energy needs. But so far, India’s actions have been largely driven by self-interest. Despite its statements, it has not made any peace proposals like those of Turkey or China.

Indian symbolism over substance was also clear in Modi’s summer 2024 meetings with Putin and Zelenskyy. Modi visited Putin in July 2024 — a visit that coincided with Russian air strikes in Ukraine. Zelenskyy called the meeting a devastating blow to peace efforts. And the optics of Modi hugging Putin while a Ukrainian children’s hospital was bombed prompted a degree of damage control by New Delhi, leading to Modi’s visit to Ukraine in August 2024.

His visit to Ukraine was an attempt to reaffirm India’s position of neutrality on the war and its long-standing position of strategic

autonomy. It was also an attempt at a course correction in India’s relationship with Ukraine. Modi was the first Indian prime minister to visit Ukraine since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1993.

How does China impact India-Russia relations?

China is an important consideration in terms of India’s strategic calculations towards Russia. One of the reasons New Delhi is eager to maintain engagement with Russia is the fear that Moscow is becoming increasingly beholden to Beijing following its attack on Ukraine. India wants to provide Russia with strategic options as it becomes increasingly isolated and wants to deter it from becoming a client state of China. In parts of the West, that is already seen as a foregone conclusion, but Russia is not yet seen as a lost cause in India.

The other point to keep in mind is that China and India largely see eye to eye on the Ukraine war. Neither sees their close relationship with Moscow as translating into overt support for Russian actions in Ukraine. Both countries believe they are playing a constructive role through their purchase of discounted Russian crude, which is helping to control global energy prices.

But a key watch point is what Russia’s position will be on possible future hostilities between China and India. Historically, Moscow has played a relatively neutral position and has occasionally offered to play a mediating role. It has even leaned in India’s favour on occasion and has provided it with more advanced military platforms than it has provided China.

The fear in New Delhi is that this could be shifting and that in the future, Moscow could side with

China in a potential conflict or tensions with India. That would be a game-changer for India and would prompt it to rethink its relationship with Russia.

Russia providing more advanced military platforms to China would also be a major concern for India — and there are already some early signs of this happening. There has been somewhat of a role reversal in the defence trade between Russia and China. The Russian arms industry is becoming increasingly dependent on dual-use components from China. Another concern for India, albeit not as prominent, is that of an emerging Russia-China-Pakistan axis. While China is a more pressing and long-term concern for India and a key factor in the India-Russia relationship, Russia’s relations with Pakistan have also been deepening.

For instance, Pakistan’s then-prime minister Imran Khan was in Moscow when the Russian attack on Ukraine began, and did not condemn Russia’s actions. The Pakistani army chief subsequently travelled to Washington to reassure the US and ensure continued support from the IMF and other donors amid the country’s ongoing economic challenges.

Following Modi’s visit to Ukraine, any further actions or statements made by India that are perceived as critical of Russia could prompt Moscow to express its displeasure by deepening relations with or increasing outreach to Pakistan. For example, Moscow has voiced its support for Pakistan’s inclusion in BRICS+. India will want to keep a close eye on how this relationship evolves.

The article first appeared on Chatham House.



Russia has been a preferred arms supplier for India for many years because it provides arms at reasonable prices without end-user constraints, and is often able to supply sensitive technologies, which other countries are not.

But the relationship is undergoing a managed decline. It does not have the same level of strategic importance as it did during the Cold War. Although India still depends on Russia for a large proportion of its military hardware, since the 1990s, there has been a push to diversify.



Then-secretary general of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev (r) and then-prime minister of India Indira Gandhi exchange documents after signing the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation in 1971.
● HINDUSTAN TIMES



Visitors pass by the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, jointly developed by India and Russia, at the International Maritime Defense show in St. Petersburg, Russia, in July 2019.
● AP

Iran women draw confidence from Russia friendlies ahead of Futsal World Cup

Sports Desk

Iran women's futsal head coach Shahrzad Mozaffar said she was pleased with her team's performance during a couple of friendly games against Russia last week.

Iran, which will take part in the inaugural Women's Futsal World Cup in the Philippines in a month, played to a 2-2 draw against the European opponent on Thursday, before winning 4-3 two days later in the Russian city of Tula.

Maral Torkaman, the top scorer in May's Asian Cup, impressed again in the Iranian outfit by finding the net on four occasions – including a double in the first game.

"The camp in Russia played a vital role in assessing our strengths and weaknesses, while it also improved the players' technical and mental cohesion ahead of the World Cup," Mozaffar said.

"We had worked on the tactical aspects of our game in recent training sessions, devising various defensive, offensive, and transition strategies. We also fo-

cused intensively on improving the players' physical and mental condition. However, none of these drills had been tested in an actual match. That's why the two friendlies were crucial in putting what we had practiced into action," said Mozaffar, who returned to the Iranian job for a second spell in June, replacing Forouzan Soleimani after a below-par Asian Cup campaign in China, where the two-time champion failed to defend its title and finished third.

"It took us some time to find our rhythm in the first match, given it had been several months since our last international game. We conceded two early goals but as the match progressed, the team seized control of the game. The connection between the lines improved, and we ultimately managed to turn the match around. It showed that the team is on the right track mentally," added the Iranian coach.

"We worked on the details between the two games, focusing on Russia's playing pattern, how to defend against their

quick rotations, and exploit open spaces in our counter-attacks. Fortunately, the players executed the instructions perfectly. The result itself showed that the team learned from the first match and was able to adapt more quickly to the conditions.

"All 15 players in the squad got some playing time, which was crucial because it helped us evaluate the players' performances in different situations and against a strong opponent like Russia. These games gave us a better understanding of the players' form, which will certainly influence our final selections for the World Cup."

Iran will get its World Cup campaign underway against eight-time Copa America champion Brazil – the top team in the latest FIFA World Ranking – on November 23, before taking on Panama three days later.

Mozaffar's side will hope to be in contention for a top-two finish in Group D and a place in the round of 16, when squaring off against world No. 7 Italy on November 29.



Iranian players and coaching staff are seen ahead of a futsal friendly against Russia in Tula, Russia, on Oct. 18, 2025.

AFC Champions League Two: Sepahan, Esteghlal eager to build on domestic momentum

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League clubs Sepahan and Esteghlal will look to take inspiration from their recent domestic form when resuming AFC Champions League Two action.

Sepahan will take on Turkmenistan's Ahal FC in Group C at Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium today, with Esteghlal hosting Jordan's Al Weh-

dat in Group A at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium on Wednesday.

Sepahan will head into the home game on the back of two wins either side of goalless draw against city rival Zob Ahan in the Iranian league, having failed to win any of its first six games in the new season.

Mohammad Daneshgar and Ehsan Hajsafi were on target as Sepahan walked away with a 2-0

win at Esteghlal Khuzestan on Friday to move up to seventh in the Iranian league table.

Moharram Navidkia's men suffered a 1-0 away loss to Jordanian top-flight champion Al Hussein in their opening game in the group, which now features only three teams after India's Mohun Bagan SG was expelled from the competition for refusing to travel to Iran for the previous matchday in September.

Ahal FC will also chase a first win the Asian second-tier competition, following a 4-1 home defeat against the Jordanian side last time out.

Esteghlal, meanwhile, will step onto the pitch fresh off a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Mes Rafsanjan in Tehran on Friday.

In-form Albanian winger Jasir Asani found the net in the first half – his third goal in six league outings – as the Capital Blues celebrated only a second victory across all competitions in the new campaign – Esteghlal's first win in 58 days.

The result took Esteghlal to third in the table, easing the pressure on under-fire Portuguese coach Ricardo Sa Pinto, but his team still can't afford to drop points today after back-to-back defeats in its opening two matches.

Esteghlal began its campaign with a 7-1 humiliation against the UAE's Al Wasl in Dubai, and then fell to a 1-0 home defeat to Bahrain's Al Muharraq.

Al Wehdat is also desperate to end a two-game losing streak in the competition.

The Jordanian team was beaten 2-1 by Al Wasl at home, before the 4-0 rout at Al Muharraq in mid-September.



Esteghlal winger Jasir Asani (L) celebrates his goal during a 1-0 win against Mes Rafsanjan in Tehran, Iran, on October 17, 2025.



● ATTU

'I won't get carried away': Faraji unfazed after stunning Asia's elite

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis prodigy Benyamin Faraji insists he "won't get carried away" after pulling off stunning upsets against two top-ranked players at the Asian Team Championships earlier in October.

The men's competition was hardly one to remember for the Iranian team as before successive defeats to China, South Korea, and North Korea in the knockout phase saw the country settle for an eighth-place finish, though the result was still enough to secure a berth at next April's ITTF World Team Championships in London.

Faraji, who first made the headlines by stunning Chinese world No. 1 and reigning world champion Wang Chuqin at last year's Asian Championships, was back in giant-slaying mode in Bhubaneswar, India. The 15-year-old sensation came from behind to beat Lin Shidong – ranked second behind his compatriot in the ITTF World Ranking – 3-2 in the quarterfinals, before rallying from two games down to defeat South Korean world No. 13 An Jaehyun in the 5th-8th placement match.

Faraji came within touching distance of beating Lin at the Asian Championships last year, only to relinquish a six-point lead in the deciding game to suffer a 3-2 defeat.

"The bitter taste of that defeat always stayed with me because I had come so close to beating Lin in our previous match," Faraji told ISNA. "When we were scheduled to play China, I told the national team head coach, 'If I get to play Lin, I will beat him this time. I am fully prepared.' I was in the right mindset, not to mention I always play well against Chinese players."

On the secret behind his sensational victory, Faraji said: "I had no significant technical or tactical superiority over Lin, but, as I said, I was fully prepared mentally and that's what made the difference in the end."

"These individual wins come and go; what truly matters is the success of the team. A victory over China would have meant we beat the Olympic champion and secured a first-ever semifinal spot for Iran at the Asian Championships. Nonetheless, I am delighted with my victories over these table tennis giants, and hope I can maintain this momentum," added

the Iranian, who won a historic under-15 bronze at the 2024 World Youth Championships.

"After I defeated Lin, all eyes were on me but I kept my composure because the tournament wasn't over – we still had a match against South Korea. An is formidable opponent and a former world bronze medalist. I lost the first two games, but managed to stage a comeback and win. It was a real thriller.

Despite already being regarded as a high-profile young prospect before the tournament, Faraji said the level of attention changed dramatically after his wins.

"So many fans asked for photos and selfies. Even during training sessions, all the cameras were on me. However, I won't let any of this distract me. I won't get carried away by these victories – they only motivate me to work harder and achieve even more," Faraji said.

Reflecting on his growing dominance against Chinese players, Faraji said: "I beat most of my Chinese opponents at the junior level last year. I think I had an 8-3 record against them. A decade ago, Iranian players were quite intimidated when competing against the Chinese, but that's not the case anymore as we play with no fear against them – a level of fearlessness I don't see in players from other countries."

"Even though we couldn't win a medal in this tournament, we've learned that we are getting closing the gap on China, Japan, and South Korea. As I said before, we used to be afraid of the Chinese, but this time, I was confident that we could win a medal. Perhaps we were a bit unlucky against China. I'm sure we can beat China and Japan in a couple of years and play with much more confidence at the next Asian Games."

When asked if he is concerned that, now as a well-known player, his tactics might be predictable for his future opponents, Faraji said: "We analyze every opponent the night before the match and I come up with a specific gameplan for each player."

"You might need long serves against an opponent, while against another, serving short could be the key. I won't let anyone figure out my tactics as I have thousands of them at my disposal," Faraji asserted.

Global recognition of Iranian villages drives smart rural development

Iranica Desk

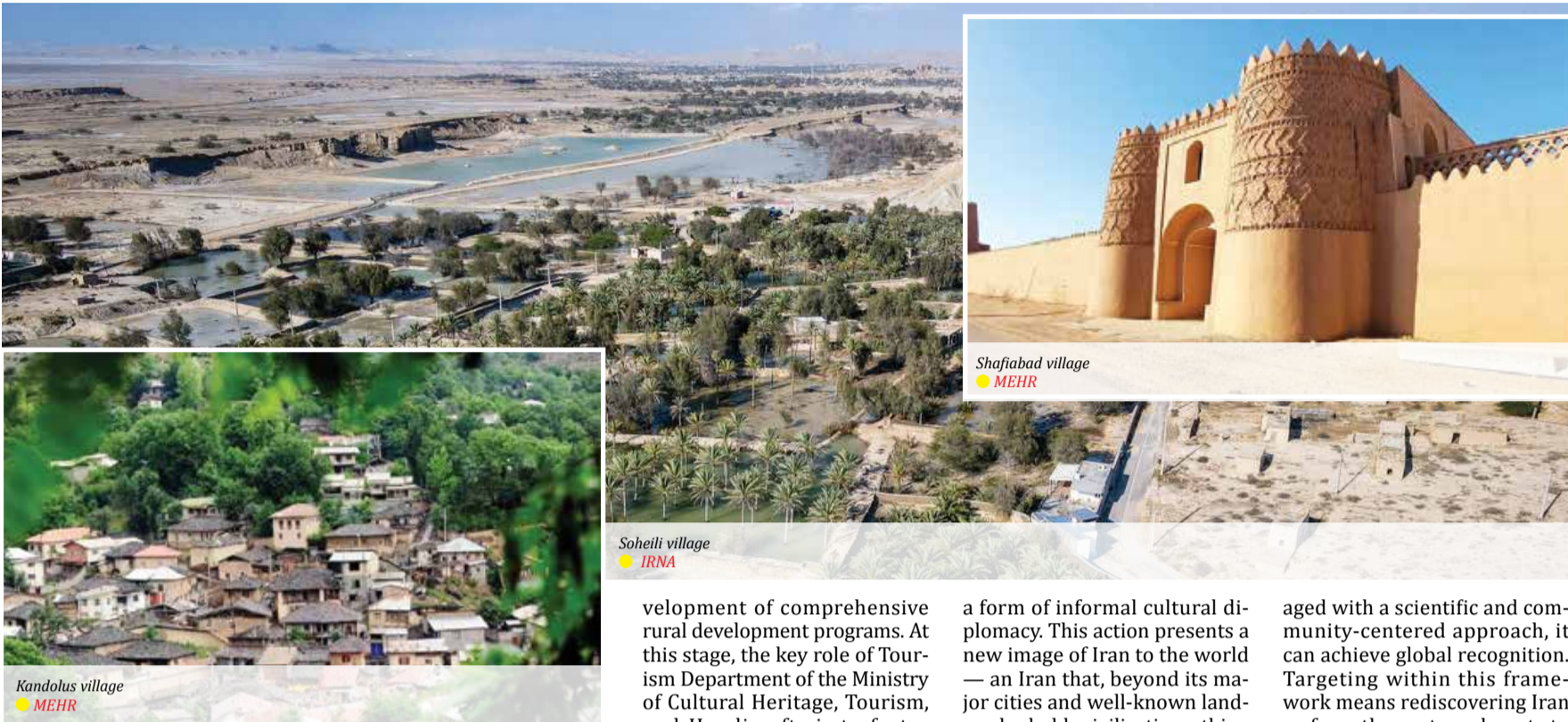
The inscription of the three villages — Soheili on Qeshm Island, Kandolus in Mazandaran Province, and Shafiabad in Kerman Province — on the list of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) is not merely a symbolic honor for Iran; it represents an effective step toward mapping a new path of smart destination development, sustainable growth, and the revival of local identities within the country's tourism system.

Hani Rastegaran, advisor to the Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts for Tourism Affairs, wrote in a note published by IRNA: This event is a clear sign of Iran's hidden capacities in rural and community-based tourism, which can become one of the driving forces of the national economy.

The inclusion of the names of these three Iranian villages on the global list is a historic opportunity to redefine the concept of "development from within the people." These villages, by relying on their cultural, natural, and historical elements, managed to stand out among hundreds of international candidates as successful examples of coexistence between humans and nature.

Soheili, located beside the mangrove forests; Kandolus, with its historic architecture and authentic northern culture; and Shafiabad, situated on the edge of the Lut Desert — together present three distinct faces of Iran's climate, lifestyle, and civilization to the world.

However, the significance of this recognition goes beyond the mere inclusion of names on a list; these villages are now becoming target hubs on Iran's tourism map — destinations



that can inspire a new direction in tourism policy, visitor distribution, and the development of lesser-known regions.

In today's world, tourism is moving toward more human-centered and responsible experiences. The modern traveler is no longer only seeking historical monuments or shopping centers; they seek to feel the rhythm of local life, taste traditional foods, listen to community stories, and experience the authentic way of life of the people.

Iran's globally recognized villages shine precisely at this point: in Soheili, travelers experience both the beauty of nature and the maritime culture of southern Iran as they wander among the floating mangrove forests and the heights of Qeshm Is-

land. In Kandolus, walking through cobblestone alleys, breathing in the scent of damp wood, and hearing the murmur of springs evoke the authenticity and natural harmony of the North. And in Shafiabad, the boundless silence and star-filled desert sky tell a different story of peace and beauty.

These three examples can serve as models for designing new destinations in Iran — destinations built upon climatic diversity, local identity, and community capacity, each offering a unique story to share with the world's travelers.

From a policy-making perspective, the global recognition of these villages offers an opportunity to integrate sustainable tourism into the fabric of people's daily lives through the de-

velopment of comprehensive rural development programs. At this stage, the key role of Tourism Department of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts is to foster synergy among government agencies, local councils, and the private sector to provide the necessary infrastructure — from access roads and accommodations to marketing and branding.

Along this path, empowering local communities is the most essential principle. The people of Soheili, Kandolus, and Shafiabad villages are not merely hosts to tourists but creators of the travel experience itself. Training in hospitality skills, standardizing eco-lodge services, strengthening handicraft industries, and supporting women and youth in these villages are vital links in the tourism value chain of these regions.

Global reflection

The inclusion of these villages on the global list also carries

a form of informal cultural diplomacy. This action presents a new image of Iran to the world — an Iran that, beyond its major cities and well-known landmarks, holds civilization, ethics, and beauty within its villages.

Foreign tourists visiting these regions engage not only with nature but also with the Iranian people and their authentic way of life. Such encounters serve as the most effective language for introducing the real Iran to the global stage — a language that requires no translation, as it emerges naturally from the hospitality and sincerity of its people.

The Tourism Department plans for the coming years are based on the concept of targeting new tourism destinations. As model hubs, these globally recognized villages can pave the way for designing similar destinations in other provinces.

This experience has shown that if the natural and cultural heritage of each region is man-

aged with a scientific and community-centered approach, it can achieve global recognition.

Targeting within this framework means rediscovering Iran — from the eastern deserts to the northern coasts, from the mountainous villages of Kurdistan to the southern palm groves.

The global inscription of these three Iranian villages sends a clear message about the future of the country's tourism: Iran has the capacity to join the global network of rural tourism, offering authentic narratives and diverse faces of its land.

Along this path, smart policymaking, scientific planning, and active participation of local communities are decisive factors.

May Soheili, Kandolus, and Shafiabad mark the beginning of a new era — an era in which Iran's villages become not only the origin of life but also the destination of travelers' global dreams.

Urban planners value cemeteries, encourage community engagement

Iranica Desk

Over the past century, particularly between the 1930s and 1990s, many historic cemeteries across Iran were removed from city maps under the pretext of urban development or labeled as "incompatible land use."

In urban planning schemes, cemeteries were often classified alongside markets and slaughterhouses, gradually being excluded from the list of recognized cultural and spiritual spaces. However, over the past two decades, the perspective of Tehran's urban managers toward historic cemeteries has gradually shifted toward preservation and cultural recognition, according to Mehr News Agency.

The national registration of historic cemeteries, including Zahir-od-Dowleh, Ibn Babawayh, and the Doulab Armenian Cemetery, reflects this transformative change — a redirection from previously destructive approaches toward value-oriented preservation and urban revitalization.

Tehran Urban Research and Planning Center has recent-



ly introduced a new strategic approach for the value-based preservation of historic cemeteries.

According to the findings of the center, historic cemeteries are, in essence, a form of cultural landscape: spaces with a history of more than 50 years that possess internal structural organization, spatial coherence, and a profound connection with their surrounding environment.

These cemeteries are not merely the final resting places of prominent religious, literary, cultural, scientific, and artistic figures. Due to their unique physical and landscape characteristics, they also play a crucial role in collective memory and



the urban identity of Tehran. Threat assessments conducted across ten domains indicate that historic cemeteries face more than 70 types of damage, spanning ten major areas — from physical and spatial deterioration to management,



social, and environmental threats. These factors place the sustainable life of these historic spaces at serious risk, leading to gradual destruction — ranging from the demolition or homogenization of graves to non-expert interventions in the design of

green spaces and tomb architecture.

In developing this strategic plan, researchers at the Tehran Urban Research and Planning Center drew on international experiences, UNESCO documentation, and guidelines from the Getty Conservation Institute to establish a comprehensive theoretical framework for the preservation of historic cemeteries. Within this framework, cemeteries are recognized as potential sites for cultural and heritage tourism — spaces that, in addition to being physically protected, can foster a sense of belonging and respect for the past among citizens.

The research emphasizes that the most appropriate approach

for historic cemeteries involves preserving their existing condition, providing continuous care, and ensuring structural stabilization. Reconstruction or aesthetic homogenization should only be undertaken under very specific conditions and based on meticulous documentation.

The final summary of the study presents a vision document for the preservation of these sites, alongside key strategies and guidelines for protecting historic cemeteries in Tehran.

Ultimately, the research underscores that historic cemeteries should not fall victim to uncontrolled urban development, but must instead be recognized and respected as living cultural spaces and guardians of the city's collective memory.

According to the researchers, no action should lead to the loss of the historical, cultural, or spiritual values of these cemeteries, as each tombstone represents a unique narrative and preserves a part of Iran's rich and layered history. By safeguarding these sites, Tehran not only protects its past but also fosters a deeper cultural awareness and appreciation among future generations.

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Fajr Int'l Film Festival serves as cultural beacon: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, underscored the significance of hosting the Fajr International Film Festival in the current national climate. During a signing ceremony for the festival's memorandum of understanding in Shiraz, Salehi emphasized that showcasing Iran's vibrancy to the world is crucial. "The more we can demonstrate that Iran remains lively and resilient despite challenges, the more we achieve our national interests," he stated, IRNA reported. Salehi highlighted the festival's role beyond cinema, viewing it as a national endeavor that fosters social confidence and normalizes the atmosphere. He noted that the presence of

numerous countries at the event contributes to this effect. "The Fajr International Film Festival is not merely a cinematic event; it is a national undertaking," he affirmed. The minister also acknowledged cinema's pivotal role in public diplomacy and cultural representation, describing it as a "recognized face" of Iranian culture. He expressed pride in the festival's esteemed status, attributing it to the collective efforts of the Iranian cinematic community. Regarding Shiraz as the festival's host city, Salehi praised its symbolic national significance. "Shiraz, the city of Sa'adi and Hafez, symbolizes Persian poetry and art," he remarked. He suggested that the festival offers an opportunity to redefine the relationship between poet-



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi (R) and Fars Governor General Hossein Ali Amiri exchange a memorandum of understanding on October 20, 2025, to host the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival in Shiraz, southwestern Iran.
● [akhbarinkhabar.ir](#)

ry and cinema, aligning them as complementary wings of Iranian-Islamic civilization. The signing ceremony was attended by various dignitaries, including Fars Governor General Hossein Ali Amiri, who emphasized the province's rich cultural heritage. Amiri noted that the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has referred to Fars as "the land of religion, epic, and art," highlighting its embodiment of these values.



Tehran Int'l Short Film Festival turns lens on Iran's aging society



Arts & Culture Desk

The 42nd Tehran International Short Film Festival (TISFF) is underway at the Iran Mall Cinema Complex, spotlighting themes of aging, solitude, and the erosion of familial ties. The event, running from October 19 through October 23, is directed by Behrooz Shoaibi, and carries the theme "Rationality and Intellectualism." The festival's opening day featured a selection of films addressing Iran's growing elderly population and the social challenges they face, IRNA reported. Official statistics indicate that approximately 60% of elderly Iranians, partic-

ularly women, live alone, a trend exacerbated by declining birth rates and shrinking household sizes. Among the notable films was "Tamaroz," directed and produced by Peyman and Pouya Inalouei. The social drama portrays an elderly man seeking companionship in his twilight years. Esmaili Meh-rabi's compelling performance as the isolated senior highlights the emotional depth of the narrative. The film subtly contrasts the dignity of old age with the profound need for human connection. Another standout was "Goodbye Trash," an allegorical film by Bah-man and Bahram Ark, produced by Mehdi Badrlou. The story

centers on a solitary elderly Azerbaijani woman who forms an unusual bond with a garbage monster, symbolizing her emotional neglect. Mahrokh Rafizadeh's nuanced portrayal of the elderly woman captures the delicate balance between humor and pathos. Festival juror Mirona Radu from Romania praised Iranian cinema for its "great honesty" and its ability to authentically depict family dynamics. She emphasized the festival's role in fostering a fair platform for both established and emerging filmmakers. In conjunction with the screenings, a photo exhibition focusing on women and family opened at the festival. The exhibition, showcasing 60 selected works from over 1,200 submissions, was inaugurated by festival director Shoaibi, judge Mehdi Ashna, and Narjes Abolghasemi from the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs. The TISFF, recognized by the Academy Awards, continues to serve as a significant platform for short filmmakers worldwide, offering a venue for cultural exchange and cinematic innovation.

Majidi calls for broader view of modern sculpture

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian sculptor and academic Abbas Majidi urged critics to rethink narrow definitions of sculpture, saying the art form today extends "from abstract to conceptual" and should no longer be confined to traditional figurative carving. His recent work, 'Peyvand-e Mehrgan', he said, embodies this modern understanding. Majidi described as "completely wrong" the notion that his latest piece is not a sculpture, arguing that such criticism stems from "outdated, historical" thinking that limits the field to conventional craftsmanship. "Unless one insists on viewing it through that lens," he

said, "there's nothing in 'Peyvand-e Mehrgan' that contradicts the essence of sculpture." He explained that contemporary sculpture, beyond aesthetic traditions and art-historical paradigms, embraces a wide spectrum — including ready-mades and process-driven works — where ideas, form and spatial dialogue take precedence over material fidelity. "Volume is a tangible reality and carries meaning," he noted, emphasizing the interaction between form and space as central to any sculptural expression. Majidi said 'Peyvand-e Mehrgan' establishes a strong connection with its surroundings. "You can walk around it, study it from every an-



gle, and sense how the positive and negative spaces converse," he said, calling the work fully defensible both in form and concept. On whether the piece is interactive, Majidi drew a distinction between mechanical movement and natural engagement. "If interaction means mechanical motion or audience intervention, that's not the point," he said.

Golestan Palace to decode newly found Qajar-Era films using domestic expertise

Arts & Culture Desk

The director of Tehran's Golestan Palace said the recently identified 31 Qajar-era film reels are now being examined by specialists, and their content will be decoded and released through a domestic digital platform once analysis is complete. Afarin Emami, who heads the UNESCO-listed World Heritage site, told Iranian media that the reels, 28 in 35-mm format and three in 16-mm, were found during a recent inventory and preservation check at the palace's Album House, IRNA reported. "Our goal is to use internal capacities to extract and interpret the visual content," she said, stressing that expert evaluation is under way to determine the films' historical value. The discovery, made earlier this month by the Album House's chief custodian Reza Rezaei, revealed that what had long been classified as "raw film stock" actually contained moving images from the Qajar dynasty. Preliminary inspection suggests scenes of royal ceremonies, religious gatherings, and daily court life, though precise subjects remain unverified. Emami said the films are being handled under controlled conditions and will be analyzed with assistance from national institu-



tions such as the National Film Center and museum departments. "Specialists will decide how best to decode and preserve the material to ensure maximum accuracy and protection," she noted. Once authenticated, the restored footage will be publicly unveiled at Golestan Palace in a formal event featuring scholars and film historians. The content will also be made available to researchers through a dedicated domestic platform managed in coordination with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts' information-security office. The Qajar films add to a growing collection of rare cinematic material preserved at Golestan Palace. In previous projects led by the late historian Shahriar Adl, 59 minutes of Qajar footage were extracted from 38 reels restored

in France and Germany and later returned to Iran. Golestan's Album House, home to more than 61,000 historical items—including early cameras, photographs, glass negatives, and paintings—remains one of the world's most significant royal image archives, second only to Britain's Windsor collection. While the duration of the new decoding process is still unknown, Emami said it will continue "until the specialists reach full clarity about every reel." She emphasized that the project could yield valuable insights into early visual documentation of Iranian society and the origins of Persian cinema. "If these films bring new knowledge to what we already know about the Qajar period," Emami said. "We'll share them widely so that history can speak for itself."

Pezeshkian urges elites ...

"The enemy has its eyes on us, thinking Iran has weakened and it is time to strike," he said. "But if our elites step forward, the enemy can't do a thing." The president described the country's situation as "unacceptable," noting that Iran is blessed with vast natural and human resources but continues to face serious economic and environmental chal-

lenges. "It is neither proper nor dignified that we sit atop a mountain of blessings yet struggle with a mountain of problems," he said. Pezeshkian dismissed the culture of blame that, he said, has long characterized Iranian policymaking. "Looking for culprits won't solve anything. The real issue is that we have not made proper use of what God has given us," he said, urging a shift toward

pragmatic, evidence-based governance. He defined "righteous action" as work grounded in knowledge, ability and willpower, warning against policy decisions detached from scientific planning. "We have developed our cities without comprehensive studies and now face crises like subsidence, air pollution and congestion," he said.