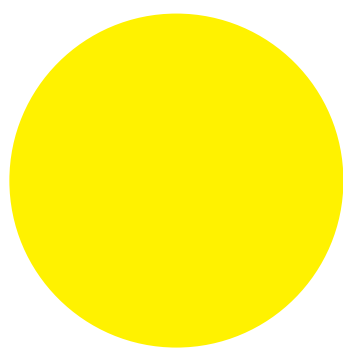


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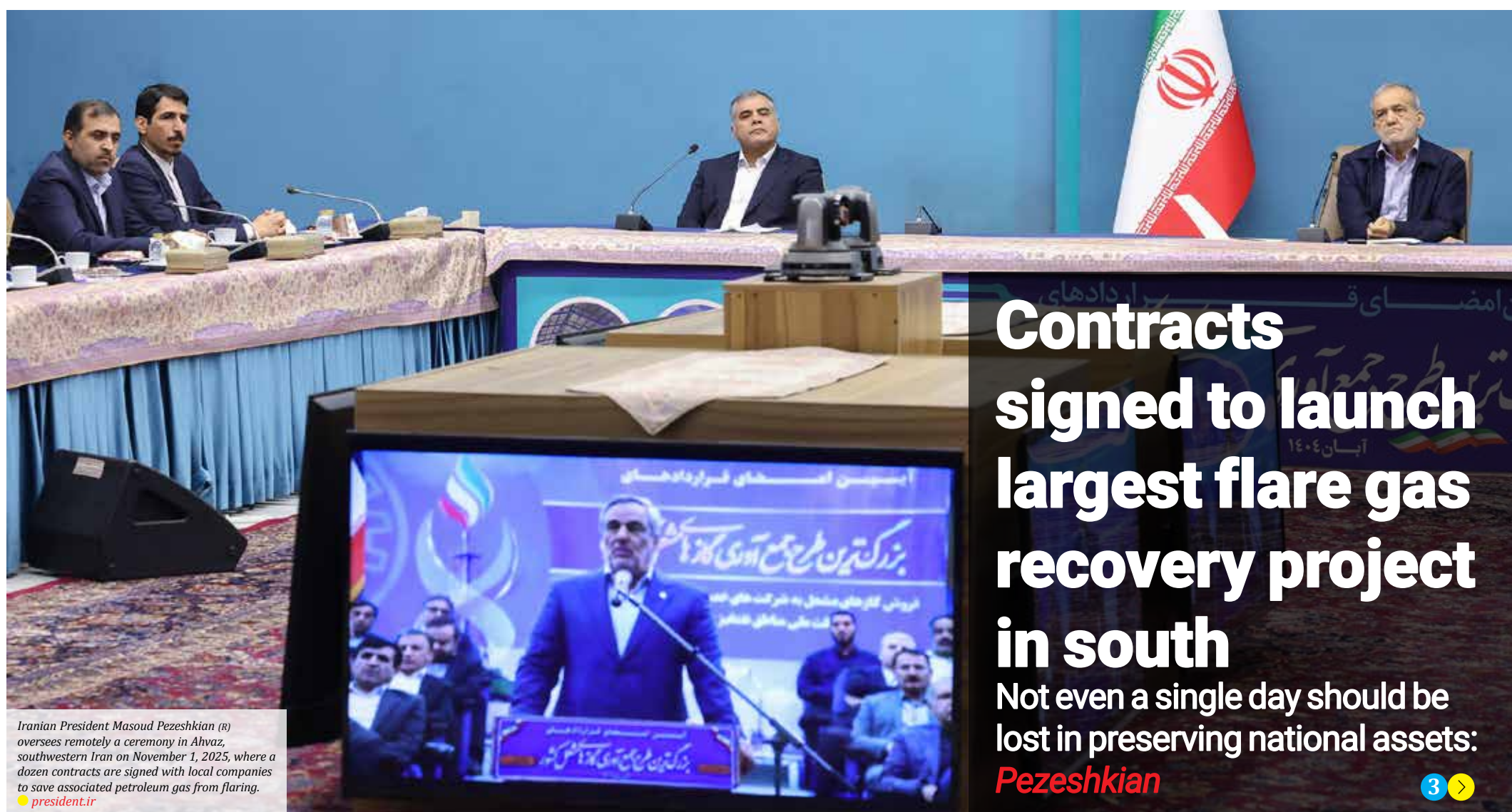
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| IranDailyWeb

Araghchi: Iran not to negotiate on enrichment, missile program

'Israel will face another defeat in any future conflict'

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) oversees remotely a ceremony in Ahvaz, southwestern Iran on November 1, 2025, where a dozen contracts are signed with local companies to save associated petroleum gas from flaring.
● president.ir

Contracts signed to launch largest flare gas recovery project in south

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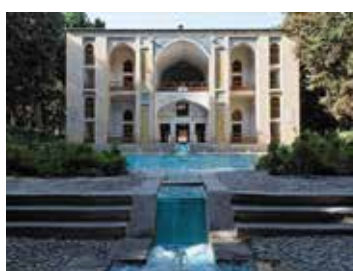
Pezeshkian

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Diwali sparks fire,
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Beyond Chabahar

Indian strategy needs deeper understanding of Iran



By Omid Babelian
India affairs expert

**O P I N I O N
E X C L U S I V E**

Along the flow of the waves where maritime routes have long forged enduring links between civilizations, the relationship between Iran and India remains one that goes far beyond ordinary interstate cooperation. For India, Iran is not solely a geographic point in West Asia; it is a link that can extend India's reach from the Indian Ocean to Central Asia, Russia, and parts of West Asia. Within this vision, Chabahar is not just a standalone project but a key component of India's maritime-centric strategic architecture—an architecture

that has grown increasingly prominent in New Delhi's strategic circles in recent years, redefining the role of sea routes, maritime networks, and key ports.

Yet, there is a visible gap between this potential and India's actual policy toward Iran—a gap born from an incomplete understanding and an often-reductive view of Iran's role and the complexities surrounding it. The experience following the US withdrawal of sanctions waivers for India's activities in Chabahar was telling: although New Delhi did not abandon the project, external pressure exposed just how vulnerable a structurally critical link in India's regional strategy could become. India's return to Chabahar, therefore, reflected less a full appreciation of Iran's strategic depth and more

an acknowledgment that excluding Iran from India's regional connectivity equation would create a serious void—one whose long-term costs would be considerable.

This gap in understanding also surfaces in Afghanistan, where India has embarked on a new policy track over the past two years. The reopening of India's embassy in Kabul was not simply symbolic; New Delhi has also pursued quiet, multilayered talks with the Taliban to prevent competitors from taking over the field. Still, it is clear that India's Afghan policy cannot be sustainable or effective without Iran. Iran not only controls the logistical and transit corridors linking India to Afghanistan but also possesses a historical familiarity and deep social networks within Afghanistan that no other actor can

replicate. Unless Indian foreign policy institutions factor this into their analyses, New Delhi's engagement with Kabul will remain incomplete and fraught with risk.

Under such circumstances, the importance of genuine understanding between the two nations becomes more critical than ever. Iran possesses three irreplaceable attributes: a deep civilizational heritage, a strategic maritime position, and the capacity to bridge multiple geopolitical spheres. Yet these elements can only play a meaningful role in India's policymaking when think tanks and intellectual elites from both countries collaborate to build shared perspectives and dispel misconceptions. Today, the fast-paced regional developments—from Chabahar and the Sea of Oman to Kabul and Dushan-

be—make sustained scholarly dialogue and joint analysis more essential than at any time before. Without such mechanisms, even the most promising initiatives risk being undermined by misinterpretation, bureaucratic inertia, or external pressure.

The Iran-India relationship is a legacy of the past, but its future depends on understanding and cognition. The waves may chart the course, but the depth of that course will be determined only by coherent engagement among the intellectuals, research institutions, and policymakers of both nations. In a world growing ever more complex, the continuity of this partnership will not rest on history alone, but on building a forward-looking and precise understanding—one that both Iran and India now need more than ever.

Araghchi: Iran not to negotiate on enrichment, missile program

'Israel will face another defeat in any future conflict'



International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that the Islamic Republic will not give up its capacity to enrich uranium and will never negotiate on its missile program to reach an agreement on its nuclear program.

Araghchi said in an interview with Al Jazeera that Tehran is ready to hold talks to remove concerns about its peaceful nuclear program, stressing that it is possible to reach a fair agreement. However, he noted that the United States has set "unacceptable conditions."

He was referring to the US demands for zero uranium enrichment in Iran and limits on its range of its missile.

"We will not negotiate on our missile program, and no rational person would agree to be disarmed. Halting uranium enrichment is not possible, and what

cannot be taken through war, cannot be given away through politics," Iran's top diplomat said.

Referring to talks with the US on Iran's nuclear program, he said that Iran has no desire for direct talks with Washington, but can reach an agreement through indirect negotiations, he added.

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 military commanders, nuclear scientists, and civilians.

The strikes came as Iran and the US were at the midst of the nuclear negotiations.

The United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of international law. On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the

Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the aggressions.

Referring to a possible confrontation between Iran and Israel in the future, Araghchi said that Iran anticipates any aggressive action by the Israeli regime and is prepared for all scenarios.

"We are at the highest state of readiness at all levels, and Israel will face another defeat in any future conflict.

We gained significant experience from previous war and tested our missiles in real combat. Any aggressive move by Israel will have dire consequences," he added.

Araghchi emphasized that Israel attempted to expand conflict in the region by targeting Iranian oil facilities.

"We managed the war with Israel carefully and prevented it from spreading across the region," he said, adding that Israel would not have initiated war without US approval.

Muscat calls for GCC's policy change toward Tehran

Iran, US urged to go back to negotiating table on nuclear issue

International Desk

Oman's Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi on Saturday pointed the finger of blame at Israel for being the main source of instability in the West Asia region, encouraging fellow Persian Gulf Arab countries to engage with Iran as well as Iraq and Yemen.

Addressing a panel at the IISS Manama Dialogue conference in Bahrain, Al-Busaidi said the five rounds of indirect US-Iran nuclear negotiations mediated by his country had made substantial progress before they were sabotaged by Israel. Three days before the sixth round of talks was set to take place in June, Israel "unleashed its bombs and missiles in an illegal and deadly act of sabotage."

Negotiations between Washington and Tehran were aimed at reaching a new deal on Iran's nuclear program, but talks collapsed when the 12-day war with Israel broke out. The US also intervened and carried out strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. "This was shameful, but unfortunately, it was not surprising. We have long known that Israel, not Iran, is the prime source of insecurity in the region," Al-Busaidi told the conference. A cease-fire last month ended just over two years of Israel's devastating war in Gaza and another shaky truce is in place with Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israel has also carried out attacks on Syria, Yemen and Qatar.

"Israel's deliberate efforts to prolong tensions have, in this case, killed hundreds of Iranian civilians. But Iran responded with remarkable respect, just as it had when Israel bombed its consulate in Syria, injured its ambassador in Lebanon and assassinated a leading Palestinian negotiator in Tehran," he said.

Al-Busaidi said that over the years, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council has at best sat back and permitted what he claimed to be Iran's "isolation."

"I believe this needs to change, and it needs to change now," the Omani foreign minister added.

Al-Busaidi said the states should engage Iran as well as Iraq and Yemen directly to bolster regional security. He advocated "inclusive dialogue"



Oman's Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi addresses a panel at the IISS Manama Dialogue conference in Bahrain on November 1, 2025.

and "engagement," rather than "containment" with Iran.

The six-member Persian Gulf Cooperation Council includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran-US talks

Al-Busaidi also urged Tehran and Washington to go back to the negotiating table.

"We want to return to the negotiations between Iran (and) the United States," Al-busaidi said.

His remarks came a day after Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-e Ravanchi, who visited Oman on Thursday, said that any negotiation whose outcome is predetermined is "meaningless."

The Iranian official said on Friday that Tehran and Muscat exchanged views on Iran's peaceful nuclear program and that the Islamic Republic expressed its "clear position" on the issue.

The senior diplomat stated that the US government's unwillingness to negotiate on an equal footing compels Iran to see no justification for continuing the talks under the current circumstances.

He stressed that any negotiation process must lead to balanced outcomes for both sides, stressing that "negotiations whose results are predetermined are meaningless."

Thousands feared 'in grave danger' in Sudanese city after fall to rebels

Iran raps attacks on civilians, stresses support for Sudan's territorial integrity

International Desk

Thousands of civilians are feared trapped and in imminent danger in the Sudanese city of El-Fasher after its fall to armed rebels, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said Saturday.

At war with the Sudanese army since April 2023, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seized El-Fasher on October 26, pushing the military out of its last stronghold in Darfur after a grinding 18-month siege marked by starvation and bombardment.

Since the city's fall, reports have emerged of summary executions, sexual violence, attacks on aid workers, looting and abductions, while communications remain largely cut off.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in a Friday phone conversation with his Sudanese counterpart, Mohi El-Din Salem, condemned the deadly attacks on civilians and emphasized Tehran's unwavering support for Sudan's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Araghchi reiterated Iran's commitment to supporting the legitimate government of Sudan and standing in solidarity with its people.

Survivors from El-Fasher who reached the nearby town of Tawila have told of mass killings, children shot before their parents, and civilians beaten and robbed as they fled.

The UN says more than 65,000 people have fled El-Fasher since Sunday but tens of thousands remain trapped. Around 260,000 people were in the city before the RSF's final assault.

"Large numbers of people remain in grave danger and are being prevented by the Rapid Support



Displaced Sudanese who fled El-Fasher city in Darfur gather around makeshift tents, in Tawila, Sudan, on October 29, 2025.

Forces and its allies from reaching safer areas," Doctors Without Borders said.

The NGO added that only 5,000 people had managed to make their way to Tawila, about 70 kilometers to the west.

Several eyewitnesses told MSF that a group of 500 civilians, along with soldiers from the military and the army-allied Joint Forces, had attempted to flee on Sunday, but most were killed or captured by the RSF and their al-

lies.

The UN said Friday the death toll from the armed rebels' assault on the city may be in the hundreds, while army allies accused the militant group of killing over 2,000 civilians.

The RSF has received weapons and drones from the UAE, according to UN reports, though Abu Dhabi has denied giving any support to the rebel group.

El-Fasher's capture gives the RSF full control over all five state capitals in

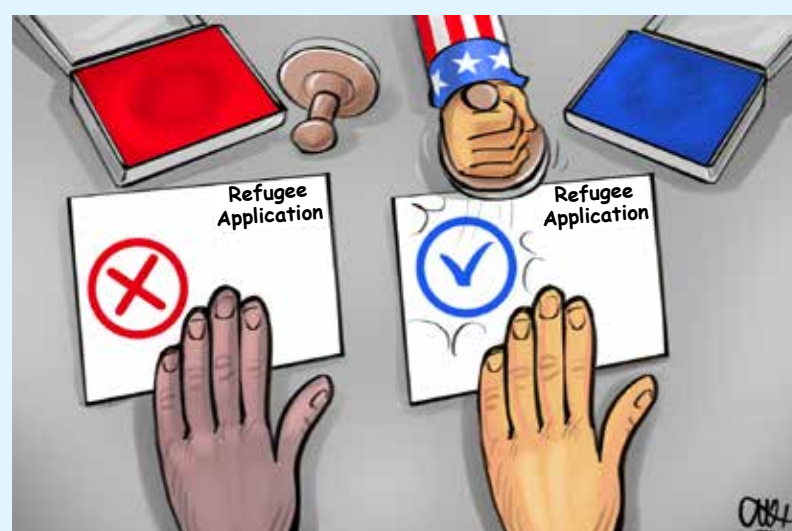
Darfur, effectively splitting Sudan along an east-west axis, with the army controlling the north, east and center.

UN officials have warned that the violence is now spreading to the neighboring Kordofan region, with reports emerging of "large-scale atrocities perpetrated" by the RSF. The wider conflict has killed tens of thousands, displaced nearly 12 million and created the world's largest displacement and hunger crises.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Contracts signed to launch largest flare gas recovery project in south

Not even a single day should be lost in preserving national assets: *Pezeshkian*

Economy Desk

Iran signed 12 contracts on Saturday for its largest-ever associated petroleum gas (APG) recovery project, aiming to capture about 295 million cubic feet per day (mcf/d) of flare gas from multiple oilfields in the country's southern provinces. The agreements, signed between the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) and private sector investors during a video conference attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian and Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, cover 32 flare sites in the provinces of Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Bushehr, IRNA reported. Addressing the ceremony, Pezeshkian said, "By capturing and utilizing flare gas, we have taken a major step not only toward significant economic gains but also toward improving environmental indicators and safeguarding the health of the people." Emphasizing the need to remove barriers facing the private sector, the president added, "Therefore, there must not be even a single day's delay in advancing this effort." Pezeshkian underlined that, "Not even a single day should be lost in preserving national assets. If possible—which I believe it is—these projects should be completed ahead of schedule. We must not allow flares to burn national assets daily before our eyes. Complementary plans for this goal must be quickly submitted to and approved by the government." Meanwhile, the oil minister said, "These 12 contracts will gradually increase flare gas recovery by about 295 mcf/d by the end of the Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2026)."

"With the continuation of this process and implementation of the planned projects, flare gas recovery will reach 44 million cubic meters per day by the end of the Seventh Development Plan (2029). This is exactly the quantitative target mandated in the plan," Paknejad said. He added that in the years leading up to the Pezeshkian administration, which took office in August 2024, Iran had created a total capacity of 330 mcf/d for flare gas collection. Officials described the new contracts as a model of successful cooperation between the government, private investors, and foreign partners involved in technology transfer. The projects are expected to attract about \$800 million in investment over two years and eliminate around 30 flare stacks, preventing the daily loss of 295 mcf of gas. The initiative is projected to generate some \$550 million in annual revenue, produce about 800,000 tons of gas condensates per year to feed petrochemical plants, and inject about 200 mcf/d of light gas into the national network — a move expected to bolster winter energy supplies. National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) CEO Hamid Bovard said the move marks "a new phase in the implementation of Iran's comprehensive flare gas recovery plan." "With this new set of contracts between NISOC and the private sector, the pace of flare elimination and associated gas recovery will accelerate," he said. Bovard said that under the Seventh Development Plan, the oil industry is pursuing three strategic goals: raising crude production to 4.5 million barrels



President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) and Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (l) attend a signing ceremony of 12 contracts for APG recovery project in the country's southern provinces through a video conference on November 1, 2025. [president.ir](#)

per day, gas production to 1.3 billion cubic meters per day, and collecting associated gas across the country. "To protect the environment, preserve hydrocarbon resources, and balance the national gas network, Iran is implementing its comprehensive flare gas collection plan," he said. "Within the next two years, 1.9 billion cubic feet of flare gas — about 90 percent of recoverable volumes — will be captured."

He noted that the plan will prevent the emission of about 5,700 tons of carbon per day and includes the launch of Iran's first mini- Natural Gas Liquids (NGLs) plant with foreign investment, as well as a modular refinery with a capacity of 45 mcf/d in the Masjed Soleyman oil region in Khuzestan Province. Bovard also announced a new tender for 18 additional investment packages aimed at capturing gas from 42 more

flare sites. "These packages will be offered at a base rate of zero to capable private investors as part of our drive toward full flare elimination," he said. "Flare gas recovery is not only a major step toward sustainable development and environmental protection, but also a clear example of safeguarding national wealth and achieving balance in the country's energy equation," the deputy oil minister added.

Tehran-Vienna flights to resume Monday; Lufthansa likely in December



REUTERS

Economy Desk

Direct flights between Tehran and Vienna will resume on Mon-

day as Austrian Airlines restarts its service, according to acting director of Imam Khomeini International Airport. Ramin Kashf-Azar told ISNA that the first direct Vienna-to-Tehran flight will arrive early Monday morning, marking the relaunch of regular service between the two capitals. He added that negotiations have also been held with Lufthansa, and the German carrier is expect-

ed to resume Tehran-Frankfurt flights in early December. "Lufthansa has conducted the necessary evaluations, and these flights are likely to start from early December, operating six days a week on the Tehran-Frankfurt route," he said. Kashf-Azar noted that expanding the airport's flight network is a key strategic priority and remains at the center of its development plans.

Iran, China set up joint agricultural research center under 25-year pact

Economy Desk

Iran and China have established a joint rice research center as part of their landmark 25-year strategic cooperation agreement, aiming to develop high-yield, drought-resistant hybrid varieties capable of producing more than six metric tons per hectare, Iranian deputy agriculture minister said. Speaking to Tasnim news agency, Gholamreza Golmohammadi, head of Iran's Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization (AREEO), said that the initiative marks a significant expansion of agricultural collaboration between the two countries, which also includes the importation of new Chinese sugarcane varieties that could double domestic yields for the first time since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. He emphasized Tehran's determination to advance scientific cooperation despite the Western sanctions. "Since the reimposition of sanctions in 2018 (by the US President Donald Trump), many international institutions in the agricultural research sector—except FAO—have withdrawn



from Iran, severely limiting access to germplasm and advanced plant varieties," Golmohammadi said. "But these conditions have not stopped us. Scientific collaboration, particularly with China, continues under the framework of the 25-year agreement." Under the pact, China has issued permits for Iranian researchers to travel for advanced training, fully funded by Beijing, he said. According to the official, six young Iranian scientists will soon attend specialized courses in seed improvement across key crops including horticulture, oilseeds, wheat, rice, potatoes, canola, and ornamental plants, with all expenses covered by the Chinese government. Private-sector experts will

also be sent to China for training in sericulture (silk production) and sugarcane cultivation, Golmohammadi added. Negotiations are underway to establish joint research centers for tea and silk, leveraging China's advanced tea research capabilities to modernize Iran's production and processing technologies. Germplasm exchanges are already in progress to strengthen Iran's national gene banks, with a focus on developing climate-resilient and drought-tolerant crop varieties. Iran, in turn, has submitted a list of its own plant varieties eligible for exchange, and both sides are finalizing protocols for safe, regulated germplasm transfer in line with international standards.

Alborz industry chief says AI use can boost productivity by 20%, cut costs

Economy Desk

An Iranian provincial industry chief said that integrating artificial intelligence and advanced technologies into industry could increase productivity by 20% while reducing production costs. Speaking at a Saturday press conference in northern Alborz Province marking the National Day of Production and Export, Reza Rezaei, head of the province's Chamber of Industry, Mine and Trade, warned that the world is rapidly shifting toward a knowledge-based and skill-driven economy, and

Iran must not fall behind in this transformation or risk losing its industrial value-added and competitive edge, IRNA reported. He announced the establishment of a joint secretariat among industrial and economic institutions to promote synergy between the private and public sectors. "We are ready to take a leading role in developing new technologies, including artificial intelligence, as well as in expanding exports and international investment," he said. Rezaei also revealed that for the first time, a memorandum of understanding has been signed



IRNA

between Alborz Province and Russia, focusing on export development, technology transfer, and cooperation in production and industry. According to Parham Rezaei, head of the Alborz Chamber of Commerce,

despite its small size, the province hosts nearly 4,000 industrial and manufacturing units and is a national leader in key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food production, and auto parts.

India's geopolitical transformation

From third-world leadership to emerging power



By Ahmad
Rashidi Nejad
Geopolitical researcher

OPINION

The history of international relations has witnessed the rise of actors who, by making smart use of their geography and political capital, have managed to carve out an independent role on the world stage. During the Cold War, the Republic of India stood as a textbook case of such a player — one that cemented its place as an autonomous geopolitical pole by setting forth an alternative paradigm.

However, the collapse of the bipolar order and the emergence of new global realities have brought to the surface a fundamental question: Is India still the autonomous player it once was, or has it fallen into new patterns of dependency? Unraveling this transformation calls for a deeper look into the roots of the Non-Aligned strategy in the context of the Cold War and an analysis of how it plays out in today's complex international system. This piece argues that India has not entirely let go of its autonomy, but rather, in a pragmatic response to its shifting strategic environment, has shifted gears from idealistic non-alignment to multilateral pragmatism.

India during Cold War

When the world was split down the middle between two rival blocs, India, under Jawaharlal Nehru, took up a bold and innovative position, establishing itself as the symbol of autonomy and leadership of the Third World. The political philosophy of non-alignment, the cornerstone of India's foreign policy at the time, was not passive neutrality but an active strategy to keep its freedom to the fullest and steer clear of the power politics of the superpowers. This approach allowed India to draw in dozens of newly independent nations that wanted to



The illustration shows Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi between geographical representations of the United States and China.

● EAGLE EYE EXPLORE

stay out of the ideological tug-of-war between Washington and Moscow. Through leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement, India effectively built up a third geopolitical bloc grounded in principles such as respect for national sovereignty and peaceful dispute resolution. In practice, this translated into keeping an even keel in relations with both camps. Although New Delhi's ties with Moscow ran deeper — historically, economically, and especially militarily (particularly after their 1971 treaty) — India never signed up as a full ally of the Eastern bloc. At the same time, it kept open its channels of communication and access to development aid from Europe

and the United States. This knack for playing both sides deftly and extracting concessions from each, without bowing to either, showcased India's distinctive autonomy and unique position.

Tensions with Pakistan were, for the most part, confined to a bilateral, regional rivalry over Kashmir, and India largely kept that quarrel from spilling into the broader Cold War narrative. All told, India, during this period, stood out as a self-reliant geopolitical actor, operating based on national calculations and an alternative ideological vision.

India after Cold War

The collapse of the Soviet Union

and the end of the bipolar system forced India to rethink its place in the international order from the ground up. Two major developments shaped this transition most: the rise of the People's Republic of China as a dominant economic and military rival along India's borders, and the broader spread of global multipolarity. In response, the old doctrine of non-alignment, once meaningful in a bipolar world, gave way to a more flexible, adaptive strategy known as "multilateral pragmatism".

In this new paradigm, autonomy is no longer about isolation but about the ability to work with all centers of power simultaneously and strike a bal-



Still, India has not crossed over into the Western camp. With remarkable dexterity, it continues to take part in China- and Russia-led platforms as well. Its active membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS group bears out this dual-track diplomacy. Within the SCO, India sits down with China and Russia to discuss Eurasian security issues, while through BRICS, it helps build up a more balanced economic and financial order as an alternative to Western hegemony. This ability to walk both sides of the street demonstrates India's brand of "assertive pragmatism".

ance that serves one's interests. The main catalyst behind this change in India was the growing Chinese threat. Unresolved land disputes, recurring border clashes, and Beijing's expanding strategic footprint in the Indian Ocean — through its sweeping Belt and Road Initiative — pushed New Delhi to forge deeper strategic partnerships with the United States and its allies. The formation and institutionalization of the Quad among the US, Japan, Australia, and India stands out as a prime example of this strategic pivot. The group has set up a solid framework for maritime security cooperation and countering Chinese influence across the Indo-Pacific.

Still, this does not mean India has crossed over into the Western camp. With remarkable dexterity, it continues to take part in China- and Russia-led platforms as well. Its active membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS group bears out this dual-track diplomacy. Within the SCO, India sits down with China and Russia to discuss Eurasian security issues, while through BRICS, it helps build up a more balanced economic and financial order as an alternative to Western hegemony. This ability to walk both sides of the street demonstrates India's brand of "assertive pragmatism".

On the bilateral front, India's ties with Washington have been upgraded to a "Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership". Yet, despite tensions with China, economic interdependence and ongoing border diplomacy continue. Even amid the Ukraine war, India, despite mounting Western pressure, has refrained from condemning Russia and kept up oil imports and military cooperation with Moscow — autonomous decisions grounded in its own national calculus.



Then-Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru (R), Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (L), and Yugoslavian president Josip Broz Tito sign documents at the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961.

● WIKIMEDIA

Economic, technological dimensions

Alongside shifts in security and diplomacy, economics and technology have come to underpin India's geopolitical clout. Decades of steady economic growth have turned India into one of the world's largest emerging economies. By rising to global prominence in information technology, outsourcing, and digital innovation, India

has secured a key position in the global value chain. Massive investments in renewable energy, space exploration, and domestic defense industries show New Delhi's drive to cut down dependence and step up deterrence capacity. This economic-technological dimension not only backs up India's nuanced foreign policy but also serves as a magnet for international partners and a lever of influence in

great-power competition. India's geopolitical transformation can best be seen as a rational response, grounded in realism, to shifting global power balances. By moving away from idealistic non-alignment and heading toward multi-lateral pragmatism, India is seeking to shore up its national security and strength amid rising threats from China and Pakistan, as well as great-power

rivalries. Drawing closer to the United States while keeping alive traditional ties with Russia and staying engaged in multilateral institutions reflects a classic balancing act — essential for survival in a turbulent environment. Today, India's geopolitical autonomy lies not in detachment from global blocs but in the ability to make the most of international organizations and economic

partnerships. Its membership in BRICS, the SCO, and the QUAD shows how New Delhi builds up its status through a dense web of institutional and economic collaborations. From a classical geopolitical standpoint, India's position on the southern rim of Eurasia — the "Rimland" — gives it leverage over both continental and maritime dynamics, making it a key player in the global balance

of power in the 21st century. Ultimately, India's paradigm shift mirrors an evolution in its identity: from the leader of the Third World during the Cold War to a multidimensional emerging power that redefines its independence through flexibility and layered engagement in world affairs.

The article first appeared in Persian on the Alef news website.

Is India-China détente real?



By **Shanthie Mariet D'Souza**
Founder of Mantraya
Institute for
Strategic Studies

OPINION

Just recently, India's private airline Indigo flew one of its A320 planes from Kolkata to Guangzhou. It was the first direct flight from India to China in five years, following its halt during the Covid-19 pandemic and the souring of relations between the two neighbours in 2020 amid the border standoff that extended the freeze. In November, more flights, including Chinese carriers, will take to the sky, connecting New Delhi with Chinese cities. The resumption of direct air services is part of the increasing number of confidence-building measures undertaken by both countries to move past a history of distrust and adversarial relations. A détente is seemingly underway. However, on closer examination, the embrace appears more cautious and fragile. Since the October 2024 BRICS summit in Kazan, where Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a bilateral meeting, both countries have made significant progress in stabilising

their border. Although criticised by the Indian opposition political parties, who term it an ad hoc move that has cemented Chinese control over vast expanses of land formerly under Indian control, a process to start negotiations on the contentious boundary issue has been set in motion. The actual process may not yield much, but it gives New Delhi more time to develop its border infrastructure to match that of China's.

In recent months, both sides have unveiled more confidence-building measures. In June 2025, China acceded to India's request to resume the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage, in which Indian Hindu pilgrims travel to the holy mountain and lake in Tibet. In August, Beijing also lifted the embargo on the supply of specialty fertilisers, rare earths, and tunnel boring machines to India. Reciprocating the gestures, India lifted its five-year-long restrictive visa process for Chinese tourists in July 2025.

If frequent high-level visits between countries are pointers towards attempts to mend frayed ties, both India and China have more than a handful of them. In June and July, India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and External Affairs Minister S.



● travelbizmonitor.com

Jaishankar travelled to Beijing to meet Wang Yi, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs. In August, Wang travelled to New Delhi to hold the 24th round of the Special Representative talks

with Doval on the Indo-China boundary. Later that month, Prime Minister Modi travelled to Tianjin to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit, where he met President Xi on the sidelines. Both leaders welcomed "the positive momentum and steady progress in bilateral relations," India's Ministry of External Affairs said in a press release.

This reiteration of the positive trajectory in relations by both sides, replacing the frequent acrimonious barbs of the past four years, seems to be the new normal. And yet, the spectre of normalisation remains mostly aspirational, marked by irreconcilable differences, even more apparent in the broader context in which such normalisation is being attempted.

The present thaw between India and China is happening at a time of high tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on both countries. China sees the imposition of 50% tariffs on Indian exports to the United States as an opportunity to pull India out of the American sphere of influence. However, for New Delhi, whose great power ambition is inherently linked to forging closer strategic ties with the United States, it could mostly be a question of managing its relations with China without sacrificing its core interests. Not surprisingly, Modi's China visit in August was preceded by a two-day official tour to Tokyo. He returned home without attending the Victory Day Parade in Beijing,



This reiteration of the positive trajectory in relations by both sides, replacing the frequent acrimonious barbs of the past four years, seems to be the new normal. And yet, the spectre of normalisation remains mostly aspirational, marked by irreconcilable differences, even more apparent in the broader context in which such normalisation is being attempted.

which celebrated China's victory over Japan at the end of the Second World War.

In July, senior Indian military officials accused China of logistically assisting Pakistan during the brief India-Pakistan conflict of May 2025. China's attempts to develop trilateral arrangements with Pakistan and Bangladesh on the one hand, and Pakistan and Afghanistan on the other, continue to heighten New Delhi's longstanding concerns of being encircled by a Chinese "string of pearls". For China, India's evasive commitment to a "One China policy" and strengthening ties with Taiwan remain irritants. The issue of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation and advice by an Indian Cabinet Minister for the matter to be treated internally by Tibetans has drawn Chinese ire, with China going on to describe it as a "thorn" in bilateral relations. And on trade, the Indian media is currently abuzz with talk of new curbs on specialty fertilisers from China.

As each side attempts to normalise relations and portray a détente as a strategic necessity, neither country is shying away from issues that divide them or invoke leverage points. This makes the status quo somewhat unreal and extremely unstable. The possibility of armed conflict between the two is remote. But deep distrust and competition will remain the defining features of their relations.

The article first appeared on the Lowy Institute.



India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar (2nd-L) meets with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi (3rd-R), in New Delhi, India, on August 25, 2025.
● MEA

Islamic Solidarity Games:

Iran braces for 'mini World Cup' test in futsal

Sports Desk

The futsal competition at the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games will be among the most highly-anticipated events in Riyadh, as six of the eight participating teams featured at last year's World Cup in Uzbekistan.

Record 13-time Asian Cup champion Iran will be joined by African powerhouse Morocco, as well as Afghanistan and Tajikistan, in Group B, while Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Libya, and Azerbaijan complete the lineup in Group A. Recently-crowned AFC Player of the Year Salar Aqapour and three former winners of the prestigious prize – Hossein Tayyebi, Saeid Ahmadabbasi, and Moslem Oladqobad – will spearhead Iran's 14-man squad in the Saudi capital.

Baqer Mohammadi, Behzad Rasouli, Mohammadhossein Derakhshani, Mahdi Karimi, Masoud Yousef, Behrouz Azimi, Hossein Sabzi, Mohammadhossein Bazayr, Amirhossein Gholami, and Ali Khalilvand complete the Iranian roster as head coach Vahid Shamsaei, having named a full-strength squad, aims to go all out for glory at the Games.

"This is going to be a mini World Cup in Riyadh," Shamsaei's number two Mahmoud Khorakchi told Varzesh3 before Iran left for the Games on Friday.



Former Asian Player of the Year Moslem Oladqobad (L), pictured against Morocco at the 2024 Futsal World Cup, will be a key player in the Iranian squad at the Islamic Solidarity Games.

● GETTY IMAGES

the World Cup. They are a team we are watching very closely.

"Just like Afghanistan, Tajikistan has been on a sharp upward trajectory, earning a spot at the previous World Cup. They will undoubtedly be a tough opponent for any team and should not be underestimated," Khorakchi said of the two rising powers in Asian futsal.

Iran made hard work of a 3-1 win over Afghanistan when the two sides met in the 2024 Asian Cup group stage, while Tajikistan was somewhat unfortunate to finish fourth after back-to-back shootout defeats – against Thailand in the semifinals and Uzbekistan in the bronze-medal match.

"All four teams in this group have now competed on the biggest stage, which raises the stakes and makes every match in this group critically important," Khorakchi insisted.

The top two teams in each group will advance to semifinals, with the final showpiece set to be staged at the Prince Faisal bin Fahad Olympic Complex – Green Hall on November 11.

"Morocco is literally a global powerhouse of the game. We recently watched them in a couple of friendlies against Spain last week. They were tactically spot-on and came away with the victory. They excel in every tactical aspect of

the game – in attack, in defense, on set-pieces – and possess everything it takes to be a top-tier futsal team," added the Iranian coach. Iran will face Morocco in the group opener on Tuesday – a rematch of last year's World Cup

knockout encounter, which the African side came from behind to win and progress to the quarter-final.

Iran's second outing in Riyadh will be against Afghanistan on Thursday, followed by the final

group game against Tajikistan on Saturday.

"Afghanistan has also been turning heads, both at the World Cup and in the recent Asian tournaments. Argentina only managed a narrow 2-1 victory over them at

Iran's Mottaqian eyeing ISG gold, new javelin milestone in Riyadh



● NPC

Sports Desk

Tokyo Paralympic champion Hashemiyeh Mottaqian said her goal for the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games is not only to win the javelin throw gold medal but also to set new record for the discipline.

Mottaqian will be one of the four Iranians – alongside Zeinab Moradi, Parastou Habibi, and Yassin Khosravi – vying for glory in para athletics at the multi-sport event in Riyadh.

When asked about her absence at September's World Championships in India, the 39-year-old Iranian explained, "I suffered a serious injury after last year's Paris Paralympics and my physiotherapy program lasted for six months to achieve a full recovery. "If I had competed in the

World Championships, I might have won a medal despite my injury, but my ultimate goal is always to claim the gold, which is why I decided to rest and take part at the Islamic Solidarity Games, not risking my shot at a gold medal," the three-time world silver medalist told ISNA. "The injury has completely healed, and I have no issues now. I have been training seriously for three months and gearing up for the Games in Riyadh," Mottaqian added. "I am striving to begin this new chapter by winning a gold medal and setting a new world record at the Islamic Solidarity Games. After that, I will focus on preparing for next year's Asian Para Games in Nagoya, and the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics."

IHF Men's U17 World Championship: Iran defeats Puerto Rico to finish ninth

Sports Desk

Iranian handball boys managed to win their second match in a row at the IHF Men's Under-17 World Championship, defeating Puerto Rico 42-30, as the Asian champions finished ninth at the inaugural event in Morocco.

Player of the match Amirhossein Samarbakhsh and Farshad Nowruzpour each contributed with a game-high nine goals for Iran, with Ali Ghayour scoring seven.

Fresh off an impressive win against the host in their previous game, the Puerto Ricans started right on the front foot, building on an unanswered four-goal run to take a 7-4 lead

and prompt the first team timeout from Iran.

Dylan Andreu and Antwan Garcia were the players to watch from Puerto Rico, before Iran began to turn up the pressure, with the biggest difference between the two teams in the first half being the shooting efficiency.

While Iran boasted a 74% efficiency, Puerto Rico hovered around 50% – largely thanks to Iranian goalkeeper Mehrshad Mansouri, who stood tall with 11 saves and a 44% saving efficiency in the first half.

Iranian boys took control as the first half wore on, as a 7-0 unanswered run turned the game on its head and helped the Asian side build a four-goal lead, 11-7, which



Iran's Mohsen Hadizadeh (24) shoots during a victory over Puerto Rico at the Men's U17 Handball World Championship in Casablanca, Morocco, on October 31, 2025.

● IHF

Iran began its campaign with a 45-20 loss to Germany, which went on to secure a place in the final, and then suffered a 38-29 defeat against Argentina in Group C.

The preliminary win against Puerto Rico was followed by a 30-21 triumph over South Korea in the 9-12 place semifinals – a rematch of the final showpiece in September's Asian U17 Championship, which Iran had won 28-25.

it maintained to lead 19-15 at halftime.

The two sides had already met in the preliminary round, with Iran winning 38-33, but this time around, with Puerto Rico shuffling their cards in the second half, there was no question about the winner.

The Asian side, which dominated throughout the whole match, opened its first 10-goal lead (33-23) after 44 minutes, part of a four-goal unanswered run.

Eventually, Iran clinched a 42-30 win, finishing on the ninth place with two wins in five matches.

Persian Gulf Pro League: Esteghlal beats 10-man Iralco to go top

Sports Desk

Esteghlal moved atop the Persian Gulf Pro League table, thanks to a 3-1 home victory over Iralco at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium.

In-form Albanian winger Jasir Asani put the Tehran Blues ahead from the spot in the 17th minute, after being fouled in the box by Yassin Jorjani. Former Barcelona player Munir El Haddadi headed home Alireza Koushki's delicate cross to double the home side's lead in the first-half added time.

Rahman Jafari pulled one back for the visitors with a

52nd-minute penalty, but Reza Marzban was sent off for a second bookable offence on the hour mark, before Koushki's glancing header restored the two-goal cushion five minutes later.

Esteghlal sits atop the tight standings – in which the top eight are separated by just four points – with 16 points from nine games, with Iralco is seventh with 13.

single point.

Foolad Khuzestan had substitute Abolfazl Zadeh-Attar's 96th-minute equalizer to thank for salvaging a point in the Ahvaz Derby against Esteghlal Khuzestan, after Aref Rostami had given the home side a 19th-minute lead.

Zob Ahan and Malavan shared the spoils in a goal-less stalemate in Isfahan – the same scoreline between Khaybar and Golgozar Sirjan in Khorramabad.

Chadormalou continued its impressive start to the season with a 3-2 away victory over Mes Rafsanjan to sit third with 14 points.



● AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

On Thursday, defending champion Tractor and Persepolis drew 1-1 in an empty Bonyan Diesel Stadium in Tabriz.

Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh thought he had secured the Tractor's first victory over Persepolis since February 2022 when his low effort

from the edge of the box found the bottom corner in the 88th minute.

The Tehran Reds, however, had the final say, as Montenegrin midfielder Marko Bakić drew the visitors level with a sumptuous free kick in the seventh minute of stoppage time.

Fin Garden in Kashan preserves centuries of history



Iranica Desk

Persian garden is far more than a collection of trees and water; it stands as one of the most enduring and profound expressions of Iranian art, architecture, and philosophy throughout history. Morteza Ahmadi Nejat, a journalist, wrote in a note published by chtn.ir that Persian gardens, deeply rooted in ancient rituals and religious beliefs, have always symbolized a “promised paradise” (Pardis) on the Earth. From both mythological and religious perspectives, the Iranian garden reflects cosmic order, where water — the source of life — shade — a refuge from the scorching desert sun — and geometric symmetry — a symbol of divine perfection — are intricately intertwined. The concept of the Persian garden is based on a structured fourfold layout, often centered around a pool where the four elements converge. The history of Iranian gardens stretches back to the Achaemenid era, but they reached their

peak during the Sassanid period, particularly after the advent of Islam and the development of the Chaharbagh (four-fold) design in the Safavid era. Among these, the Fin Garden of Kashan, Isfahan Province, stands out as one of the most complete and well-preserved examples, holding a special place in Iran’s cultural heritage. Located at the foothills of the Karkas Mountain near the historic city of Kashan, Fin Garden is not only a prominent example of Iranian landscape architecture but also a living record of Iran’s political and historical developments over the past four centuries. Covering an area of approximately 2.3 hectares, the garden visually embodies the three core ideals of the Iranian garden: water, shade, and symmetry. Archaeological evidence suggests that some elements of the Fin Garden site date back to pre-Islamic times, possibly even the Sassanid era. However, the garden as it is known today was established during the Safavid period under

Shah Abbas I in the late 16th century. Its location was strategically chosen, as Kashan lay along the royal summer retreat routes, and the abundant water needed for the garden was supplied through the region’s intricate qanat network. Originally, Fin Garden was intended for royal use and as a place of rest for the Safavid kings.

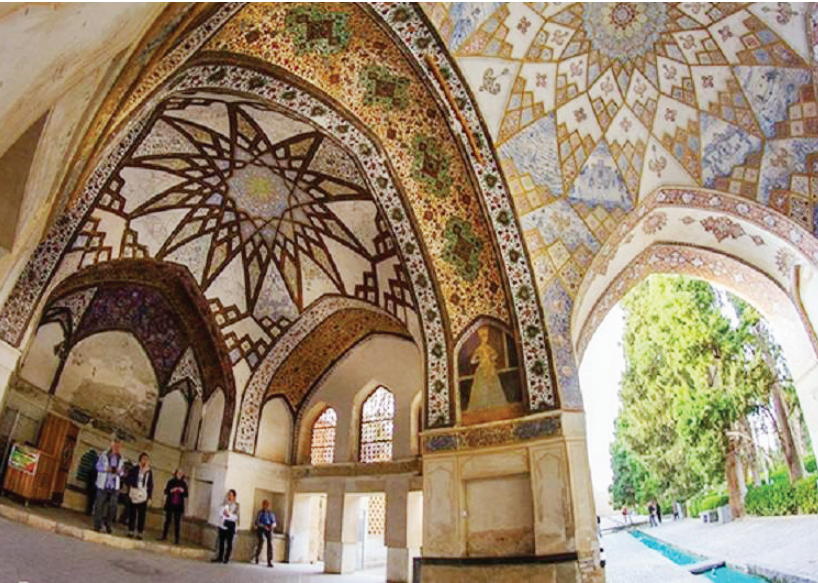
Design and layout

Fin Garden is designed according to the classic Chaharbagh layout. This plan features a central intersecting axis — usually the main thoroughfare — that divides the garden into four equal sections. In Fin Garden, this main axis passes through the central pool and directs the flow of water throughout the garden. The primary axes divide the green spaces into symmetrical sections, with precision so exact that even the planting of trees and placement of water channels follows the geometric plan. The axes, particularly the water channels, serve as visual boundaries and functional pathways, giving visitors a sense of depth and continuity as they explore the garden.

Water system and features

The most remarkable technical feature of Fin Garden is its sophisticated water supply system. The garden draws water from the Soleymaniyeh Spring, one of the main branches of Kashan’s extensive qanat network. Water flows into the garden under natural pressure, utilizing the terrain’s slope — without mechanical pumps, as was the practice during the Safavid era. This natural pressure powers the garden’s water features. The water initially moves through the main channels, often lined with glazed tiles to minimize evaporation.

Large central pools, such as the main shallow pool, collect the water, which is then carefully directed toward the fountains. The engineering brilliance of Fin Garden is especially evident in the fountains, designed to release water from multiple points at balanced pressure. Elevation differences within the underground channels regulate this pressure. In some cases, engineers created diversion pathways and control valves, allowing certain fountains to increase in force if another channel was closed — a remarkable demonstration of dynamic interaction with water. This precise water management not only met the irrigation needs of the garden’s trees but also enhanced comfort in the hot desert climate. The gentle sound of flowing water and the cooling effect of evaporation transformed the garden into a refreshing oasis, reflecting the sophisticated integration of aesthetics, functionality, and environmental adaptation in traditional Iranian landscape design.



Notable structures

Safavid buildings: These smaller structures are proportionate to their surroundings, designed to frame direct views of the central pool. Adobe roofs, thick walls, and small verandas were all created to counter summer heat and maximize breezes. The primary focus of this period was the harmony between architecture and nature.

Qajar buildings: During the Qajar era, reflecting shifts in taste and governmental needs, larger and more ornate buildings were added, often influenced by European architecture, particularly in interior decoration. The most notable is the pavilion overlooking the large pool, which has undergone renovations in various periods. With expansive verandas and reception halls, these buildings served more administrative and ceremonial functions.

Fin Bathhouse: This unique bathhouse goes beyond mere hygiene, representing a masterpiece of traditional ventilation and heating engineering. The floors and walls were warmed by smoke from underground furnaces, while a carefully designed airflow system — often using wind-catchers or hidden vents — brought in fresh air and vented warm air, setting an exemplary standard in climatic architecture. Fin Bathhouse is also remembered as the site of one of the most tragic events in modern Iranian history: the assassination of Amir Kabir, the grand vizier of Naser al-Din Shah. Amir Kabir, who initiated major reforms in the army, economy, and administration, was removed from power and exiled to Kashan due to court opposition. On January 1852, under orders from Naser al-Din Shah, he was murdered in Fin Bath.

In 2011, Fin Garden of Kashan, along with eight other Persian gardens, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as an “Persian Garden,” providing international recognition of its global significance as a model of landscape architecture.

Qurabiya is signature sweet of Tabriz

Iranica Desk

Tabriz, the capital city of East Azarbaijan Province, is famous for its wide variety of souvenirs, especially its pastries that have earned nationwide recognition. Known as a city of sweets, Tabriz boasts an impressive array of traditional confections. From the delicate Nugha and Riss, to Sohan Asali and Baklava, each treat tells a story of cultural heritage and craftsmanship passed down through generations. The city’s confectioners are celebrated for their precision, creativity, and use of fine local ingredients — especially nuts like almonds, pistachios, and walnuts — which give Tabrizi sweets their distinct flavor and elegance. Among these, Qurabiya — also spelled Qurabieh or Ghorabiyeh — stands out as one of the most beloved and elegant local cookies. It is a rich, nut-based cookie traditionally made with almonds, sugar, and eggs, often decorated with pistachios or almond slices. Its fine ingredients and delicate preparation have made it one of Iran’s most luxurious and expensive sweets. Though best known as a Tabrizi specialty, Qurabiya is also baked in Zanjan and Qazvin provinces, each region adding its own distinctive touch.

In the broader world of pastries, some creations go beyond taste to tell stories of artistry and tradition — and Qurabiya is one of them. The pistachio Qurabiya is especially admired for its fragrant aroma, tender texture, and refined sweetness, turning any celebration into a memorable occasion. According to culinary dictionaries, the word “kurabiye” refers to a cookie-like sweet commonly prepared in Turkey, Greece, and the Middle East. Yet the Tabrizi Qurabiya holds a special place for its craftsmanship and generous use of high-quality nuts. This confection is often enjoyed during festive occasions such

as weddings and holidays, and it is a popular souvenir purchased by visitors to Tabriz. Beyond pistachio and almond versions, walnut, coconut, and even Greek-style Qurabiya are also well-known variations, offering flavors for every taste. Beautifully golden, delicately crisp, and irresistibly nutty, Qurabiya represents more than just a dessert — it embodies the heritage, artistry, and hospitality that make Tabriz a true center of confectionery.

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Diwali sparks fire, light traditions that connect India, Iran

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

India's Ambassador to Tehran, Rudra Gaurav Shresth, offered an exclusive insight into Diwali on Saturday, describing the festival of lights as a centuries-old celebration of light, knowledge, and prosperity. Speaking at his residence during the embassy's Diwali gathering, Shresth highlighted cultural connections between Diwali and ancient Iranian traditions, including Zoroastrian fire worship and the Chaharshanbe Suri festival. He noted that fireworks and fire play a central role in both celebrations. "Particularly for children, bursting firecrackers is the most exciting part," he said, emphasizing the joy and communal spirit of the occasion. Diwali, he explained, is also a major religious and commercial occasion. Devotees pray to the goddess of wealth and prosperity, and businesses view the day as a pivotal moment in the year. "On this day, it is believed that the goddess comes to Earth to see how houses are decorated,"

Shresth said. "If she is pleased, she blesses your home, and your business earns well for the rest of the year." This makes the festival particularly significant for merchants and businesspeople, he added. The ambassador also emphasized Diwali's growing commercial importance. "It has become quite commercialized. People buy new clothes, paint and decorate their houses, and businesses run big promotions and sales. It is a very important period for spending money," he said. A notable example, Shresth said, is the sale of nuts, which constitute roughly 85 percent of India's annual nut trade in the 15–20 days leading up to Diwali. He suggested that Iran, as a regional producer of dried fruits and nuts, could explore opportunities to supply India, reducing reliance on far-off markets such as California, Australia, Canada, and Spain. Shresth also stressed the deep historical and cultural connections between India and Iran. He cited the Persian scholar and traveler Al-Biruni, who wrote



India's Ambassador to Tehran, Rudra Gaurav Shresth, lights a lamp to inaugurate Diwali festivities at his residence, celebrating the festival of lights, on November 1, 2025.

● IRAN DAILY

one of the earliest descriptions of Diwali, and observed that festivals like Diwali and Nowruz (Persian New Year) serve as bridges between the peoples of the two nations. "By celebrating each other's festival occasions, the connection between our peoples can become stronger," he said. The envoy highlighted similarities between Diwali rituals and Zoroastrian practices, noting the central role of fire in both traditions. "Many aspects of religious practice during Diwali have parallels with ancient Iranian religion," he said. "Fire worship and the symbolism of light are important in both, which can be fascinating for tourists and cultural observers from both countries." Shresth further drew attention to shared philosophical roots, citing connections between the Hindu Vedas and the Zoroastrian Avesta, which may underpin



common cultural motifs such as the worship of light and fire. The Diwali celebration at the Indian ambassador's residence marks the second consecutive year the embassy has hosted the festival in Tehran. It included traditional rituals, festive decorations, and the exchange

of gifts such as nuts, which are a customary part of Diwali greetings. Shresth said that observing the festival in Iran allows Indians abroad to maintain cultural traditions while fostering greater understanding of India's heritage among Iranians. "Diwali is the biggest festival

in the Indian calendar," Shresth said. "Its blend of spirituality, communal joy, and commercial activity makes it a celebration of life, prosperity, and shared culture. Hosting it here in Tehran is a way of connecting our peoples through light, fire, and centuries of shared history."

Kashan named UNESCO Creative City of Architecture



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's ancient city of Kashan was admitted to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of architecture, marking a new milestone for Iranian-Islamic cultural and architectural heritage. The designation was announced on October 31 during the 43rd General Conference of UNESCO in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, IRNA reported. Hassan Fartousi, Secretary-General of Iran's National Commission for UNESCO, confirmed the membership in the

presence of Science Minister Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, calling the move "a step toward reinforcing Iran's cultural diplomacy and architectural identity on the world stage." The announcement coincided with World Cities Day 2025, when UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay named 58 new members of the Creative Cities Network, which now brings together more than 300 cities across fields including architecture, crafts, literature, music, and gastronomy. The program promotes the role of creativity as a driver of sus-

tainable urban development. Kashan joins the ranks of cities such as Rome, Paris, and Barcelona, recognized for "sustainable architecture and rich civilizational heritage." Officials described the city's inclusion as a "turning point" in advancing sustainable cultural growth rooted in Iranian-Islamic design traditions. With more than 1,700 historical sites, including around 330 nationally registered monuments and the UNESCO-listed Fin Garden, Kashan stands as a living museum of traditional architecture adapted to its

desert environment. Its vaulted houses, windcatchers, and underground spaces reflect a refined integration of art, science, and ecology that has inspired architects for generations. According to Fartousi, the successful nomination followed months of coordination with UNESCO experts. "Kashan's creative potential and its authentic architectural character made it a strong candidate," he said, emphasizing that the recognition "opens doors for international cooperation and cultural exchange."

Iran's classical music gets kudos in St. Petersburg

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian musician Khashayar Par-sa and his ensemble presented a compelling, contemporary interpretation of classical Persian music at the historic Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg during DairaFest on October 26, 2025. Their performance brought the ancient Maktab-e Montazemi-yeh school vividly to life, guiding listeners from the soundscapes of medieval Persia through the Qajar era to modern reinterpretations, IRNA reported. The ensemble's journey began earlier in the festival, on October 19, when they performed music of the Qajar period, featur-

ing works by Darvish Khan and songs by singer Taherzadeh, in one of St. Petersburg's historic venues. Instrumentalists included three-Tar (long-necked lute) player Hedayat Kalari, Kamancheh (an Iranian spiked fiddle) artist Alireza Rasouli and vocalist Mehdi Shah-savar. During the October 26 show, Par-sa performed on Santur (hammered dulcimer) and conducted an ensemble featuring oud player Abuzar Hosseini (also composer), Tar player Mohammad Mehdi Sheikh, Kamancheh player Arman Heidari-an and Tonbak (Iranian goblet drum) artist Hossein Gazer. Vocalists Ahmad Shakouri and Neda Shah-savar joined to offer a layered

aural experience of multi-voiced Persian classical music. Parsa described the project as an attempt to present Iranian classical music not merely as "historical heritage" but as a "living language of cross-cultural dialogue." He said the collaboration with DairaFest over the past two years has "built a bridge" between Iranian and Russian artists. The overwhelming sell-out two days in advance confirmed the strong interest among Russian audiences in Persian classical music. According to festival organizers, the ensemble's performance offered a fresh, contemporary voice rooted in ancient tradition.

AI-generated short film 'The Stain' to debut in Los Angeles Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'The Stain,' written and directed by Hoda Fallah, will be screened at the AI International Film Festival in Hollywood on November 16, 2025, at the historic Los Feliz Theatre. The three-minute-43-second piece, created entirely using AI tools such as LTX Studio, Runway and ElevenLabs, explores a teenage girl's journey through "shame" and silence in a traditional family, Mehr News Agency reported. 'The Stain,' has already gained recognition as a semi-finalist at the second edition of the AI Film Festival Japan earlier this year, marking its second international appearance. Its Los Angeles showing marks the film's entry onto the US festival circuit. By melding generative-AI techniques with a sharply personal narrative, Fallah's work spotlights the creative potential at the intersection



of technology and identity. The film's selection for the Los Feliz screening underscores the growing global interest in AI-driven storytelling. Festival organizers said the November event would present a curated selection of short films "pushing the boundaries of storytelling with artificial intelligence."