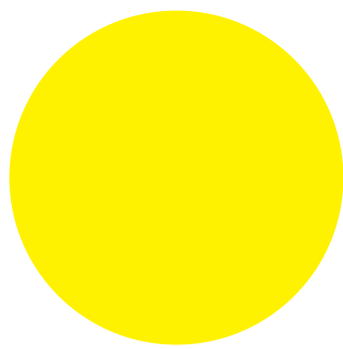


UNESCO adds Iranian philosopher Tabatabaei, mystic Bastami to global commemoration list

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## Larijani: Iran open to negotiations but demands 'real' talks

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Crises in Afghanistan and question of Iran's mediation



By Jafar Haghpanah  
Afghanistan affairs expert

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Contemporary Afghanistan has long struggled with recurring political and security crises that have undermined its internal cohesion and peaceful coexistence with neighboring states. Structural factors — such as its harsh and landlocked geopolitics, its mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities closely tied to societies beyond its borders — combined with agency-driven dynamics, including the persistence of both traditional and modern elite power, an authoritarian political culture resistant to participation, and a strategic mindset among domestic and foreign actors that views war and intervention as solutions rather than sources of ongoing challenges, have all perpetuated and deepened the country's chronic turmoil.

At times, however, the intensity of Afghanistan's crises and their spillover effects have reached a level that compels international organizations and regional and global powers — even those whose prior interventions contributed to the current situation — to step in as mediators, not necessarily to find a final solution, but to manage and reduce the level of the crisis and prevent its escalation. Historically, successful mediation has come from states that enjoy good relations with both sides of a dispute.

This principle has once again proven true in the recent military standoff between Afghanistan's caretaker government and Pakistan. The risk of full-blown war and regional destabilization pushed several countries to engage in mediation efforts. Through Qatar's successful initiative, a temporary cease-fire was established between the two neighbors. Parallel talks are now underway in Turkey to reduce tensions further, though the road to a lasting agreement remains long. Qatar's cordial relations with both Islamabad and the Taliban — along with its soft power and the influence of its media and think tanks in building trust — played a decisive role in its diplomatic success.

In this context, it is worth assessing Iran's potential for mediation and examining why its role has been relatively understated, despite the direct and indirect implications of the Afghan-Pakistani conflict for Iran's own national and regional security.

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## Iran vows to rebuild nuclear sites 'stronger than before'

**Pezeshkian:** Nuclear industry aimed at public welfare, not weapons

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (C), accompanied by Iran's nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami (L), visits the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in Tehran on November 2, 2025.  
● [president.ir](http://president.ir)



Iran achieves 96% domestic drug production amid Western sanctions

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# Iran vows to rebuild nuclear sites 'stronger than before'

**Pezeshkian: Nuclear industry aimed at public welfare, not weapons**

## International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that Iran would rebuild nuclear sites damaged by Israeli and US strikes "stronger than before." US President Donald Trump has claimed that the June strikes "totally obliterated" Iran's nuclear program, but the full extent of the actual damage remains unknown. In a visit to the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) for visiting an exhibition showcasing the latest nuclear achievements in the fields of healthcare, medicine, and production of radiopharmaceuticals, Pezeshkian said Tehran "will build (the destroyed sites) stronger than before." "By destroying buildings... we will not be set back," he said in a video posted to his official website, adding that Iranian scientists still had the necessary nuclear know-how. Pezeshkian also emphasized that Iran's expansion of its peaceful nuclear in-

dustry is aimed at enhancing the nation's welfare, not acquiring weapons. Pezeshkian said biased propaganda and narratives are meant to insinuate that nuclear activities are synonymous with developing atomic bombs. "However, the nuclear industry is a vast collection of scientific and industrial capacities and only a tiny fraction of its disproportionate and inhumane consequences relates to bomb-making," he added. "Our intention and determination in expanding this industry is to meet the needs of the people and enhance the welfare of our country, not to produce weapons." Israel launched an unprecedented bombing campaign against Iran in June, kicking off a 12-day war that saw it target nuclear and military facilities as well as residential areas, and kill many top scientists, military commanders and civilians. The US joined the aggression by the Israeli regime, targeting three Iranian



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) listens to one of the personnel of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran during a visit to the organization in Tehran on November 2, 2025.

● [president.ir](#)

nuclear facilities. The Israeli strikes on June 13 came as Iran and the US were scheduled to hold sixth round of negotiations over Iran's nuclear program in Oman. The regime's aggression derailed the negotiations which had been underway since April. The United States then joined the aggression on June 22 and bombed Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan nuclear facilities. Iran retaliated with ballistic missile barrages aimed at Israeli cities. Tehran accused the IAEA of effectively paving the way for the Israel-US attacks with a report on May 31 that led the IAEA's 35-nation Board of Governors to declare Iran in breach of its non-prolif-



eration obligations. Tehran maintains that its nuclear program is for purely civilian purposes. US President Donald Trump has

warned that he will order fresh attacks on Iran's nuclear sites should Tehran try to restart facilities that the United States bombed in June.

## Larijani: Iran open to negotiations but demands 'real' talks

### International Desk

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani said the Islamic Republic is not saying that it will not negotiate, but the negotiations must be real. "No one says we will not negotiate, but we should not be naive. Negotiation is a method, but it must be done at the right time," Larijani said during a meeting on Wednesday. Referring to the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the West, the Iranian official said that they say Iran must stop uranium enrichment, reduce the range of its missiles, and do in the region exactly what they want. Larijani said that the enemy's main goal is to break the will of the Iranian nation, adding, "The enemy's demands are endless and require national resistance. Iranians must stand firm on their own demands." "It is not the case that the Islamic Republic is unwilling to negotiate. We were negotiating when the enemy started the war." Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in an interview with Al Jazeera 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 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." "We will not negotiate on our missile program, and no rational person would agree to be disarmed. Halting uranium enrichment is not possible," Iran's top diplomat said. Comments by Iranian officials came as Oman urged Tehran and Washington on Saturday to resume talks. "We want to return to the negotiations between Iran (and) the United States," Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi said at the IISS Manama Dialogue conference in Bahrain.

A day earlier, Al-Busaidi hosted Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-e Ravanchi in Muscat where the two sides exchanged views on Iran's peaceful nuclear program. Takht-e Ravanchi said that the Islamic Republic expressed its "clear position" on the issue during the meeting in Muscat. Iranian government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said Sunday that Tehran "has received messages" on resuming diplomacy, without providing further details. Oman hosted five rounds of US-Iran talks this year. Just three days before the sixth round, Israel launched an unprovoked aggression against Iran, which derailed negotiations with the US.

## US cranks up pressure on Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah

### International Desk

US special envoy for Syria Tom Barrack claimed that Lebanon is collapsing, pressing the Arab country to disarm the popular resistance movement Hezbollah and engage in negotiations with the Israeli regime. Speaking at the Manama Dialogue Forum in Bahrain on Saturday, Barrack labeled Lebanon as a "failed state" over severe shortages within the Arab country's military and public institutions, while pushing for Hezbollah's disarmament amid Lebanon's border tensions with the Israeli-occupied territories. "Lebanon is a failed state. There's no central bank. The banking system is bust. There's no electricity — people rely on private generators. For water and education, you need private providers," Barrack said, disregarding Lebanon's decrepit civilian infrastructure as a result of US sanctions. Claiming that the Lebanese Armed Forces suffer from "a lack of financial and human resources," Barrack said the Israeli regime is prepared to reach an agreement with Lebanon on border demarcation. The American envoy urged the Lebanese leadership to "join the negotiations and safeguard their borders," adding, "It is unreasonable that there is no dialogue between Lebanon and Israel." Stressing that Lebanon's leadership "must move faster to restrict Hezbollah's weapons," Barrack claimed, "There will be no problem between Lebanon and Israel if Hezbollah is disarmed." Barrack's call for Hezbollah's disarmament comes as the Israeli regime has, over the

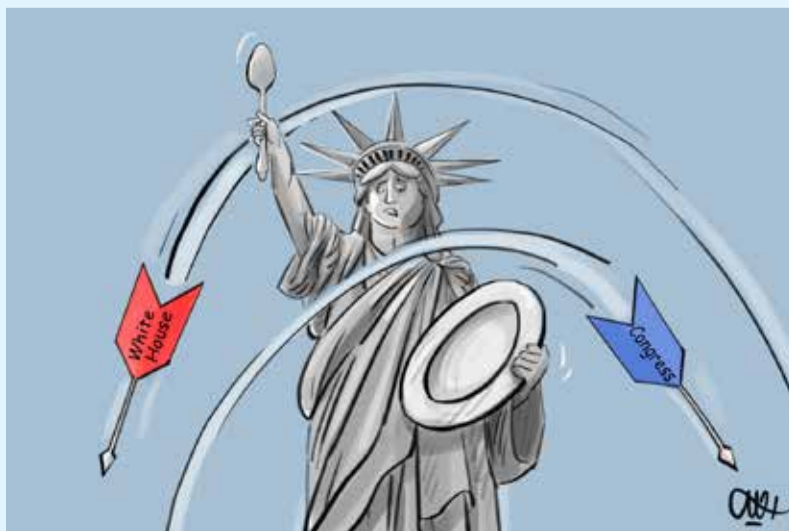
past years, repeatedly violated Lebanon's sovereignty through airstrikes, drone incursions, and cross-border attacks.

The ongoing breaches of previous UN-brokered cease-fire agreements demonstrate that Tel Aviv has no genuine intention of de-escalation or respecting the Arab country's territorial integrity. Expressing concerns about the regime's security, Barrack warned that "thousands of rockets in southern Lebanon still threaten Israel," saying time is running out for Lebanon to "bring weapons under control quickly." Claiming that regional stability depends on the disarmament of Hezbollah's military power and advancing border discussions with Israel, the envoy warned that the Tel Aviv regime may act unilaterally if Beirut does not "assert state control." Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem criticized on Friday the US role in Lebanon, slamming Washington as a sponsor of aggression rather than an impartial mediator. Sheikh Qassem also held the Lebanese government responsible for protecting the country's sovereignty, expelling the "enemy," and stopping violations by preparing a plan that enables the national army to respond effectively to Israel's regular onslaught. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on Sunday that Hezbollah was seeking to rearm and that Israel would exercise its right to self-defense under last year's cease-fire accord if Lebanon failed to disarm the group.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

CARTOON



## Crises in Afghanistan ...

The Islamic Republic of Iran maintains friendly ties with both countries, sharing religious and cultural affinities, and despite its cautious and partial recognition of the Taliban government, Iran continues to operate an active embassy in Kabul and several consulates across Afghanistan. Naturally, effective mediation requires more than cordial relations; it also depends on possessing direct

interests and a clear will to help shape a desirable regional security framework. China, for instance, though maintaining good relations with both Islamabad and Kabul, has refrained from involvement, largely due to its lack of direct stakes or motivation to foster such arrangements. Iran, by contrast, holds both the incentive and the interest to assume a more active mediating role. Yet one missing piece remains which is the weak connectivity among the media,

research centers, and think tanks across the three countries. These institutions can play a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding, developing a shared vocabulary, and building trust among policymakers. It might be appropriate for the Iranian side to take the initiative by opening the door to such dialogues and second-track negotiations, thereby paving the way for the mediation efforts of its diplomatic apparatus.

# Ministry unveils major customs overhaul, targets smart systems

## Economy Desk

Iran's Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh announced on Sunday the launch of a comprehensive plan to modernize and digitize the country's customs network, including the installation of new high-speed X-ray systems, the creation of joint border customs with neighboring countries, and the involvement of foreign private firms in trade-related projects.

Madanizadeh said the ministry has prioritized customs modernization as a key component of its structural reform agenda following President Masoud Pezeshkian's directive to overhaul the country's customs system, Tasnim news agency reported. The program aims to enhance transparency, cut clearance times, and improve efficiency in cross-border trade operations.

According to the minister, broad initiatives have begun in several areas — including the renewal of X-ray scanning equipment, the digitalization of customs procedures, and the establishment of joint customs offices with neighboring countries.

"In this framework, the transfer of some trade-related projects to foreign private companies — including

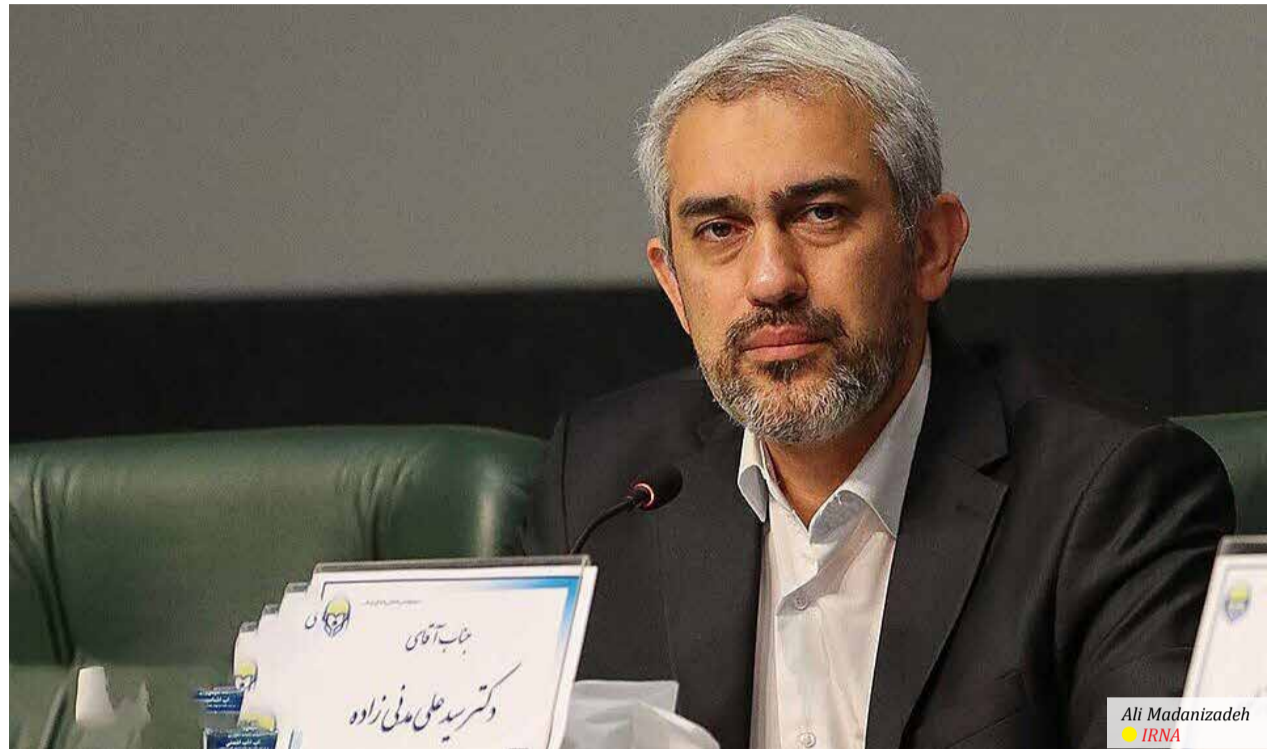
Chinese firms — is on the agenda," Madanizadeh said. "The goal is to upgrade technology, accelerate clearance procedures, and reduce logistics costs."

He added that under government resolutions, customs clearance operations will be centralized at 15 major customs offices nationwide. "By the end of the Seventh Development Plan (2029), 10 high-speed smart X-ray systems will be purchased through foreign financing and another 10 will be supplied domestically," he said.

## Joint border customs expansion

Plans are also underway to establish joint customs posts with Pakistan in Chabahar, with Turkey in Maku, and with Azerbaijan in Aras, the minister noted, describing the initiative as "a turning point in the transformation of Iran's customs system and the facilitation of foreign trade."

Under the ministry's equity-oriented growth program, the customs overhaul is seen as a central pillar of structural economic reform. The initiative aims to reduce administrative corruption, improve trade facilitation indicators, attract investment to border regions, and ensure fairer access to trade infrastructure, Tasnim wrote.



Ali Madanizadeh  
IRNA

The deployment of new high-speed X-ray machines, equipped with automatic detection and precision imaging, is expected to significantly short-

en cargo inspection times by allowing trucks to be screened without prolonged stops.

The enhanced inspection systems will

also strengthen border security and curb smuggling while supporting export growth and regional economic development.

## 'Far Iran' expo promotes knowledge-based economy with 80 products



IRNA

## Economy Desk

The "Far Iran" (dignity of Iran) exhibition opened in Tehran on Sunday with the unveiling of 80 domestically developed, high-tech products in an event attended by Vice President for Science, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy Hossein Afshin.

The four-day exhibition, held at the Tehran International Fairgrounds, aims to highlight the achievements of Iranian knowledge-based companies and innovators and to demonstrate their growing role in building a knowledge-driven economy, Mehr news agency reported. Officials said the exhibition will be organized annually to

showcase the economic and social impact of technological innovation.

At a press conference on Saturday, Afshin described the event as "a manifestation of the nation's knowledge, creativity, and determination to advance a knowledge-based economy."

He said products on display were selected through a rigorous evaluation process based on three main criteria: technological capability, industrial performance and regulatory approval, and measurable economic and social impact.

"Since the beginning of this year (March 21), around 428 products entered the evaluation process, and 80 were qualified for official introduction," he said.

Of these, "about 30 are in health and pharmaceuticals, 28 in oil and related industries, 11 in the electricity sector, 10 in artificial intelligence and software, five in agriculture, and nearly eight in areas such as water, textiles, automotive, mining, and laboratory equipment," Afshin added.

Afshin said the introduction

of these products into domestic markets could save the country an estimated \$1.35 billion annually in foreign currency.

"The economic impact of this initiative goes beyond lower prices; by localizing production, it will expand public access to a wider range of more affordable products," he said. The vice president also noted that "many of the showcased products have no foreign equivalents and are entirely indigenous, developed by young Iranian innovators."

Afshin said the government's goal is to enable these products not only to meet domestic needs but also to enter regional markets. "To that end, we have prepared special support packages for export promotion and market expansion," he added.

Organizers said only fully licensed and certified products were presented this year, reflecting a new emphasis on verified quality and regulatory compliance. The unveiling of new technological products will now be scheduled each year in November and December.

## NIGC to extend gas deal with Turkey, says ready to supply Pakistan

## Economy Desk

The CEO of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said the Islamic Republic plans to extend its natural gas export contract with Turkey and is ready to begin supplies to Pakistan once the necessary infrastructure is in place in the neighboring country.

"The gas export agreement with Turkey will definitely be renewed," Saeed Tavakoli told ILNA. "Iran is also prepared to export gas to Pakistan."

Tavakoli described the regional gas market as increasingly volatile and short-term in nature. "The regional gas market has become very situational, short-term, and time-consuming," he said. "On one hand, US LNG production has increased, while export restrictions have been imposed on some producers. On the other, most of the region's available gas has already been allocated."

He said Iran continues to push for long-term energy contracts with its partners. "Our focus and follow-up on long-term agreements will continue, and naturally, renewing the Turkish contract is among our top priorities," he added.

The current gas export agreement between Iran and Turkey is due to expire in 2026. Tavakoli



IRNA

expressed hope that the two sides would finalize an extension "for several more years" before that date.

He also noted that Turkey remains a committed buyer. "Turkey is definitely interested in Iranian gas," he said, adding that discussions are ongoing. "The volume, mechanism, and other details will be determined through negotiations."

On exports to Pakistan, Tavakoli said Iran has the capacity and readiness to deliver gas but stressed that "it depends on Pakistan to prepare the required infrastructure."

Regarding gas imports, he said talks are continuing with Turkmenistan and Russia, emphasizing that "continuity is the key principle in our energy diplomacy, and we expect positive outcomes."

Turkey has long sourced natural gas from Iran and, as of March, began receiving Turkmen gas through swap arrangements via Iranian territory. The deal provides for the delivery of 1.3 billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas to Turkey by the end of this year. Murat Kalay, secretary-general of Turkey's Petroleum and Natural Gas Platform Association (PETFORM), said last month that Ankara currently receives gas both from Iran and through the Turkmen swap, with negotiations for a new term underway.

Oguzhan Akyener, president of the Turkey Energy Strategies and Policies Research Center (TESPAM), noted on October 8 that Turkey's gas demand has declined during the summer months, as has Iran's domestic consumption, allowing for continued gas shipments under existing agreements.

## Khaf-Herat railway emerges as key transit route linking Asia to Afghanistan

## Economy Desk

Freight from Turkey, Turkmenistan, India, the UAE, Russia, and even the US has been transported to Afghanistan via the Khaf-Herat railway, an Iranian route that is fast emerging as a key regional transit corridor, a senior transport official said on Sunday.

"Cargo from these countries has passed through this railway, and even goods from the US have reached Afghanistan via this route," Jaber Zakeri, Iran's deputy min-

ister of roads and urban development told ILNA.

According to the official, the volume of cargo transported along the railway between Iran and Afghanistan in east of the country hit a record 63,000 tons last month, with the figure expected to reach 100,000 tons by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2026).

He attributed the rising transit to growing interest from Afghan shippers and India's government, which is seeking to use the corridor for its exports and transit trade

through the southeastern port of Chabahar.

"To meet this growing demand, we have instructed Iranian logistics companies to prioritize resolving existing operational issues," he said. "We are addressing these problems one by one."

The deputy minister said Afghanistan's railway authority has welcomed the route and shown strong interest in boosting freight movement. "The Afghan railway has approved this corridor and is keen to increase cargo transport, and Iran's rail-

way organization is following up closely," he added.

Zakeri also noted that construction work is advancing on the Afghan side of the route. "I hope that within a month, another 43 kilometers will be added to the Herat railway. The project is now 90% complete," he said, adding that Afghanistan has pledged to finish the remaining section from Rahzanak toward Herat within the next month. Once complete, only one more station — currently under construction — will remain before full connectivity.

He pointed out that an industrial zone located near the next station will serve as a key cargo hub. "The strength of this route is that an industrial city lies adjacent to the next station, which will significantly boost freight traffic once it is linked to the rail network," Zakeri said. The expansion comes as Iran exported its first diesel shipment to Afghanistan via the Khaf-Herat railway last Sunday, establishing the first fuel trade corridor between the two countries and marking a new phase in bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

# Long history of efforts to remove Iranian, Persian traces in Mideast

## Neighbors cannot solely meet Iran's economic needs



By **Kourosh Ahmadi**  
Former Iranian  
diplomat to  
the United Nations

**S P E E C H**

A panel discussion, titled “Iran, Its Regional Environment, and Emerging Deals: The Essence of Iran, Foreign Relations, and Regional Policy,” was held on Sunday, October 26, at the Center for Middle East Strategic Studies, an initiative by the Iran Studies Group. The session shed light on several historical points concerning Iran’s surrounding environment.

Speakers included Kourosh Ahmadi, Iran’s former diplomat at the United Nations and an international affairs analyst, Abbas Akhouni, former Iranian minister of Roads and Urban Development, and Kaveh Bayat, writer and translator. They laid out their perspectives on the key priorities of Iran’s foreign policy. What follows is a translation of Kourosh Ahmadi’s detailed address.

It is wise to kick off any discussion about Iran with an examination of geopolitics — the product of interaction among physical geography, human geography, and politics. While physical geography remains unchanged, human geography and politics are constantly evolving, which means a country’s or a region’s geopolitics is bound to shift with the tides. In other words, a state’s geopolitical profile is never carved in stone. It changes in line with developments in human geography, politics, and the dynamics of power surrounding it.

By the late 18th century, Iran underwent a sweeping geopolitical transformation. Up to that point, its geopolitical boundaries had been confined to a zone where four main powers — the Ottoman Empire, the Uzbeks, the Mughal Empire of India, and Iran — either rubbed shoulders or locked horns at any time. Since the early 16th century (specifically 1507 to 1515), the Portuguese had moved into the region, though their presence was mostly limited to Iranian islands and ports. As a global maritime hegemon, they had taken control of southern Iranian waters. Yet, Europe’s powers largely failed to break into the Iranian heartland or its surrounding lands. Later came the Dutch, whose presence was mainly maritime and trade-oriented, though they occasionally resorted to military force.

### Risks of overlooking cultural Iran

Then, by the late 18th century, the British stepped onto the scene, staking a claim both within Iran through political influence and on the Indian subcontinent through both physical and colonial presence. During this period, Russia was also active. Thus, by the end of the 18th century, two European imperial powers had set their sights on the region. The arrival of these two powers threw the region’s geopolitics into disarray — a development unseen before. Previously, four regional powers had jockeyed for position, but with these two European, militarized, and modernized empires muscling in, the balance went out the window. Their intervention in Iran and Iran’s periphery set the stage for sweeping changes in both. The British, in particular, started meddling in the cultural sphere of what was then known as Greater Iran.

With the consolidation of the East India Company’s position in India, the process of “de-Persianization” got underway. Persian language and culture had been integral elements of Iran’s wider cultural sphere. Yet, this process was met with hostility from the British, who in 1837 banned Persian — the administrative, royal,



The photo shows damaged bas-reliefs in Persepolis, central Iran.  
© foders.com

and judicial language of India — and swapped it out for English. By that time, the Persian language had been deeply rooted in the subcontinent for nearly eight centuries, ever since it had made its way in under Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, rising to its peak of refinement when they started the de-Persianization. Immigrants from mainland Iran — architects, craftsmen, and others — had long been flocking to India. Many of these migrations came about in the 18th century, after the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, when Iran was thrown into turmoil.

This chaos was stoked by uprisings largely fueled by religious minorities who had had enough of Safavid court-imposed pressures. Sunnis, Zoroastrians, and others rose up against the Safavids. As a result, numerous artists, poets, architects, and other professionals packed their bags and headed for India.

The outcome was a flourishing of Iranian art, literature, and culture there. Another hallmark of this “greater Iran” territory was its decentralization, especially after the fall of the Safavids and the weakening of the Mughals. Various cities, large and small, held on to nominal autonomy. Persian culture and language took much better root in such environments and managed to endure. But with the arrival of the Russians from the north and the British from the south and east (through the Persian Gulf and India, respectively), these imperial forces largely destroyed the autonomy of those semi-autonomous local entities. For Britain, the Persian language and Iranian culture stood in the way of its dominance.

### Impact of modern notion of borders on cultural Iran

To dig a bit deeper, when Britain entered the picture as a global power, it came face-to-face with Iran — the only real regional power both before and after that

era. That regional power, however, had to be kept in check if Britain wanted to tighten its grip on the area. Consequently, semi-autonomous regions in Central Asia gradually fell under Russian rule, while the British worked to undermine Persian cultural and artistic presence concurrently with expanding their political influence in Iran and its surrounding. The idea of “Iran” and its historical levers and networks of influence were thus slowly stripped of their strength.

Iran’s reach gradually came under pressure from two major powers — Russia and Britain — both militarily and politically. In the Iran–Russia wars, some parts of the Caucasian territories were lost. Iran also clashed with Britain twice in attempts to reassert control over Herat. Between 1838 and 1854, several skirmishes broke out as Britain sought to block Iran’s expanding influence and efforts to reclaim Herat, launching attacks from the south and pressuring the Qajar court.

At the same time, the British turned their eyes to the Persian Gulf, moving to take over Iranian ports and islands. As a maritime power, Britain needed to keep a foothold along key sea routes, making control of Iranian coasts, ports, and especially islands crucial. This policy kicked off with Bahrain and eventually spilled over to the three disputed Iranian islands — an episode well-known today that can be analyzed under the mentioned framework.

Thus, Iran found itself squeezed militarily and politically. Beyond that, in cultural, literary, and artistic realms, the British made no secret of their efforts to wipe out Iran’s historical influence in India. In the north, the same playbook was followed in Central Asia, where Iran’s political, military, and cultural influence was systematically reined in.

Subsequently, with the treaties of Turkmenchay and Golestan, Iran’s frontiers in Central Asia and along the Aras River were formally drawn up. This period

marked the start of Iran’s entry into the age of its defined, modern borders. Before that, Iran had only “frontiers,” zones where, for example, Iran, the Ottomans, and local powers all shared space, and clear delineation was rare. The involvement of Russia and Britain, coupled with the introduction of new concepts of international law, led to the gradual drawing of borders. As a result, a deep divide opened up between “cultural Iran” within its new political borders and “cultural Iran” beyond them, in regions such as Afghanistan and Central Asia. From the 19th century onward, this fragmentation grew increasingly visible.

To the west, a similar process unfolded. The Ottoman Empire, too, fell partly under the umbrella of Iran’s cultural sphere. Four to five centuries before Ottoman domination of Western Asia — which began in the late 13th and 14th centuries — Persian culture and language had already seeped in. The Ottoman sultans were familiar with Irani-

an culture; Some were Persian speakers, poets, and avid readers of the Shahnameh. Even formal correspondence between Shah Ismail Safavid and Ottoman monarchs was carried out in Persian.

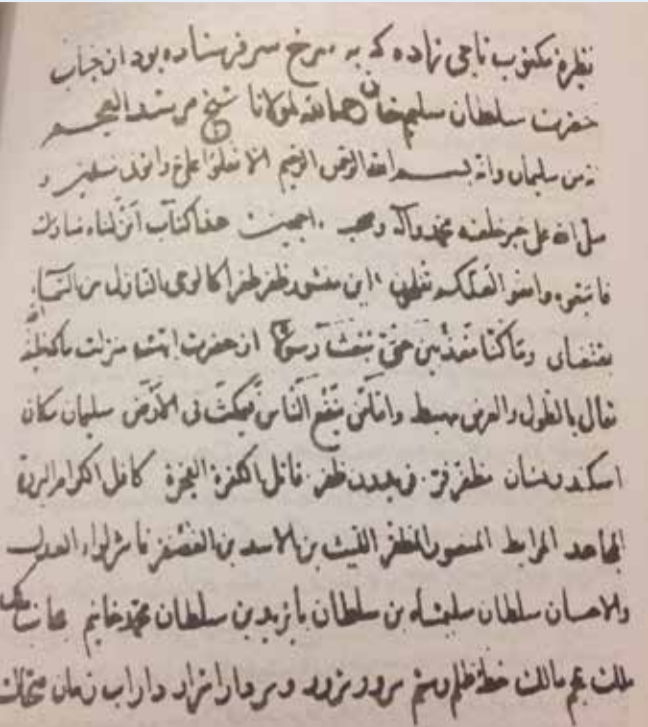
For example, Sultan Suleiman left behind a Persian divan of poetry, which speaks volumes about how Persian was, at that time, the administrative, judicial, and literary language of the Ottomans. This trend carried on for roughly three to four centuries, lasting until the late 17th century — around the 1690s. During this period, the Ottomans set out to start de-Persianization, swapping out Persian with Turkish in the court, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary, and rolling out extensive language reforms in Turkish.

Nevertheless, the Persian language managed to hold onto its cultural influence throughout the Ottoman realm and its surroundings — even across Eastern Europe. In the Arab world, Iraq was much the same; Culturally, religiously, and through Shia Islam, Iraq was closely tied to Iran, with Persian language and culture making significant inroads. The majority of Iraqis were Shias, and because of pilgrimage and religious exchanges, the two countries were constantly coming and going, maintaining cultural ties. Iraq actually stood as a kind of buffer and shared backyard between Iran and the Ottomans, with both powers vying for the upper hand in Iraq. At times, Iraq fell under the sway of Iran, while at other times, it came under Ottoman domination. Persian language and

The Mughal emperor Shah Alam (sitting-G) of present-day India hands a scroll to Robert Clive, the British governor of Bengal.  
© BENJAMIN WEST/BRITISH LIBRARY



The British, in particular, started meddling in the cultural sphere of what was then known as Greater Iran. With the consolidation of the East India Company’s position in India, the process of “de-Persianization” got underway. Persian language and culture had been integral elements of Iran’s wider cultural sphere. Yet, this process was met with hostility from the British, who in 1837 banned Persian — the administrative, royal, and judicial language of India — and swapped it out for English. By that time, the Persian language had been deeply rooted in the subcontinent for nearly eight centuries, rising to its peak of refinement when they started the de-Persianization.



Letter exchange between Sultan Selim I of the Ottomans and Shah Ismail of the Safavids before the Battle of Chaldiran in the Persian language

culture crept into Iraq widely, leaving their mark on daily life, literature, and the arts.

Cultural Iran has maintained its historical continuity

A new development that deepened the rift was the emergence of nation-state formation, which began to get off the ground after World War I. When the Ottoman Empire fell apart, new modern states sprang up across the region. Building national identity quickly shot to the top of the agenda for these states, and the drive for distinctive cultural and political boundaries kept gathering momentum. In line with this, starting in the 1940s, the nascent governments, such as Iraq’s Ba’ath Party, got down to the business of nation-building. Their created identities were defined by novel ideas of the nation and the state, and over time, Iran was cast as “the other” in the region’s political and cultural discourse. These moves coincided with a wave of de-Persianization that picked up speed after World War I. At this point, Britain’s presence also came into play. As the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, areas such as Iraq fell under Britain’s thumb and were brought under direct control. In these territories, new cultural policies were rolled out to undercut the Persian language and culture. In Bahrain, for instance, a British national served as Adviser to the Ruler of Bahrain for around 30 years. This longstanding presence played a pivotal part in cutting Bahrain loose from Iran’s cultural sphere and dimming the standing of the Persian language and culture there. Thus, the political and cultural changes after the fall of the Ottomans, the arrival of European powers, and the onset of nation-building in the Middle East opened up a rift in cultural Iran. As a result, cultural and political Iran drifted apart — an outcome that paved the way for the emergence of new borders in Central Asia. This trend intensified in the Soviet era as the Soviets rolled out systematic policies to weaken Persian language and culture, including a wholesale switch to the Cyrillic script and efforts designed to drive a wedge between Central Asian nations and Iran. Still, even in this new age, the cultural, artistic, and literary elements of Iran and Persian kept going strong throughout the wider region. Although Persian was no longer the official language of the court or judiciary, it remained in use among the in-

tellectual, scientific, and cultural elites of the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia. Religiously, Iranian Islam stands apart from the Islam of the Quraysh tribe or the Arabs. This difference isn’t limited to Shia Islam; Even Sunni communities in Central Asia and parts of Afghanistan show the fingerprints of Iranian Islam. These cultural and religious factors have, over centuries, played a key role in keeping cultural Iran alive. In fact, these features have ensured that cultural Iran has held its ground historically despite shifting borders and politics. Even now, there’s a cultural Iran on one side, while on the other, Iran rubs shoulders with Arab Islam and the Western world. The issue of “othering” came out in the open during World War I, at a time when state-building was high on the agenda in the region. In Iraq, the Ba’athists, Pan-Arabists, and Arab socialists — whose outlook was a blend of leftist and nationalist ideas — set out to cobble together a new nation from scratch. That’s why, especially in Iraq, more than anywhere else in the region, forces worked hard to forge a sense of identity by differentiating themselves from Persian and Iranian culture. During the Iraqi monarchy, Tehran and Baghdad got along reasonably well, but in Iraq’s education, arts, and broader culture, a deliberate push for Arab, Iraqi, and Sunni identity got underway. This new identity-building, often implicitly, sometimes openly, boiled down to defining Iran as “anti-Iraq” and “the outsider”. By this means, Iraq set out to distinguish

its own culture and identity from Iran’s. In Turkey, meanwhile, during Atatürk’s state-building drive, the process unfolded with far less animosity toward Iran, thanks to his relatively friendly ties with Reza Shah. In Central Asia and the Caucasus, Russia and the USSR pursued their own agenda, while in the Indian subcontinent, de-Iranization and de-Persianization went ahead unabated.

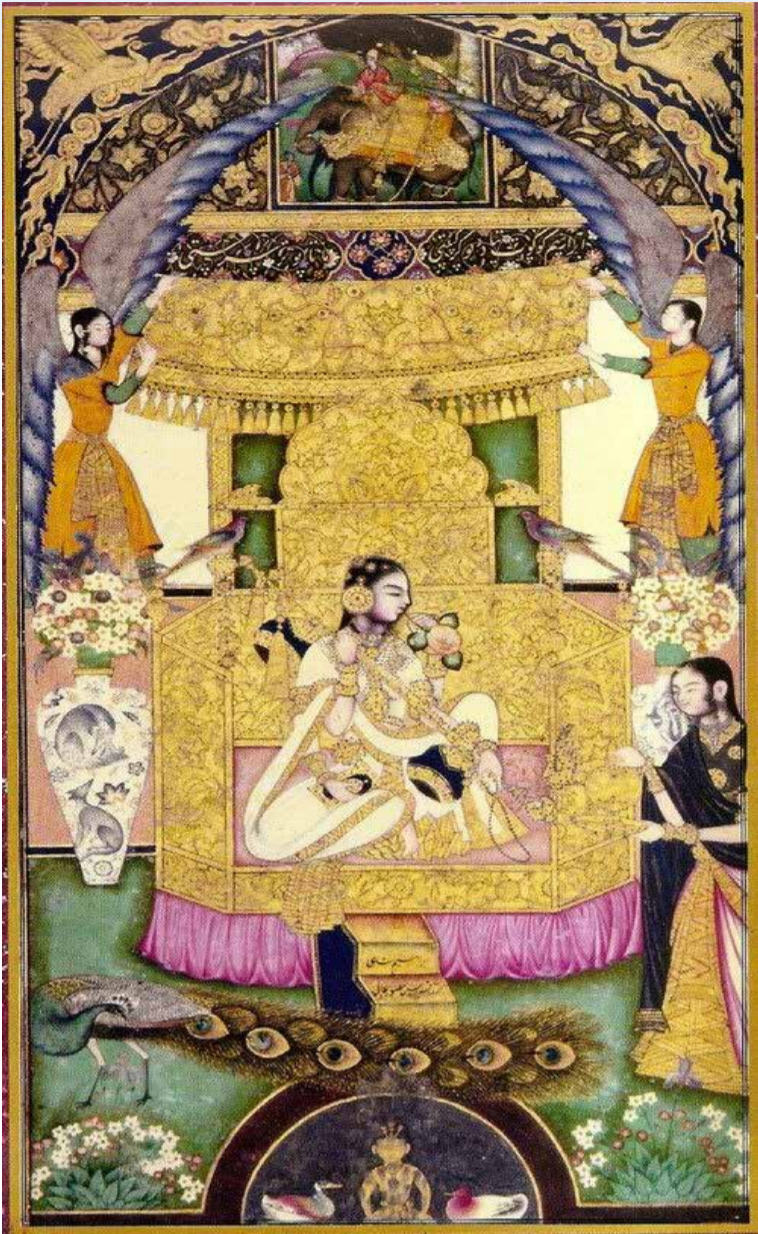
Relying on regional ties won’t cut it economically

On ties with neighbors — especially economic ties — there’s been a strong push in recent years for the notion that regional relations are enough to fall back on, and that if these are well-developed, everything will fall into place and even sanctions won’t hold Iran back. This position holds little water, and there’s little reason to buy it; From an economic perspective, it’s not realistic. The combined GDP of Iran’s neighbors — including Persian Gulf countries — makes up barely more than six percent of the global economy, even at best. So, even supposing Iran could pull off the highest possible level of economic cooperation with all its neighbors — which, given the current climate and sanctions, is next to impossible, — this still wouldn’t go far toward meeting its economic needs. For instance, not long ago, Turkmenistan and Iraq inked a deal on transferring oil via Iran, but since an approval from the US never came, the project ground to a halt. Or in the case of Chabahar Port, the US recently scrapped India’s sanctions waivers for the area. All of this shows that even with fewer restrictions, leaning solely on regional ties simply won’t get Iran over the line economically. Iran is a large, populous country at a crossroads of the world; Neighborly ties alone can’t solve all its problems.

Regional convergence now an uphill climb

Let’s continue by looking at the Iranian and Arab worlds — and at our main priorities over the past few decades. In several surrounding areas, we come across regions where Iran shares common cultural, historical, identity, and heritage with the neighboring Iranian world. That is, greater Iran covers territories where history, language, religion, art, thought, and lifestyle all bear the imprint of Iranian civilization. Zoroastrian heritage, Iranian mysticism, poetry and politics, and pillars of Iranian culture —

wisdom, ethics, and justice — have all played a central role in shaping this civilizational zone. This is the sphere found mostly north and east of Iran — along with parts of Iraq to the west, and on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. Alongside this environment is a separate environment — the Arab world — which took shape under the sway of the Islam of the Quraysh tribe or the Arabs, a version of Islam that stands in contrast with Iranian Islam, whether in its Shia or Sunni branches. The key point is that in the last 40 years, Iran’s strategic focus has been on the Arab and Islamic aspects of the region, not its Iranian cultural roots. In other words, Iran has poured its energy and resources into the Arab-Islamic sphere and let the Iranian cultural ties fall by the wayside. Globally, since the end of the Cold War, one of the major currents in international politics has been regionalism and convergence — a trend that our region has missed out on entirely. Europe’s regionalism has gone so far as to reach political union and foreign policy coordination. Here in the Middle East, though, regionalism has barely gotten off the ground. Iran’s decision to focus on the Islamic-Arab sphere — not cultural Iran — is the main culprit. Cultural Iran, especially in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan (setting aside the Taliban and looking instead at Afghan elites), is largely mystical and secular, which has not really been desirable for us. When it comes to real regional convergence, structural, ideological, and cultural barriers keep cropping up. Worries over Shia ideology, ideological interpretations, power struggles, and geopolitical rivalries are all part of the mix. Within Iran, some political and cultural factions aren’t sold on the idea of closer ties with mainly secular neighboring states. On the other hand, some Iranians with secular or non-ideological leanings see themselves as a cut above places like the Caucasus, India, and Arab countries. This sense of cultural superiority itself has become a psychological sticking point, making regional coordination and cooperation that much tougher. Under these circumstances, to genuinely move cultural and civilizational regionalism forward among Arab and neighboring countries and those within Iran’s cultural orbit, Iran would have needed to take concrete steps — sadly, that hasn’t happened to the necessary extent. Joint TV and media networks with Cen-



Saraswati Enthroned, made by the Iranian immigrant Farrukh Beg in c.1595–1609 at Bijapur, India

tral Asian and Indian subcontinent countries, collaborative university programs — including faculty and student exchanges and cross-cultural research projects, expanded joint artistic and literary initiatives especially through organizations like UNESCO to showcase and protect Iranian civilizational symbols regionally, joint mystical symposiums given the deep Sufi roots linking Central Asia, the Caucasus, and India, and joint productions of TV series, films, concerts, and regional artistic teams — all of these could have gone a long way toward rebuilding cultural ties with the Iranian world. Other countries have gotten a jump on these fronts; For example, the Turks have stitched together the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States and managed to hammer out real cultural and political convergence. Iran, meanwhile, has failed to set up any such structure and has wound up losing out on both sides. Turkey itself has been beating the drum for Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism. While Iran has mostly stayed focused on ideology, the Middle East, and the Arab world, it has never gone after a cultural Iran, missing out on its potential. The truth is, Arab states have never welcomed Iran’s role in regional Middle Eastern structures and have always looked at us with suspicion. On Palestine and plenty of other fronts, they have refused to team up with Iran in earnest, always taking steps to derail Iran’s influence in the region. By overcommitting to the Arab-Islamic world, Iran has let the opportunity slip by to reconnect with the cultural Iranian world, essentially making way for Turkey to move in and take over the field.



The photo shows the map of the historical Greater Iran.

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The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

# Iran embraces top-tier tests at Futsal World Cup, Tavassoli says

## Sports Desk

Iranian goalkeeper and captain Farzaneh Tavassoli knows the challenge that lies ahead for her and her teammates at the upcoming Women's Futsal World Cup but embraces the opportunity to test themselves against the best in the game.

Iran has been drawn alongside futsal heavyweights Brazil and Italy, as well as Panama, in Group D of the inaugural World Cup, which will kick off on November 21 in the Philippines.

Iranian girls will get their campaign underway against eight-time Copa America champion Brazil – the top team in the latest FIFA World Ranking – on November 23, before facing Panama three days later.

The Asian side will hope to be in contention for a top-two finish in the group and a place in the round of 16, when it squares off against world No. 7 Italy on the final day on November 29.

When asked about Iran's tough draw, Tavassoli said, "Brazil and Italy are top-tier, star-studded teams, but we won't be intimidated by the magnitude of the task." "In fact, matches like these are a huge source of motivation for us. We've analyzed Brazil thoroughly; we know their strengths and weaknesses, and will be prepared for any scenario," the 38-year-old keeper told the official website of the Iranian Football Federation.



● AFC

cial website of the Iranian Football Federation.

"In futsal, everything comes down to belief and focus. They may have more global experience, but we have hearts full of motivation and passion. Our goal is to get the best possible result from every single match," added the Iranian skipper.

A third-place finish at May's

Asian Cup secured Iran a spot at the World Cup – alongside finalists Japan and Thailand – though it was hardly deemed a satisfying outcome for a nation that had won back-to-back titles in the previous two editions of the continental showpiece.

Following Iran's underwhelming campaign in China, the sport's national governing body dis-

missed head coach Forouzan Soleimani and reinstated Shahrzad Mozaffar, who had led the team to the Asian title in 2018 during her previous tenure.

"The Iranian team has changed; the players are more motivated and disciplined. Our technical staff is doing a fantastic, highly professional job; from fitness to analysis, everything is scientific

and precise. When you train with a team like this, you just want to go out and shine on the court – and we are ready to make that happen," Tavassoli said.

"Iran is now a rejuvenated team with a different mindset. We're firmly confident that we can stand our ground against any opponent. We push and motivate each other in training because we know

that every second of practice could be decisive at the World Cup."

Iran faced Russia in friendly double-header in Tula two weeks ago, playing to a 2-2 draw in the first game before winning the second outing 4-3.

"The training camps are truly intense, but we find this hard work rewarding because we know we have a great goal ahead of us. Every training session, every in-camp game, and every tactical meeting brings us one step closer to our objective. The coordination among the players improves daily, and the team has reached a strong level of mental and physical consistency.

"There's a powerful team spirit within the squad. The experienced players support the younger ones, and the younger ones motivate us all with their energy. We are like a family – everyone is working towards the same goal."

On Iran's ultimate goal in the Philippines, Tavassoli said, "For us, the World Cup is more than just a tournament; it's an opportunity to show the world the spirit of Iranian women. We'll go out there to prove that Iranian talent, dedication, and passion can excel at any level.

"Our matches will undoubtedly be challenging, but I can only promise that we will fight with all we have until the final whistle. Our team is ready to stun the world."

## Iran's Safi finishes doubles' runner-up at World Tour event in Italy

### Sports Desk

Iran's Meshkatozzahra Safi settled for the doubles' runner-up trophy at the W15 Solarino tournament in Sicily, Italy.

The Iranian player teamed up with Germany's Vivien Sandberg to reach Saturday's

final at the latest ITF Women's World Tennis Tour event but fell in straight sets (6-3, 6-4) to the Italian duo of Carlolina Gasparini and Kseniia Ruchkina.

The Iranian-German duo began their campaign with a 2-0 victory (6-4, 7-6(4)) over the

host's Alessandra Fiorillo and Ylenia Zocco and was then handed a walkover against NoemiLa Cagnina and Giulia Paterno in the quarterfinals. Safi and Sandberg then came out victorious in successive sets (7-6(3), 6-1) against Swiss pair of Nicole Gadient and Sophie Luescher to progress to the final showpiece.

Safi had claimed the doubles crown – alongside British girl Jasmine Conway – at the W15 Kayseri tournament in June to become the first Iranian to win a trophy at a World Tour event.



● ITF

## Greek Super League:

## Taremi on target again as 10-man Olympiacos edges Aris

### Sports Desk

Iranian striker Mahdi Taremi found the net for a second game in a row to help Olympiacos beat Aris 2-1 at home in the Greek Super League on Saturday.

Making only his second top-flight start since joining the club in August,

the prolific Iranian exchanged a neat one-two with Portuguese winger Daniel Podence before firing the ball into the roof of the net on the hour mark to double the home side's lead at Karaiskakis Stadium.

Podence had opened the scoring in the 49th minute. Olympiacos still had to with-

stand a late scare to secure all three points, as Gustavo Mancha was sent off in the 71st minute, before Lorenzo Morón pulled one back from the spot for the visitors three minutes later.

This was Taremi's sixth goal in 10 appearances in the Olympiacos colors.

The former Porto and Inter

forward came off the bench to score twice on his club debut during a 5-0 win over Panserraikos on the opening day of the new league season, and netted another double to lead The Legend to a 2-1 victory over Asteras Aktor in the domestic cup on September 24. The Iranian then went on a six-game goalless run across all competitions, but ended the drought with a smashing header during a 2-0 win against archrival AEK Athens last week.

The latest victory saw Olympiacos move atop the top-flight table with 22 points from nine matches – two points clear of second-placed PAOK, which has a game in hand.



Olympiacos striker Mahdi Taremi celebrates his goal during a 2-1 victory over Aris in the Greek Super League in Piraeus, Attica, Greece, on November 1, 2025.

● olympiacos.org



## Tractor aiming for back-to-back wins in ACL Elite

### Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League champion Tractor will seek a second successive victory at the AFC Champions League Elite when it faces Al Shorta at Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium today.

Having shared the spoils with Emirati outfits Shabab Al Ahli (1-1) and Al Wahda (0-0) in its first two games in the league phase, Tractor upset the formbook with a stunning 5-0 win against Sharjah FC on matchday three while Iraq's Al Shorta has yet to shift into high gear with just a point to its name.

While Tractor would have been glad to

register victory against Sharjah, it will head into the Al Shorta tie having only twice won back-to-back matches on the continental stage, which were both achieved in 2016.

The victory against Sharjah, however, ended a run of three winless matches and with Al Shorta struggling to get its campaign running, Tractor will fancy its chances of taking maximum points.

Al Shorta's only point came from its opening-day draw with Al Sadd SC of Qatar and the Iraqi side needs to start getting points on the board if it is to stand a chance of a top-eight spot in the West Zone's 12-team table and a place in the round of 16.

The odds are stacked against the Iraqi side, with Al Shorta having only picked up one point over its last 11 outings in the Asian elite clubs' competition, finding the net only four times and conceding 28.

Sitting fifth in the table, Tractor will step onto the pitch on the back of a frustrating 1-1 home draw against 10-man Persepolis in the domestic league on Thursday, when a Marko Bakic's stunning free kick in the 96th minute canceled out in-form Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh's 88th-minute opener for the host.



● FFIRI

# Astara Beach Bazaar welcoming visitors to crossroads of heritage, trade

Iranica Desk

Located in the northwest of Gilan Province, the Astara Beach Bazaar sits just a short distance from Iran's border with the Republic of Azerbaijan. Nestled between the Caspian Sea and Estil Wetland, this bustling market has become one of the most important commercial centers in northern Iran, playing a vital role in the local economy and employment.

The Astara Beach Bazaar, consisting of roofed walkways and more than 1,600 active shops, takes its name from its proximity to the sea. While clothing remains the dominant product sold here, the market also offers a wide range of goods, including cosmetics, household appliances, bags, sports equipment, toys, and mobile accessories. The products are both domestic and imported.

Facilities at the bazaar include open-air parking and public restrooms, though finding a space during peak hours can be challenging. Several grocery stalls, food kiosks, and fast-food stands also serve visitors. Beyond shopping, the market gives travelers an opportunity to experience the daily life and culture of Astara's local community.

History

The origins of the Astara Beach Bazaar date back to 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Soon after, the border crossing between Iran and the newly independent Republic of Azerbaijan reopened, and the bazaar was established as a hub for trade between the two nations, kojaro.com wrote.

In its early years, the market was known primarily for selling goods imported from Russia and other former Soviet republics, earning it the nickname "the Russians' Bazaar." At that time, many Azerbaijani traders



Astara Beach Bazaar  
● balad.ir



Astara National Garden  
● kojaro.com



Astara Beach Bazaar  
● balad.ir



Estil Wetland  
● kojaro.com

were unfamiliar with the true value of their goods and sold high-quality personal items — such as Russian cameras and fine glassware — at remarkably low prices. This simplicity and openness became a defining feature of the market's early days.

As trade between residents on both sides of the border grew, the bazaar evolved into a more structured and official commercial center. Its appeal lay in the combination of high-quality goods and affordable prices, quickly transforming Astara into a popular border shopping destination.

The fame of the bazaar soon

spread beyond the region, attracting visitors from Tehran, Tabriz, Hamedan, and Qazvin. As demand rose, new shopping centers and arcades were built around the market to accommodate the influx of customers.

However, stricter customs and border regulations gradually restricted imports from Azerbaijan. Eventually, low-priced but lower-quality Chinese products filled the shelves. Today, according to local vendors, most goods in the Astara market are shipped directly from Tehran and no longer carry the same distinctive quality once associated with the bazaar.

A destination for all seasons

The best time to visit Astara Beach Bazaar is during spring — particularly in May and June — when the weather is cool and pleasant. Summer also attracts many travelers, though the humidity can be intense for some visitors.

Beyond the market itself, Astara offers a range of nearby attractions that enrich the travel experience:

National Garden

A relic from the Qajar era, this scenic park features statues, playgrounds, a children's library, and an amphitheater. Re-

cently renovated, it provides a refreshing spot for picnics and family gatherings.

Shariati Beach Park

Shariati Beach Park offers green spaces ideal for picnics and walks. Facilities include gazebos, camping areas, and restrooms, with restaurants nearby serving local dishes.

Bird Garden

Opened in 2007, this 10,500-square-meter sanctuary houses around 300 birds from 60 species, including parrots, peacocks, pheasants and quails. Some species are kept in cages, while others

roam in open spaces.

Estil Wetland

Listed since 2005 as one of Gilan's top five tourism zones, the Estil Wetland spans 138 hectares and is home to more than 80 species of plants and animals. Picnic shelters and facilities have been added around the lagoon for visitors' comfort.

From its early beginnings as a modest border marketplace to its current role as a lively coastal destination, the Astara Beach Bazaar continues to reflect the intersection of commerce, culture, and community along Iran's northern frontier.

Introduction to the book:

## Vernacular Architecture along the Northern Coastal Regions and Ports of the Persian Gulf

Living with heat and humidity



The book entitled "Vernacular Architecture along the Northern Coastal Regions and Ports of the Persian Gulf" authored by Niloufar Nikqadam has been published by the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia in 2024.

Kazem Mousavi-Bojnourdi, in his foreword, emphasized the importance of studying the Persian Gulf's coasts and highlights the cultural and artistic continuity of the region. He regards the author's research as a significant contribution to uncovering lesser-known aspects of Iranian architecture.

In her preface, the author pointed out the historical significance of Iran's southern coasts. Their strategic geographic location, access to open waters, trade routes, and abundant natural re-

sources made these areas central to merchants and political powers throughout history. Historical buildings in this region have largely suffered from harsh climatic conditions, leaving only a few structures intact. Climate-sensitive architecture has played a key role in local construction, with buildings designed to adapt to the hot and humid conditions of the northern Persian Gulf.

The book is organized into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the elements of vernacular architecture in harmony with the climate, incorporating observations from geographers, travelers, and explorers of the past. The second chapter explores architectural features, including structure, materials,

and design details. Buildings were constructed to provide shade, minimize sunlight penetration, and maximize natural ventilation. Roofs near the coast are flat and light, while those farther inland are heavier and often domed. Key materials include porous sea stones, Sarooj (a traditional water-resistant mortar), mud bricks, and clay, which enhance thermal comfort.

The third chapter delves into the historical background of islands, ports, and cities along the northern Persian Gulf, from ancient times to the Islamic period, highlighting the role of trade, fresh water, security, and agriculture in regional prosperity. Some surviving structures date back to the fourth millennium BCE. Cities such as

Bandar Abbas held strategic importance from the Achaemenid era through the Sassanid period.

The fourth chapter, the core of the book, presents a functional classification of architecture, mosques, religious buildings, palaces and mansions, water reservoirs, hydraulic structures, public buildings, and constructions by foreign powers.

Most mosques are inward-oriented with central courtyards, adapted to the local climate, and some feature wind catchers and minarets. Forts date from the Sassanid to Qajar periods, serving military or administrative purposes, while royal and aristocratic residences were often located within fortifications. Cisterns and hydraulic works

ensured drinking water and supported economic activity. Public buildings include caravanserais, bazaars, bathhouses, and schools. Structures built by foreigners, mainly from the Safavid to Qajar periods, served military and administrative functions.

The buildings are introduced geographically from east to west, covering Hormozgan, Fars, Bushehr, and southern part of Khuzestan provinces. The information is compiled from historians, travelogues, and historical maps, carefully reviewed and illustrated. The author hopes this research will help preserve and promote the understanding of southern Iran's unique vernacular architecture, ensuring this invaluable heritage is passed on to future generations.



# UNESCO adds Iranian philosopher Tabatabaei, mystic Bastami to global commemoration list



Bayazid Bastami



Allameh Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei



The commemoration of Bastami's 1,150th death anniversary was backed by Armenia, Tajikistan and Turkey. Born around 803 CE in the north-central Iranian city of Bastam, he was revered as "King of Mystics."

Bastami's teachings, centered on humility, lifelong learning and harmony with nature, resonate strongly with UNESCO's advocacy of lifelong education and sustainable development.

Iran's commission said both figures embody "timeless values of knowledge, reason and coexistence." It plans a series of international academic conferences and exhibitions in their honor next year.

Tehran also played an active role in three other nominations approved for the 2026-2027 cycle, the 1,050th birth anniversary of Persian poet Rabia Balkhi (backed by Tajikistan and Afghanistan), the 50th anniversary of Iraqi philosopher Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr's 'Logical Foundations of Induction,' and the 500th birth anniversary of Turkish poet Baki. UNESCO's commemoration list, updated every two years, celebrates figures whose work promotes dialogue among cultures and advances peace, a mission that, for Iran, remains both philosophical and strategic.

## Arts & Culture Desk

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on November 1 approved the inclusion of two towering Iranian figures, philosopher Allameh Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei and mystic Bayazid Bastami, in its 2026-2027 calendar of global commemorations, following a proposal by Iran's

National Commission for UNESCO.

By celebrating its philosophers, Iran recalls a legacy of Islamic thought and Sufi wisdom, projecting cultural influence abroad and reaffirming its place in the world's shared intellectual heritage, IRNA reported.

The decision was adopted during the 43rd session of UNESCO's General Conference, underway in the historic Silk

Road city of Samarkand from October 30 to November 13. The session was attended by Minister of Science, Research and Technology Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, who also heads the National Commission for UNESCO, and the body's Secretary-General Hassan Fartousi.

Tabatabaei's centennial of intellectual life will be marked with support from Azerbaijan, Iraq and Pakistan. His

groundbreaking work 'Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism' is credited with forging a dialogue between Islamic thought and Western rationalism.

UNESCO documents describe him as a "bridge-builder" between philosophical traditions, a scholar whose reasoning "transcended borders" in pursuit of mutual understanding.

## Iran achieves 96% domestic drug production amid Western sanctions

By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

### INTERVIEW

Iran now produces about 96% of its pharmaceuticals domestically despite decades of Western sanctions, lawmaker Fatemeh Mohammad Beigi said, describing the country's health-care sector as one that has "crossed the wall of sanctions" and joined the world's vaccine-making nations.

The member of Parliament's Health and Treatment Committee said Iran's scientific drive had turned restrictions into an "engine of innovation."

She warned that the humanitarian fallout from sanctions-related drug shortages rests squarely with the countries that imposed them, and revealed that parliament is preparing legal filings to hold the United States and European governments accountable for the impact on Iranian patients, particularly those

with rare and life-threatening illnesses.

"Our specialists stood on their own feet," she told Iran Daily, stressing that Iranian researchers and manufacturers had built "a self-reliant pharmaceutical system" capable of meeting nearly all domestic demand. "Only a small fraction of medicine for certain diseases still comes from abroad, and our knowledge-based firms are doing everything possible to fill even those gaps."

Mohammad Beigi said the growth of Iran's home-grown biotech companies had pushed the country into "the top ten vaccine-producing nations."

She pointed to the success of locally developed COVID-19 vaccines as proof of that progress. "During the pandemic, our scientists created vaccines when others tried to isolate us," she said. "That moment showed what Iranian talent can achieve."

Still, she acknowledged that the

pharmaceutical sector faces persistent headwinds. Shortages of raw materials and advanced laboratory equipment remain "the toughest challenge," she said, though Iranian engineers have begun building their own specialized machinery and production lines. "Step by step, we are closing those gaps too."

Mohammad Beigi said Parliament was pressing international organizations to recognize medical sanctions as a breach of humanitarian law. "Many of our patients lost access to vital drugs because of banking restrictions and blocked trade channels," she said. "The moral and legal responsibility lies with the sanctioning states."

To reduce exposure to such pressures, Tehran is expanding regional partnerships and currency-swap frameworks.

Mohammad Beigi cited Iran's entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS as moves that "dilute Western leverage."

"We've started pharmaceutical exchanges with friendly countries that share mutual interests," she said, describing those deals as lifelines for the health sector.

Parliament, she added, is drafting a plan to shift medicine trade away from the dollar. "Relying on one currency means relying on those who weaponize it," she said. "Our aim is to settle transactions in national currencies so that no patient's treatment depends on political pressure."

The lawmaker lashed out at Washington's sanctions policy, arguing that the United States "inflicts suffering on nations" and will not escape the repercussions at home. "There are growing protests and inequalities even inside America," she said, linking them to what she called "the same unfair policies" that have hurt access to healthcare worldwide. She also pointed to domestic eco-



Fatemeh Mohammad Beigi

nomics strains caused by the removal of Iran's preferential exchange rate and limited access to foreign currency, which have made importing inputs more costly. "Sanctions turned every dollar into a bottleneck," she said. "But our start-ups and researchers refused to surrender. They are producing high-tech

medicines and giving new hope to patients."

Mohammad Beigi said that Iran's experience has proved that scientific capacity can outlast isolation. "Sanctions tried to paralyze us," she said, "but instead they pushed us to build. Today, Iran stands among the nations that make their own medicine and their own vaccines."

## German Hans Zimmer to stage film-concert in Tehran



### Arts & Culture Desk

A special film-concert program devoted to the renowned German-born composer Hans Zimmer will take place on November 24, at the royal auditorium of the Spinaz Palace in Tehran, featuring live performance by the

"Daris" Symphony Orchestra and a choral ensemble.

The production, organized by Fidibo, will showcase some of Zimmer's most evocative and memorable film scores, IRNA reported.

Highlights will include music from the Christopher Nolan-directed 'Inception' and his Batman trilogy; Ridley Scott's 'Gladiator'; Ron Howard's 'The Da Vinci Code' and 'Angels & Demons'; Guy Ritchie's 'Sherlock Holmes'; Gore Verbinski's and Rob Marshall's 'Pirates of the Caribbean 2 & 4'; Edward Zwick's 'The Last Samurai'; and Joseph Kosinski's forthcoming 'F1', all accompanied by film plan and

sequence projections.

Zimmer's accolades include five Grammy Awards, one British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) prize and two Academy (AKA "Oscars") Awards, and in 2007 the British daily The Telegraph listed him among the world's living geniuses.

The concert will mark Fidibo's latest venture; after earlier film-concert runs devoted to the 'Harry Potter' and 'The Lord of the Rings' franchises, staged over ten nights for twenty performances this year, it now transcends the conventional concert-cinema format for Tehran audiences.

## 50 Iranologists from 21 countries to convene in Tehran

### Arts & Culture Desk

Fifty leading Iranologists from 21 countries are set to gather in Tehran for the International Iranology Summit, organizers announced, underlining the central role of tourism in Iranological studies.

The three-day event, scheduled from November 15 to 17 at the University of Science and Culture, will feature a dedicated session exploring the intersection of tourism and Iranology, organizers said, Mehr News Agency reported.

"Tourism is always at the heart of Iranology," noted Saeed Hashemi, dean of the university's Faculty of Tourism, during a press briefing on Sunday.

The summit will assemble eight prominent Iranologists from Iraq, Lebanon, Armenia, Turkey, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, many specializing in cultural heritage and literary tourism. They will join Iranian academics in discussions aimed at broadening public awareness of Iranological research. Hashemi highlighted the growing collaboration between universities and the summit, describing the integration of academic institutions as "a major step in scientificizing" the field and communicating Iran's cultural landscape to global audiences. Each participating university will act as a supporting arm for the summit, contributing expertise and facilitating scholarly exchange.