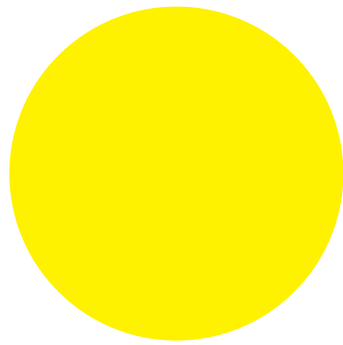




President calls for overhaul of youth programs, says Iran's future hinges on 'creative minds'

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West has no choice but to recognize Iran as 'hub' of nuclear industry: *FM*

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Balancing East & West: Iran's strategy in new global order



By Asgar Ghahremanpour
Editor-in-chief

OPINION

From Barry Buzan's perspective, the Second Cold War represents a structural conflict — one that differs from direct military confrontation yet performs the same essential function: redefining the global balance of power. The new battleground has shifted from the ideological front lines of the twentieth century to the domains of technology, digital economy, energy, and geopolitical influence. In this context, nations capable of managing both hard and soft power simultaneously are the ones able to secure — and even expand — their national interests. The same principle applies to Iran.

Geographically, Iran occupies one of the most sensitive and strategic regions in the world — a crossroads where the interests of major powers and vital global energy routes converge. The Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf remain powerful levers in Tehran's hands; if employed prudently, they can serve as instruments for safeguarding the nation's interests. In an era marked by US-China competition, this geopolitical position has gained even greater strategic value, as both powers rely on the stability of the Persian Gulf for the security of global energy flows.

At the same time, Iran's expanding ties with China and Russia present both opportunities and risks. The 25-year cooperation agreement with Beijing, for instance, offers prospects for investment and technology transfer — but it will truly serve Iran's interests only if implemented transparently, with balance and rigorous oversight. Excessive dependence on any single foreign power — friend or otherwise — could undermine Iran's strategic autonomy. Iran's foreign policy will be most effective when it maintains a smart equilibrium between East and West: engaging with all, aligning with none.

A central pillar of Iran's national interest is domestic stability. History shows that when Iran has faced internal economic strain or social division, external powers have gained leverage over its national decisions. Thus, an effective foreign policy in this new Cold War must align closely with economic and social strategy. Sustainable development, reducing oil dependency, and expanding advanced technologies are no longer economic luxuries — they are instruments of national security.

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Larijani: Iran's leaders never been hostile toward West

Missile issue used as 'tool' to pressure Tehran

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Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani addresses a conference titled "We and the West" in Tehran on November 10, 2025.

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Larijani: Iran's leaders never been hostile toward West

Missile issue used as 'tool' to pressure Tehran

International Desk

Iran's top security official said Iranian leaders have never been hostile toward the West but it is the West's policy toward political and security issues that has created crisis in relations. Addressing a conference named "We and the West" on Monday, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani said the West was Iran's primary trading partner for many years and the Leader has no problem with economic interactions between the two sides. However, he said that Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei believes that the West uses economic issues to interfere in matters such as the range of Iran's missiles or its nuclear capabilities.

"Iran is neither seeking control [over other nations] nor is submissive to the dominance of any power," Larijani stressed. Larijani underscored the importance of maintaining Iran's independence "because freedom, culture, and economy will not remain stable in the absence of independence." He also said the West is using the country's missile capabilities as a means of pressure, stressing it is in no position to comment on the issue. "The current debate on Iran's missiles is not out of genuine security concerns but rather serves as a tool to exert pressure and restrict the country's defense power," Larijani said. "What does it have to do with the West that it comments on the range of Iran's missiles?" he asked.



Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani addresses a conference titled "We and the West" in Tehran on November 10, 2025.

● MIZAN

Larijani, who was a former nuclear negotiator, emphasized that Western countries also use the nuclear issue as a pretext to harbor animosity towards the Iranian nation, saying the US and Europe are raising issues about the range of Iran's missiles with the aim of imposing control and dominance.

"No country is entitled to interfere in the Iranian nation's defensive power," which is a matter of independence, Larijani pointed out. The United States and its European allies have repeatedly called for any future agreement on Iran's nuclear activ-



ities to include its ballistic missile program as well.

Tehran has consistently rejected that demand, saying

its military capabilities are non-negotiable.

West has no choice but to recognize Iran as 'hub' of nuclear industry: FM

National Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that Western countries would have no choice but to recognize Iran as a scientific 'hub' in the field of peaceful nuclear industry.

The top diplomat said Western countries had been trying to deprive Iran of nuclear capability.

"Their main objective is to force Iran to relinquish its nuclear capability and keep everything under their own monopoly," Araghchi said during a visit to an exhibition showcasing the latest achievements of the country's nuclear industry at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI). He hailed Iranian nuclear scientists for developing a "highly complex and advanced global science," calling it a "major accomplishment that no one can ignore."



"We have worked hard for these achievements and the scientific progress made in the nuclear industry. People have shed blood for it and fought for it. Undoubtedly, no one in Iran will ever give up this right," the Iranian foreign minister said. Iran's nuclear program has been a source of contention with West-

ern countries for more than two decades. While Iran insists that its nuclear activities are entirely peaceful and aimed at civilian purposes such as energy production and medical research, Western powers—particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—have long expressed



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (c), accompanied by chief the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami (2nd R), visits an exhibition of Iran's nuclear industry in Tehran on November 10, 2025.

● www.aeo.org.ir

concern that Tehran could be seeking the capability to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran confirms IAEA inspections of nuclear sites last week

International Desk

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) visited several nuclear facilities in Iran last week, including the Tehran Research Reactor, the Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

"As long as we are a member of the NPT, we will abide by our commitments," ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said, referring to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. He did not specify which other sites had been inspected.

"Regarding other nuclear facilities, the procedures and related regulations are clear. Based on the law passed by Parliament, we are obliged to decide on any IAEA inspection request after coordination with the Supreme National Security Council," Baqaei added. The IAEA has conducted nearly a dozen inspections since Israel attacked Iran in June, followed by US airstrikes targeting the Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan nuclear facilities. The announcement came just days after IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi urged Tehran to "seriously improve" its coop-

eration with the agency.

"These visits demonstrate our constructive engagement, despite the provocations from the Zionist regime [of Israel] and its backers," Baqaei said, adding that June attacks had placed Iran in special circumstances.

"Due to the aggressive actions of the Zionist regime and the United States, we are facing exceptional conditions, and the agency must understand that the situation is not normal," he said. Iranian officials have rebuked the IAEA for providing justification for Israel's aggression, which triggered the 12-day war against Iran. Israeli airstrikes began the day after the IAEA Board of Governors voted to declare Iran in violation of its NPT obligations.

Following the Israeli and US attacks, Iran's Parliament passed a law suspending IAEA inspectors from entering its nuclear sites. However, Tehran later reached an agreement with the agency to resume limited cooperation, described as a goodwill gesture to prevent European signatories of the 2015 nuclear accord, known as the JCPOA, from triggering



the snapback mechanism. Despite that effort, Britain, France and Germany went ahead and invoked the mechanism, paving the way for the reimposition of UN sanctions that had been lifted under the nuclear deal.

Baqaei said Iran had maintained "normal cooperation" with the IAEA prior to the "military aggression of the Zionist regime and the United States," and later reached an understanding "under the Cairo arrangement" to continue working with the agency under new conditions.

"The parties that should be blamed are the European sides, which sought to misuse the JCPOA dispute resolution mechanism to restore the previously lifted Security Council resolutions," he added.

Balancing East & West ...

Iran's regional influence, when channeled toward its national interest, is another valuable asset. Its role in Middle Eastern security architecture offers the chance to help shape stable regional arrangements that reinforce, rather than endanger, its own security. Dialogue with neighbors and the resolution of longstanding tensions are not signs of weakness, but of diplomatic maturity.

To act as a responsible regional power, Iran must pursue stability as a strategic objective, not a tactical concession.

Globally, the Second Cold War is increasingly intertwined with new

domains — cyber rivalry, artificial intelligence, and data security. Effective participation in these arenas means preserving technological independence and digital sovereignty. Iran must invest in science and innovation alongside its defense capabilities, for in the new world order, knowledge itself is power.

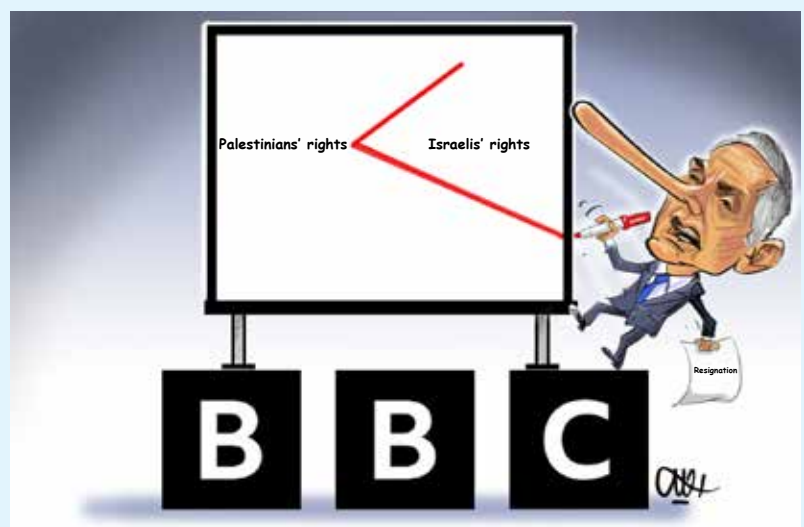
Ultimately, the meaning of "national interest" in this emerging era has become far more complex. It no longer refers solely to protecting borders or military capacity, but also to economic resilience, political stability, cultural soft power, and multilateral diplomacy. Iran can play a role that goes beyond a regional actor —

provided its foreign policy rests on three principles: independence in decision-making, balance in partnerships, and flexibility in diplomacy.

As Barry Buzan reminds us, the world is moving toward a deeply pluralist order — one in which no single power can dominate. In such a system, those nations that treat change not as a threat but as an opportunity to rebuild their national strength will emerge as the true winners. By placing its national interests as the compass of its foreign policy, Iran will not only withstand the turbulence of the Second Cold War, but can also emerge as one of the pillars of stability in the new global order.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran clinches maritime deal with Russia, advances talks with littoral states



Economy Desk

Iran is moving to increase its use of regional maritime transport capacity, with Tehran and Moscow agreeing to form a joint maritime consortium while negotiations with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have also

reported positive progress in recent days. Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, said in a post on X on Monday that the two countries "have agreed to form the first maritime transport consortium," IRNA reported. He said the understanding

was reached during meetings on November 6 and 7 in Makhachkala — capital of Dagestan republic, southwestern Russia — involving the heads of the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran, senior government officials, and executives from major private-sector companies in both

countries. According to Jalali, "the structure and framework of this consortium were agreed upon" and the two sides will finalize the official text within a month. He said the consortium will aim to "expand comprehensive trade, transit and multi-

modal transport between the two countries as a strategic objective." Saeed Rasouli, head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, who participated in the talks, told IRNA that negotiations with Kazakhstan on joint investment and cooperation in maritime transport "have reached the contract stage," while discussions with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are continuing. Rasouli said that although Iran has historically emphasized its hydrocarbon reserves, the country has "rich resources" in its ports and coastlines that require greater utilization. He noted that in the Caspian Sea region, Iran holds significant maritime potential for cooperation with its four neighboring littoral states, including landlocked countries seeking access to shipping routes. He said agreements with Kazakhstan on investing in Iranian ports are "close to being signed," while Turkmenistan has also held related discussions. The official added that a high-level Azerbaijani delegation led by the deputy prime minister recently visited Iran's Shahid Rajaei Port, and Tehran and Baku are now negotiating expanded transport cooperation using Iranian port infrastructure.

\$190b investment required to fully achieve SDP goals: Paknejad



Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad attends an open session of Parliament in Tehran on November 10, 2025. ● SHANA

Economy Desk

Iran will need around \$190 billion in financial resources to fully achieve the goals of its Seventh Development Plan (SDP), Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad told Parliament on Monday, underlining the importance of mobilizing investment and private-sector funding in the coming years. "According to expert estimates, achieving the full goals of the Seventh Plan requires approximately \$190 billion in financial resources," Paknejad said during an open session of the parliament, IRNA reported. He added that in the first year of the plan, which began on March 20, 2024, \$27 billion had been projected to be raised, and around \$5.5 billion, or 22% of the target, was actually secured. Paknejad noted that the initial funding, while below the target, has launched the process of monetizing energy assets and highlights the need for accelerated investment and activation of non-governmental financial resources to meet the plan's overarching objectives. The minister also outlined progress on the plan's implementation, which was issued by Iran's Plan and Budget Organization. "An operational program and annual quantitative targets were developed, with 26 major projects assigned to relevant agencies and executors," he said. Economic growth and investment were among the plan's top priorities. While the law targeted 9% growth in the oil sector, value-added growth in crude oil and gas extraction reached 6.2%, exceeding the overall 3% growth recorded in Iran's economy in the past Iranian calendar year. Paknejad further explained that although the quantity and quality of oil, gas, and condensate exports improved in the first half of the current year, lower international price benchmarks limited the achievement of the full projected sales targets.

Minister reports 58% trade growth with Uzbekistan amid customs barriers

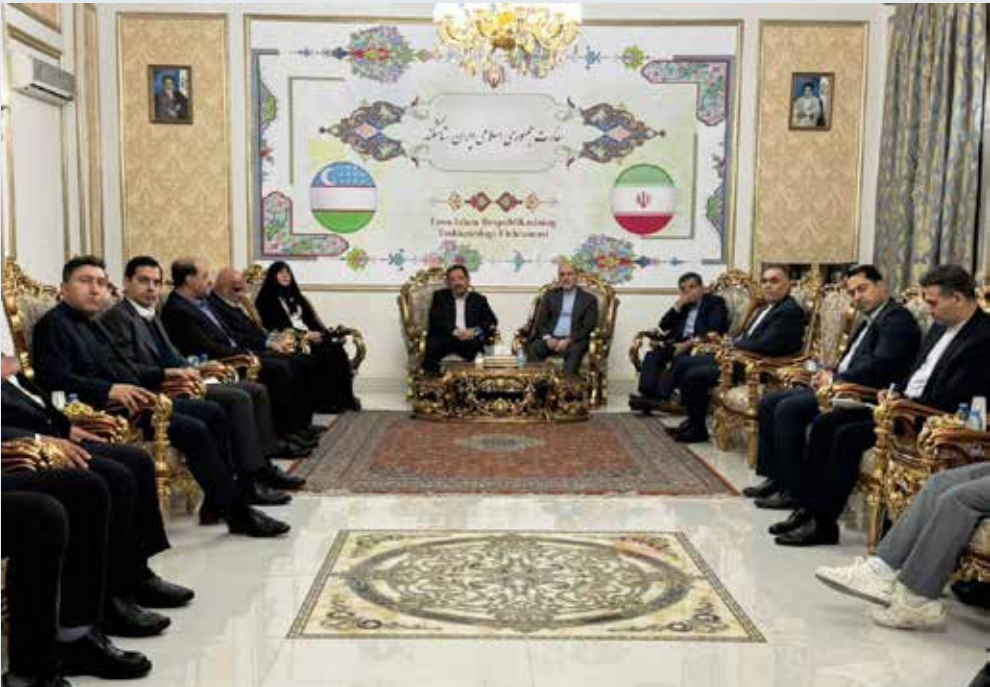
Economy Desk

Iran's industry, mining and trade minister said Tehran is aiming to secure new tariff arrangements and ease customs barriers with Uzbekistan, as bilateral trade between the two countries has grown sharply since the start of the calendar year (March 21). Speaking at a meeting with Iranian traders and businesspeople based in Uzbekistan late on Sunday, Mohammad Atabak said, "This year we witnessed a 58% growth in the volume of trade between Iran and Uzbekistan." He described Uzbekistan as "a link connecting Central Asia," IRNA reported. Atabak traveled to Tashkent to meet senior Uzbek officials, including the prime minister and economy and industry ministers, with the aim of negotiating new tariff agreements,



Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak (L) meets with Iranian traders and businesspeople at the Islamic Republic of Iran's Embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on November 9, 2025. ● IRNA

removing customs obstacles and facilitating commercial exchanges. He told the traders that recent efforts by Iran's Embassy in Tashkent, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, and other trade-related institutions have contributed to the rise in commercial activity between the two countries. However, he said further work is needed to accelerate progress. Although the recent efforts have increased trade and commercial exchanges, Atabak said, they are "not enough" and Iran must move quickly to resolve key challenges, particularly in rail and road trans-



port, customs procedures and the signing of a preferential trade agreement. Addressing these issues, he said, would enable "a significant leap" in bilateral relations.

Lufthansa reviews airspace safety as plans to resume Tehran flights

Economy Desk



Iran's civil aviation authority held a meeting in Tehran with senior representatives of Lufthansa to discuss the possible resumption of the airline's flights to Iranian airports after a temporary suspension linked to recent regional tensions, IRNA reported. The session brought together the deputy head of Iran's Civil

Aviation Organization (CAO) and senior officials with Lufthansa's evaluation team, including the airline's regional manager in Iran, its senior aviation security and risk management officer, and the head of Austrian Airlines' representation in the country, IRNA reported. According to officials, the Lufthansa team reviewed operational and security conditions in Iranian airspace as

part of its assessment to restart Frankfurt-Tehran flights. The German carrier has suspended and resumed the route several times over the past two years in response to regional security developments, and is conducting a fresh on-site review following the latest suspension. CAO officials outlined air traffic coordination procedures between military and civilian

sectors, as well as contingency plans to ensure the safety of international flights and the withdrawal of foreign airline crews if necessary. Initial feedback from the Lufthansa delegation indicated confidence in the safety and security of Iranian airspace, the officials said. Pending final approval of the assessment report, flights are expected to resume in early 2026.

A pivotal vote for Iraq's future



By Shahab Dalili

Researcher at Center for Middle East Strategic Studies

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The results of the parliamentary election set for November 11, 2025, will determine whether Iraq sticks to the path it has been treading for the last four years — one marked by internal stability, insulation from regional tensions, and a surge in foreign investment — or, on the flip side, whether the country will get caught up in yet another cycle of political, economic, and social turmoil.

Despite the flare-up of hostilities between Israel and Palestine in Gaza, the war in southern Lebanon, Israel's strike on Iran, and the downfall of the Assad dynasty in Syria, the Sudani administration has not only managed to keep Iraq out of the Middle East's tensions over the past three years, but has also succeeded in holding ethnic and sectarian tensions at bay and steering the country toward a measure of economic and political stability.

This, however, is only one side of the coin; The government is walking a tight-rope as ethnic and sectarian fault lines remain active, and Iraq's disenchanted youth are piling demands on the state. Middle Eastern unrest could spill over into Iraq at any moment and drag it into the regional fray, not to mention that the administration is also under pressure to get to grips with climate change. Against

this backdrop, Iraqis are set to head to the polls today and decide the fate of 329 parliamentary seats. This will be the first election since the electoral law was amended in March 2023.

Even though 118 parties are in the field and roughly 8,000 candidates are running, the elephant in the room remains voter distrust. Of the 29 million eligible voters, only 21 million have signed up to vote. The Sadrist Movement, one of Iraq's most credible political blocs, has boycotted the election, and the fate of the vote now hangs on the rivalry among Shia parties.

Put simply, Sudani's administration must fight on two fronts to form its second government. On the one hand, it must hold onto its position in parliament, which calls for joining forces with other parties; On the other, it needs to keep a lid on foreign meddling and deal with it effectively. The administration is well aware that this election is closely shaped by the rebuilding of the Resistance Axis, the Tehran-Washington rivalry, and the boycott by a substantial chunk of the Shia vote base (i.e., the Sadrist movement).

The layers of the upcoming election could easily morph into flashpoints after the ballots are cast. The new law brings its own technical complications — the method for counting and converting votes into seats has undergone a major overhaul. On top of that, the Shia parties are not marching in lock-step as they did last time, with separate slates entering the fray. The number of electoral districts has been slashed

from 83 to 18 (provincial) districts.

The Sadrist boycott and fracturing of Shia parties have opened the door for Sunni factions, raising the likelihood that the balance of seats in the next parliament might tilt toward the Sunni bloc and anti-Iranian alliances. The Sudani administration's nationalist movement is working to form its second government under the so-called Third Path coalition. Sunni and Kurdish parties are also stepping into the ring. Critics argue that the Shia parties are playing a tactical game: splitting up into multiple parties for the election but planning to regroup in a post-election coalition to hold onto their current 70 percent majority in parliament. Yet, to maintain this majority, alongside unity, they'll have to keep an eye on the Sadrist boycott and the risk of turnout sinking below 40%.

The Shia Coordination Framework is entering the election at least with three separate lists: Mohamed Sudani (Reconstruction and Development Coalition), Nouri al-Maliki (State of Law Coalition), and Qais Khazali (League of the Righteous) or Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) — all aiming to rake in maximum votes and leave final decisions to post-election coalition talks. Meanwhile, the National Wisdom Movement led by Ammar al-Hakim and Haider al-Abadi is also in the race, but their weight within the Shia Coordination Framework has taken a hit, and they will only be at the table for post-election bargaining. The Badr Organization under Hadi al-Amiri faces a similar sce-

nario.

On the other side, the Sunni parties are also grappling with splintering within their own ranks; The Taqaddum (Progress) party's votes have been distributed among smaller factions, weakening its hand in post-election coalition negotiations. Mohammad al-Halbousi, its leader, has been booted from the speakership for document forgery, while smaller parties run solo and chip away at the Sunni vote basket.

Alongside the Shias and Sunnis, the Kurdish parties, as the third corner of this parliamentary triangle, see the vote as a chance to boost their national share. Yet, internal rifts have reared their head among the Kurds as well. Long-running tensions between the Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union stand in the way of a united Kurdish bloc. In the previous election, the Democratic Party teamed up with the Sadrist Movement and Progress Party, while the Patriotic Union threw in with Shia and opposition Sunni factions to put together a coalition government. The Kurds' influence is mainly felt in the post-election coalition horse-trading. Thus, beyond being a battleground for the heavyweights, the election is also an opportunity for smaller parties to punch above their weight in coalition talks and government formation.

One mustn't lose sight of the fact that Iraq's election system, much like Lebanon's, runs on a consociational (quota-based) framework, in place since 2003, designed to split power among ethnic and religious groups so no single faction can corner the market on power. Traditionally, the prime minister goes to the Shias, the speaker of parliament to the Sunnis, and the president to the Kurds. This formula steers government formation, too, as seen in the current Sudani administration: 12 ministries for Shias, six for Sunnis, four for Kurds. So, party shares in parliament, and then in government, are carved out based on their vote haul. The law also sets aside nine parliamentary seats for minorities. The electoral law also heeds women's rights, guaranteeing one quarter of seats per province and 25% of parliament overall for women. As a result, in a country with Shias, Sunnis, Kurds, Christians, and a mosaic of ethnic and religious communities, no party is able to go it alone in forming a government; The quota system and electoral law serve as a safety net for fairness.

Given the current state of play and poll results, Sudani's government is leading the pack and poised to clinch a win and lock down a parliamentary majority. If Sudani does succeed in forming his second government, Iraq will, in all likelihood, stay the course toward stable governance. Nonetheless, Sudani will have to rope in smaller parties for coalition-building.

Ultimately, this November 2025 election is, above all, a recalibration of power within the quota system: a two-step process that kicks off with the will of the people at the ballot box and winds up with post-election coalition deals that shape Iraq's fate for the next four years. All eyes are now on voter turnout. Participation rates have plummeted from 62% during the Arab Spring to 41% in the previous election. Surveys indicate that turnout will hover around 40% or dip even lower. Consequently, it seems likely that the Shia movement will hang onto its parliamentary majority, and Sudani's second government will be formed. Baghdad will keep its ties with Tehran intact, but in its bid to attract more foreign investment, it will shift gears toward improved relations with the US and the West. Sunni factions, in coalition with Sudani, will sign off on his policies toward Tehran and Washington. The odds are that Sudani's second administration — under pressure from coalition partners and the West — will fast-track the process of disarming armed groups. Regional actors are likely to get behind this move.



Given the current state of play and poll results, Sudani's government is leading the pack and poised to clinch a win and lock down a parliamentary majority. If Sudani does succeed in forming his second government, Iraq will, in all likelihood, stay the course toward stable governance. Nonetheless, Sudani will have to rope in smaller parties for coalition-building.



Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani (7th-L) addresses the crowd at an election rally for the Reconstruction and Development Coalition ahead of the upcoming Iraqi parliamentary elections in Najaf, Iraq, on November 2, 2025.

● ALAA AL-MANJARI/REUTERS



US aims to drive wedge between Baghdad, Tehran: *Iraqi expert*

Financial, political inroads of foreign powers in parliamentary elections

INTERVIEW

The election silence period kicked off across Iraq on Saturday. During this time, political parties and movements are banned from rolling out campaign ads or touting their candidates until the end of voting.

Earlier, the Independent High Electoral Commission had announced that “the election silence period begins at 7 a.m. on Saturday and lasts until the end of public voting. Therefore, any promotional or campaign activity for candidates or electoral lists during this period will be treated as a clear violation of regulations, and legal action will be taken against the offenders.” Iraq’s sixth round of parliamentary elections is slated for November 11, 2025. More than 21 million citizens are eligible to vote, while some 9,000 candidates from 31 coalitions will vie for 329 seats in the Council of Representatives.

The ballot holds major significance as the next parliament will not only sign off on the cabinet but also elect the country’s president — an outcome that will directly shape the balance of power and affect Iraq’s political stability.

This time, amendments to the electoral law and redistricting have shaken up the process. Several districts in each province have been merged, and representatives will now be chosen based on the highest vote count rather than meeting the seat’s quota. These changes have heated up the competition and raised the stakes among candidates and coalitions.

Prominent Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni parties have a stronger presence than before, setting the stage for one of Iraq’s most decisive and consequential elections in recent years.

To examine the electoral landscape and the prevailing political mood, an interview was conducted with Mahmoud al-Hashemi, foreign policy expert and director of Iraq’s al-Ittihad Strategic Research Center. Below is the translation of that interview.

Mahmoud al-Hashemi



A displaced Yazidi man has his fingerprint verified before voting ahead of Iraq’s parliamentary elections, set for November 11, at a polling station in the Sharia camp near Dohuk, in Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdish region, on November 9, 2025.

● HASMID TAHVIL/AP



The Iraqi people are well aware of the schemes to undermine bilateral ties between Iran and Iraq and are determined to turn the page toward safeguarding their sovereignty and leveraging national resources within an independent framework. They view relations with Iran as a genuine and natural bond between two neighboring states linked by deep historical, religious, and social ties.



A view of the streets of Baghdad decorated with candidates’ posters ahead of the Iraqi parliamentary elections

● MURTADHA AL-SUDANI/ANADOLU

liki’s “State of Law,” Mohsen al-Mandalawi’s “Alliance of Principles,” Humam Hammoudi’s “Supreme Council,” and Abdulhussein Abtan’s “Nation’s Power Party” (former minister of sports), are each running separately. Meanwhile, Ammar al-Hakim’s “al-Hikma Movement” and Haider al-Abadi’s “Victory Coalition” have joined forces under the banner “National State Forces Alliance.”

On another front, the “Asaib Ahl al-Haq” (League of the Righteous), led by Qais al-Khazali, is running independently under the “Sadeqoun” list, spearheaded by Higher Education Minister Naim al-Aboudi.

We believe the “State of Law” list led by Nouri al-Maliki will square off as the main rival to al-Sudani’s “Reconstruction and Development” alliance.

How do you gauge the influence of foreign powers on the outcome of Iraq’s elections?

This is one of Iraq’s elections most heavily caught up in external interference, coming amid sweeping regional shifts — from Operation Al-Aqsa Storm and the Syrian regime change to the rise of a new multipolar order led by China. Persian Gulf powers, backed by the United States, are reportedly working to stir up tensions between Iraq and Iran, aiming to undermine bilateral ties and pave the way for advancing the Abraham Accords across the region. Political money, in turn, has poured in to sway electoral outcomes.

Yet the Iraqi people are well aware of these schemes and are determined to turn the page toward safeguarding their sovereignty and leveraging national resources within an independent framework. They view relations with Iran as a genuine and natural bond between two neighboring states linked by deep historical, religious, and social ties.

In your opinion, how do current election dynamics differ from the previous cycle — particularly from Iran’s and the US’s standpoints?

Undoubtedly, Iran, as a neighboring country sharing deep-rooted connections with Iraq, is closely keeping an eye on the elections. Tehran is aware that the American project aims to drive wedges between Muslim nations and prop up the Zionist regime to the detriment of the Islamic community and its future. Iran, therefore, keeps close track of Iraq’s developments, appreciates the efforts made, and stresses Baghdad’s pivotal regional role and support for the Palestinian cause.

The United States is striving to pull Iraq away from Iran and draw it into normalization schemes with Israel. Nevertheless, Washington is bound to come up short as the Iraqi electorate’s patriotic sentiment will shape the outcome of this election. They view partnership with Iran as a cornerstone for standing up to imperial pressure.

The article first appeared in Persian on ABNA.

How do you assess the atmosphere of Iraq’s elections before the vote — in terms of rivalries, party positioning, and expected voter turnout?

AL-HASHEMI: We believe that the Independent High Electoral Commission has lived up to its duties in preparation — both logistically and in monitoring irregularities. The Media and Communications Authority has also effectively kept tabs on the media conduct of the candidates, flagging many violations and cracking down on offenders. Security forces have declared full readiness to set the stage for a safe election day, too.

Meanwhile, all political blocs have spelled out their plans across media outlets. Initially, public interest was low due to poor performance by successive governments and parliaments, but through the involvement of religious, cultural, and media institutions,

voter enthusiasm has picked up, according to the latest polls.

Which parties among Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds are more likely to come out on top?

Traditional parties — Kurdish, Shia, and Sunni alike — still hold sway in the race. In the Kurdistan Region, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan are neck and neck, while opposition movements such as the New Generation movement and Islamic Union are pushing to gain ground, [while the “Gorran” (Change Movement) announced it will boycott Iraq’s upcoming parliamentary elections.] In the western regions, Sunni parties are locked in fierce competition. The “Taqadum” Coalition, led by former parliament speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, which made major gains in the 2021 elections, is expected to pick up a substantial number of seats again this time.

The “Unified Sunni Leadership” coalition includes Mahmoud al-Mashhadani (current Parliament Speaker), Khamis al-Khanjar (“Siyada” coalition leader), Muthanna al-Samarrai (“al-Azm” coalition leader), Ahmad al-Jubouri (“al-Jamaheer” Party leader), and Ziad al-Janabi (“al-Mubadara” coalition leader). The “al-Azm” coalition is expected to go head-to-head with Halbousi over the 15 seats in Anbar province and Sunni constituencies in Baghdad. In our view, Halbousi’s list will retain an edge over other Sunni alliances.

Among Shia factions, the Reconstruction and Development Alliance led by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani includes his own “al-Furatain” Movement, Ayad Allawi’s “al-Wataniya,” Fahih al-Fayyadh’s “Ata’a” Movement, Ahmad al-Asadi’s “Jund al-Imam,” Nasif al-Khat-tabi’s “Karbala Innovation,” and Muhammad Sahib al-Daraji’s “Hulool Coalition”. Other Shia blocs, such as Nouri al-Ma-



Riyadh 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games: Abdoli strikes swimming gold as Iran secures four medals on Day 2

Sports Desk

The second day of the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh saw Iranian athletes claim one gold and three bronzes across swimming, judo, and boxing events, while the country booked a place in the futsal final. Samyar Abdoli secured Iran's first gold medal of the Games with victory in the men's 50m freestyle final. The Iranian swimmer – a gold medalist at last year's Asian Age Group Championships – clocked 22.44 seconds in a closely contested race to pip Egypt's Abdelrahman Elaraby (22.51) and the host's Zaid Alsarraj (22.57) to the ultimate prize. "My times improved with each race because I was saving my energy for the final and also learned from the mistakes I made in the previous heats. I am incredibly happy to have won Iran's first gold medal, and I hope this is just the beginning," 21-year-old Abdoli said. "With three days of competition left, I will also be competing in other events, namely the 100m freestyle and the 50m breaststroke. The competition is very tough, and I don't know if I'll be able to medal again, but I will certainly give it



Iranian swimmer Samyar Abdoli celebrates after securing the gold medal in the men's 50m freestyle event at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Nov. 9, 2025. [isg-2025.com](#)

my absolute best," added the Iranian swimmer. Iran enjoyed further success in the pool on Sunday as Mohammad Qassemi, Mahdi Gholami, Ali Rashidpour, and Matin Sohran teamed up to claim bronze in the men's 4×200m freestyle relay. The Iranian quartet posted a time of 7:34.19 to finish

behind Türkiye (7:30.73) and Kazakhstan (7:33.50). Mehrshad Afqari (50m butterfly) and Arad Mahdizadeh (100m breaststroke) were also in action on Sunday but fell short of a podium finish in their respective finals. In judo, Maryam Barbat got Iranian women off the mark in Riyadh, settling for bronze in the -70kg weight class.

Iran's flag-bearer in the opening ceremony suffered a quarterfinal setback against Azerbaijan's Aytaj Gardashkhanli but bounced back to defeat Kyrgyzstan's Myrzaïym Duishonbekova by ippon in the repechage before beating Cameroonian Zita Ornella Biemi in similar fashion to claim bronze. Elyas Parhizgar (men's -81kg)

and Amirabbas Choopan (men's -90kg), meanwhile, finished empty-handed in their respective divisions. Daniah Shahbakhsh took Iran's haul to four medals with a boxing bronze. After defeating Kyrgyzstan's Ryspek Bektenov in the men's 60kg quarterfinals, the former world bronze medalist lost 4-1 to

Uzbekistan's Madiyar Daniyarov – bronze medalist at April's World Boxing Cup – in the semifinals, sharing the bronze with Saudi boxer Thamer Almatrfi.

Iran into futsal final

Another semifinal clash between Iran and Uzbekistan on Sunday saw Vahid Shamsaei's men come from behind to secure a 4-2 win and book a place in today's futsal final. Shakhzodjon Sadiev gave Uzbekistan the lead three minutes into the game, only to see his goal canceled out by Masoud Yousef three minutes later as it finished 1-1 in the first half. A cagey second half came to life when Asian Player of the Year Salar Aqapour put Iran ahead with a long-range strike 10 minutes after the restart. The Iranian's joy, however, was short-lived, as Akbar Usmonov's shot slipped through goalkeeper Baqer Mohammadi's hands to give Uzbekistan an equalizer just two minutes later. Moslem Oladqobad surged forward from his own half before his sublime finish found the top corner to restore Iran's lead with eight minutes remaining and then Ali before Ali Khalilvand sealed the victory with a simple tap-in from

Saeid Ahmadabbasi's precise low cross.

"Uzbekistan is one of our main rivals and in Asia. Our match against them in the Asian Cup last year went to a penalty shootout. They're a strong team, and we will likely face them again at the Asian Cup in two months," Iran head coach Shamsaei said after the game.

"Futsal is evolving rapidly worldwide. I said after the Afghanistan game that it's the players' effort that counts in futsal, not their reputation. My players worked hard in the second half today and controlled the game to advance to the final. "Four of our players had food poisoning before the game. Two of them even had to leave mid-game and I am so grateful for their dignity and courageous performance," added the Iranian futsal great.

Awaiting Iran in today's showdown is Morocco, which defeated Saudi Arabia 6-3 in the other semifinal later in the day.

Iran conceded a late equalizer to settle for a 2-2 draw with Morocco in the group stage on the opening day of the futsal event – a rematch of their last-16 encounter at the 2024 World Cup, which the African champions won 4-3.

Iran eyes bright future in women's volleyball despite modest finish in Amman

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Fatemeh Shaban Khamseh said she remains positive about the next generation of women's volleyball in the country, despite her team's modest finish at the Asian U16 Championship in Amman, Jordan. A straight-set loss to Kazakhstan on Saturday left Iran 10th among 14 teams in the second edition of the tournament in Amman, Jordan. The Iranian girls suffered back-to-back 3-0 defeats against the Philippines and Japan to finish bottom of

their group in the preliminary round, but bounced back to beat India (3-0), Australia (3-2), and the host nation (3-0) in the 9th-12th classification phase before the final-day setback. "Kazakhstan was a very strong team. They had tall, powerful players, which made it difficult for us to mount an effective attack. Compared to the other teams we faced, Kazakhstan presented a much tougher challenge," Shaban Khamseh said after the game. "Unfortunately, we weren't at our best today and lacked the necessary focus. Even

though we expected to be more coordinated and perform better on the final day of the competition, we couldn't deliver the performance we were hoping for," added the Iranian. However, Shaban Khamseh said she is confident that a "bright future" lies ahead for Iranian women's volleyball. "From the start of the tournament until now, we saw a remarkable improvement in the team. All experts, coaches, and referees here agreed that the Iranian players got better with each game," said Shaban Khamseh. "I hope the Iranian feder-

ation will support these talented players and create a pathway for them to gain more experience at higher age groups. These kids are genuinely gifted and if we invest in them now, we can cultivate an exceptional generation of players for the years to come. "This tournament was an invaluable experience. I am confident that if we stay on the right track and continue to provide the proper support, we will witness even greater successes from Iran's young female volleyball players in the near future," the coach concluded.



• AVC



• MNA

Asia Oceania Wheelchair Basketball Championships: Iran falls 79-71 to Australia

Sports Desk

Iranian men's wheelchair basketball team suffered a second consecutive defeat at the IWBF Asia Oceania Championships in Bangkok, edged 79-71 by defending champion Australia on Monday. In a rematch of last year's final, Jaylon Brown stole the show for Australia with a double-double of 28 points and 11 rebounds, with his teammates Tom O'Neill-Thorne and Bill Latham adding 28 and 17 points, respectively. Amirreza Ahmadi topped the scoring chart for Iran, chipping in 19 points during 31:39 minutes

on the court, followed by Mohammad-Hassan Sayyari (17pts) and Mahdi Abbasi (16). Chasing its first Asian men's crown in 20 years, Iran got off to a flying start in Bangkok, demolishing China 89-30, but fell to a 64-46 setback against Japan on Sunday. Iran will face South Korea next in Division A today, before squaring off against the host on Wednesday. All six top-tier teams will be joined by the two highest-ranked Division B sides in the quarterfinals. Afghanistan, Chinese Taipei, India, Iraq, Kuwait, New Zealand, the

Philippines, and Saudi Arabia complete the lineup in the second-tier division.

Japan came out on top (71-50) against South Korea earlier on Monday, while Kuwait defeated Saudi Arabia by a 55-49 scoreline in Division B.

Afghanistan routed India 93-26, with the Philippines beating the Chinese Taipei 51-40.

The tournament serves as a qualifier for the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, while the two finalists will also secure their spots at next year's World Championship in Ottawa, Canada.

Explore cradle of civilization in Dehloran’s ancient plains



Ali Kosh Hill
● tamadonema.ir



Chogha Sefid Hill
● salameno.com

Iranica Desk

With its ancient heritage and a landscape dotted with archaeological mounds and prehistoric sites, Ilam Province stands as one of the most significant centers of early civilization in Iran. In a recent note, Sajjad Nazari, an expert with the Ilam Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, wrote that among the province’s cities, Dehloran holds a special place — a region that preserves within its plains the traces of humanity’s first efforts to build civilization. With archaeological sites such as Ali Kosh, Chogha Sefid, Musian, Farokhabad, Sabz, and Bayat, Dehloran can rightfully be regarded as one of Iran’s richest prehistoric areas — a true archaeological paradise of early human life, according to

chtn.ir. Systematic excavations at these sites have illuminated the crucial transition of humankind from nomadic and cave-dwelling lifestyles to settled village life. Findings from Ali Kosh Hill — one of the most important Neolithic sites in Iran — reveal that about 10,000 years ago, its inhabitants cultivated cereals, domesticated goats and sheep, and built mud-brick houses. These discoveries mark the dawn of a new era in human history — the era when humankind began to control its environment and produce food, rather than merely gather it. The stone tools and primitive pottery unearthed from these mounds display the ingenuity and craftsmanship of the region’s early inhabitants. Though simple and unglazed, the pottery features well-



Musian Hill
● seeiran.ir

formed and functional shapes that reflect the artistic sensibility and aesthetic awareness of the first farming communities. Moreover, similarities between Dehloran’s artifacts and those found in the Central Zagros region and Mesopotamia suggest early cultural — and possibly trade — connections that laid the foundation for southwest Iran’s first exchange networks.

Studies of the cultural layers within these mounds indicate a continuous pattern of habitation through successive eras. Changes in tools, house-building methods, and pottery composition reflect a gradual evolution of technical knowledge and human adaptation to the environment. Such characteristics have made prehistoric sites like Ali Kosh and Chogha Sefid

invaluable sources for reconstructing the process of civilization’s formation in southwestern Iran. Yet, the significance of these ancient sites extends beyond their archaeological value. They form an essential part of Ilam’s cultural identity, linking the present-day people of Dehloran to their millennia-old roots. The inhabitants of today’s Dehloran are, in a sense, the inheritors of a civilization founded thousands of years ago upon these very plains. Safeguarding this legacy is not only the duty of cultural heritage authorities but a national responsibility shared by all generations. In recent years, efforts have been made to document and protect Dehloran’s prehistoric mounds. However, threats from human activity and natural ero-

sion still endanger these invaluable treasures. Promoting these sites through cultural tourism routes could both support their preservation and contribute to Ilam’s sustainable cultural tourism development. Undoubtedly, the ancient mounds of Dehloran are not mere heaps of soil — they are living pages of human history, telling the story of early human struggle, creativity, and harmony with nature. Continued research, preservation, and public awareness can help these silent witnesses reclaim their rightful place in the grand narrative of human civilization. Dehloran, with its hidden treasures buried beneath the earth, still holds untold stories — stories that, if properly explored and protected, can reveal its true role in the dawn of human civilization.

Mellat Park of Mashhad blends leisure, well-being for all ages

Iranica Desk

Mellat Park, one of largest, most popular parks in Mashhad, the capital city of Khorasan Razavi Province, is a vast green space featuring pleasant walking paths and a wide range of recreational facilities, making it an ideal destination for tourists and families alike. As one of the city’s major attractions, the park offers a unique opportunity to rest, exercise, picnic, and enjoy nature in the heart of Iran’s spiritual capital. A visit to Mellat Park promises a peaceful and memorable experience of Mashhad’s urban beauty and lush greenery. Covering an area of approximately 720,000 square meters (72 hectares), Mellat Park was established in 1964. Originally located on the outskirts of the city, the park now lies at the very center of Mashhad due to the city’s rapid expansion over the decades, .kojaro.com wrote. With more than 35,000 mature trees, expansive lawns, and a scenic lake, the park provides a calm and inviting environment for strolling, jogging, picnicking, and leisure activities. One of its most famous attractions is its amusement park, founded in 1972, which extends from the central to the eastern sections of the park. Over the years, this amusement area has been developed and modernized, becoming one of Mashhad’s most well-equipped entertainment complexes and among the oldest amusement parks in Iran. Today, Mellat Park stands as one of Mashhad’s most complete recreational complexes, combining cultural, athletic,



● kojaro.com



● respina24.ir

and leisure facilities suitable for visitors of all ages. **Walking and cycling paths:** The park’s long, shaded walkways, lined with centuries-old plane trees, and its designat-

ed cycling route equipped with a bicycle rental station, offer the perfect space for morning and evening exercise. **Sports grounds:** Located on the western side of the park, the sports area



● respina24.ir



● respina24.ir

includes football and tennis fields, volleyball and basketball courts, a skating rink, and an open-air swimming pool covering 1,250 square meters with a capacity of 400 people.

Paintball arena: Situated along Emamat Street, Mellat Park’s paintball field is one of the most popular spots for group games and social gatherings. **Lake:** On the eastern side of the park lies a beautiful artificial lake, providing a refreshing space for boating and relaxation. **Cultural center:** At the heart of the park stands the Mashhad City Theater and the Imam Reza (PBUH) Cultural and Artistic Complex, which include a library, classrooms for cultural and art activities, and various multipurpose facilities. **Children’s play areas:** Near the lake, visitors will find a children’s playground, the Luna Park Amusement Area, and an Inflatable Castle, offering safe and fun spaces for younger visitors. **Women’s park:** Another significant feature of Mellat Park is the Rose Garden, a dedicated area for women, providing a secure and well-equipped space for exercise and recreation. **Food court:** The Mellat Park Food Court offers a variety of snacks and meals, along with buffet-style kiosks for light refreshments, making it an excellent place to relax after a walk or family outing. **Other facilities:** Throughout the park, visitors have access to public restrooms, cafés, prayer rooms, and numerous seating areas, ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable experience for everyone. From its origins as a royal-era urban park to its present-day role as a beloved public space, Mellat Park of Mashhad continues to serve as a vital green lung for the city — a place where nature, recreation, and community come together in harmony.



President calls for overhaul of youth programs, says Iran's future hinges on 'creative minds'

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday urged officials to rethink Iran's youth development strategy, saying the country's shortcomings can be overcome "through the creative and dynamic minds" of young people. Speaking at the 44th meeting of the Supreme Council for Youth and Adolescents in Tehran, Pezeshkian called for a full review of operational plans presented to the council, including the "National Youth Advisory Assembly," the "Young Assistants to the Government of National Accord" initiative, and new frameworks for youth NGOs, president.ir reported. "All deficiencies can be resolved

with public participation, especially by relying on the creativity of our young generation," Pezeshkian said. "We must bridge the gap between theory and practice. What matters is real behavioral change and sustainable engagement among the youth." The president instructed ministers to submit revised frameworks within a month and said provincial governors would be required to present progress reports during his upcoming domestic trips. Pezeshkian emphasized that youth policy must move beyond bureaucracy to active inclusion. He proposed creating diverse working groups in cultural, educational, sports, religious, and technology

fields, including artificial intelligence, with direct involvement from adolescents and young adults. "Each taskforce must have clear mandates, specialized subgroups, and the ability to operate nationwide, from provincial to local levels," he said. The president also called for identifying and empowering "role models" within each field to instill honesty, national pride, and social responsibility in the next generation. He said the government's goal was to "institutionalize" these values across schools and communities. Sports and Youth Minister Kioumars Hashemi described youth affairs as "multi-dimensional," noting that the ministry aimed to open



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during the 44th meeting of the Supreme Council of Youth and Adolescents in Tehran on November 10, 2025.
● president.ir

more space for non-governmental youth organizations. Deputy Youth Minister Alireza Rahimi, who oversaw the drafting of the four proposals, said the process had taken about 14 months. But he warned that Iran's bureaucratic structure continues to "slow down creativity and innovation." Trusting young people, he added, "will undoubtedly improve the situation and give them a meaningful role in shaping policies."



Iran signs multilateral tourism accords with Asian partners to broaden regional connectivity



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri (R) and UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili (L) sign a joint cooperation memorandum aimed at enhancing Iran's engagement in global tourism governance and sustainable development, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on November 10, 2025.
● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri held a series of high-level talks with counterparts from Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Cambodia, Oman and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), concluding new accords on air routes, cultural cooperation and halal tourism development, according to IRNA. Iran expanded its diplomatic and tourism outreach during the 26th UNWTO General Assembly, where Salehi-Amiri said Tehran seeks to "turn shared history into a practical bridge for modern tourism." The meetings, held on the sidelines of the assembly, marked a concerted effort by Iran to align its cultural diplomacy with Asia's fast-growing travel networks.

Uzbekistan expands flights, heritage ties

In his meeting with Umid Shadiev, Chairman of Uzbekistan's Tourism Committee, Salehi-Amiri described Iran and Uzbekistan as "two civilizational partners tied by a thousand years of cultural exchange." The two sides agreed to establish a joint technical committee to enhance tourism cooperation, develop new flight routes between the two countries, and collaborate on historical restoration projects. According to IRNA, Iran offered to provide technical expertise for preserving ancient monuments in Samarkand and Bukhara, while Uzbekistan proposed expanding its e-visa platform into a reciprocal visa-free regime. Both sides also discussed training programs for tour operators and organizing cultural heritage festivals to attract visitors from neighboring Central Asian markets.

Iran, Indonesia advance halal tourism

In another meeting, Salehi-Amiri held talks with Indonesia's Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Widiyanti Putri Wardhana, to outline a roadmap for strengthening tourism ties. The Iranian minister emphasized the "solid political and cultural relations" between the two nations and said both countries were now ready to extend that partnership into the tourism sector. The talks focused on establishing direct flights between Tehran and Jakarta, organizing tourism fairs in both capitals, and launching a joint project to promote halal and Islamic-friendly tourism. Salehi-Amiri described Indonesia as a "leader in the halal tourism market," adding that collaboration would help both countries attract travelers from Muslim-majority nations. Wardhana welcomed Iran's proposal and said Indonesia supported Iran's plan for a multilateral Islamic tourism corridor across Asia.

Cambodia joins regional travel initiatives

Salehi-Amiri also met Cambodia's Minister of Tourism, Huot Hak, where the two officials explored the idea of forming a regional tourism "basket" that could include joint travel packages with other Asian destinations. The Iranian minister invited Cambodian officials and travel companies to take part in Tehran's International Tourism Exhibition in February 2026 and offered Iran's participation in Cambodian tourism expos. Hak praised the Iranian proposal as "constructive and forward-looking," expressing Cambodia's interest in deepening cooperation with Iran in cultural tourism, training

programs, and exchange of promotional content. Salehi-Amiri also said Iran could share its experience in managing heritage tourism and religious travel, which has grown rapidly in the post-pandemic era.

Oman, Iran boost maritime tourism

In a separate meeting with Oman's Minister of Heritage and Tourism Salem bin Mohammed Al Mahrrouqi, the two sides discussed expanding bilateral tourism and cultural cooperation. Salehi-Amiri proposed increasing the number of weekly direct flights between the two countries from 12 to 60, and called for joint initiatives in marine, health and cultural tourism. He also proposed holding a cross-country auto rally and a joint cultural festival to showcase shared Persian Gulf heritage. Al-Mahrrouqi described Iran as a "strategic partner and a source of regional stability," and said Oman would support Iran's proposal for a cruise-tourism agreement to boost Persian Gulf maritime connectivity.

Partnership with UNWTO

Salehi-Amiri met UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili and Secretary-General-elect Sheikha Nasser Al Nowais to discuss Iran's role in advancing sustainable tourism and capacity-building initiatives. He praised Pololikashvili's "coherent and dynamic leadership" and expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate on global programs for women's empowerment in tourism management and youth education. Al Nowais, who will become the first woman to lead UNWTO in its 50-year history starting in 2026, also highlighted her priorities for responsible tourism, capacity building, technology for good, innovative financing, and smart governance. With more than one million registered historical and cultural assets, and 29 UNESCO World Heritage sites, Iran reaffirmed its commitment to work closely with the UNWTO in promoting sustainable tourism and balanced regional development.

Why East must know Western art, while West knows little of East

By Alireza Sepahvand
Journalist

OPINION

In every art faculty in Iran, students, from the very first semester, are immersed in the names and movements of Europe, Renaissance, Baroque, Impressionism, Surrealism, Modernism, Postmodernism. Professors speak of Da Vinci, Cézanne, Picasso, and Warhol, guiding students to see the arc of world art history as stretching from Florence to New York. Yet, amid this European panorama, a pressing question takes shape: why must Iranian artists absorb the knowledge of Western art to be considered competent, while Western artists can claim to be "global" without ever understanding Persian miniature, Islamic calligraphy, or the rich visual traditions of East Asia? This is no mere matter of curriculum; it is a reflection of a deeper, persistent inequality that stretches from the age of cultural colonialism to the present day.

Legacy of Western cultural dominance

Since the 19th century, Europe, and later the United States, has dominated not only economics and politics but also culture, presenting itself as the universal measure. Art history was rewritten so that beauty appeared to evolve from ancient Greece to European modernism. In this narrative, Asia, Africa, and other regions became "the other": Cultures to inspire from, but not to study deeply. As a result, the world was divided into "center" and "periphery." The center sets artistic standards, the periphery must learn them. This division remains evident in many non-Western art education systems, including Iran.

Formation of Western-oriented art education in Iran

From the founding of Dar ul-Funun (the first modern school) to the Faculty of Fine Arts in the 1940s, Iran modeled art education on French and Italian academies. European-trained professors brought a scientific, perspectival, Renaissance-rooted vision. Over

time, this approach became the standard of "professionalism." Little space remained for Iranian or Eastern arts. "Art history" effectively meant European art history. Calligraphy, miniature painting, and illumination were marginalized. Even composition and design were taught according to Western visual logic, not the Eastern worldview, which sees space and time as fluid and inward.

Western gaze on Eastern art: Learning vs. consuming

When Western artists engage with Eastern art, their goal has often been to consume its beauty, not understand its philosophy. The East becomes a source of color, form, and mystery. From Impressionists inspired by Japanese prints to modern artists using Arabic calligraphy or Persian motifs, a subtle hierarchy persists: One side draws inspiration without feeling obliged to learn. A Western artist can gain international success with superficial knowledge of Eastern elements, while an Eastern artist must master Western visual and theoretical language to be understood. This reflects cultural imbalance, not innate superiority.

Globalization's single hub

Many hoped globalization would reduce Western cultural centrality. In practice, the same structures remain. Major museums, galleries, and art markets are still in New York, London, and Paris. Their standards define what is "global." Iranian artists seeking recognition must understand Western visual language, while Western artists continue to occupy privileged positions without studying the East.

Identity crisis of Eastern artist

Iranian artists face two opposing demands: Conform to Western aesthetic and educational standards to participate globally, yet remain faithful to cultural roots. This tension often produces works suspended between modern and traditional, local and global. Paintings use Western techniques but Eastern themes, or conceptual works employ Iranian symbols as mere decoration. This state is not the artist's weakness; it shows the historical

condition in which the East must learn while the West can afford to ignore.

Redefining East, West in art

Escaping this cycle does not mean rejecting Western art. Understanding and dialogue with other cultures are essential for any civilization. But this dialogue must be mutual. Just as Iranian artists must learn Western art, Western artists should study Eastern art, Islamic aesthetics, and Asian visual traditions, not as decoration, but as a genuine intellectual pursuit within global art.

Revising educational systems

Art history in Iranian universities should be taught as multicentric and truly global. Arts from China, India, Iran, and the Islamic world should stand on equal footing with European art.

Developing indigenous aesthetics

For Iranian art to play an active role globally, its own aesthetic theories must be revived. Concepts such as proportion, spirit, light, and silence in Persian art can form the foundation of new theoretical frameworks.

Expanding cultural exchange

Joint exhibitions, translation of Eastern art scholarship into Western languages (and vice versa), and creation of research centers can help restore balance between East and West.

Globalization through dialogue, not imitation

Studying Western art is undeniably valuable; no culture can thrive in isolation. Yet when learning flows in only one direction, it perpetuates cultural injustice. True global art will emerge only when mutual understanding replaces mere imitation. Only when a Western artist approaches Persian miniature or the philosophy of Islamic art with the same devotion an Iranian student brings to Western modernism can the age of cultural dominance be ended. Until that day, the East continues to learn, the West continues to judge, and though the shift may be slow, the scales of artistic dialogue must one day be rewritten.