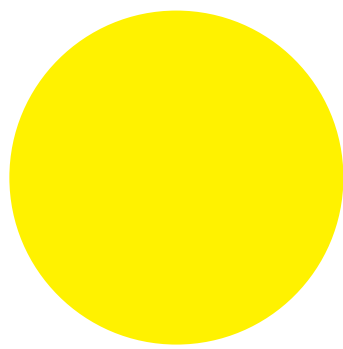


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Paniz Faryousefi makes history

First woman to lead Tehran Symphony draws full houses at Vahdat Hall

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Iranian composer Paniz Faryousefi conducts a performance by Tehran Symphony Orchestra at Vahdat Hall in Tehran, Iran on November 13, 2025.

● PANA

Iran open to cooperation with West if it gives up bullying

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE



Relations between Iran and the West have remained strained and frosty since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Although limited contacts have taken place at times, deep and lasting cooperation has never materialized due to persistent political differences. Iran blames Western powers for coercion and unreasonable demands, while the West often portrays the Islamic Republic as a source of regional instability and has sought to rein in its military capabilities through sanctions and pressure. This standoff has persisted for decades and, in recent years, reached a peak that makes reconciliation seem increasingly difficult. Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, recently noted that Iran had never been

hostile toward the West, arguing that it was Western political and security behavior that had blocked the path to cooperation. He described the American slogan "peace through strength" as the true reflection of West-Iran relations.

Mansour Haghighatpour, a political analyst, has told Iran Daily that warm relations with China and Russia prove that Iran could also have friendly ties with the West, but the West's power politics have fueled the crisis.

IRAN DAILY: Considering Larijani's remark that the nature of Iran's relationship with the West can be understood through the slogan "peace through strength," how would you describe this approach?

HAGHIGHATPOUR: Iran is not sulking with the West. What has prevented active relations is the Western tendency to look at issues solely through the lens of power and coercion. As Larijani rightly pointed out, Iran is not a country that will ever bow down to pressure. If the

West seeks ties on fair and reasonable terms, the Islamic Republic will welcome such engagement and will not shy away from it in any way.

The problem lies in the Western mindset, which unfortunately has always been driven by domination and arrogance in dealing with Iran and the wider world. While such bullying may have worked for them in the past, it no longer does in today's era. They must set aside their power-based approach and engage with Iran as an equal, without preconditions or dictates.

They cannot meddle in how far Iran's missiles can reach, like Iran rarely comments on the West's nuclear capabilities or its vast arsenals. None of the Western states that address Iran from a position of strength is willing to pursue nuclear disarmament itself. If the West abandons coercion, Iran, just as it maintains warm relations with China and Russia, can also enjoy logical and constructive ties with Europe and the broader Western world.

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JCPOA withdrawn from IAEA BoG's agenda; Iran's case limited to safeguards

International Desk

According to a memo published by the Secretariat of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Friday, with the end of the period of Resolution 2231, the issue of Iran has been withdrawn from agenda under the 2015 nuclear deal — known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — in the upcoming meeting of the Board of Governors and it will only be pursued within the framework of the Safeguards Agreement. The IAEA Secretariat said in the memo that the meeting of the Board of Governors will be held in Vienna on Wednesday (November 19), and its topics will include issues such as the membership of countries, the report of technical cooperation, safety and transportation of radioactive materials, the verification status in North Korea and Syria, the nuclear propulsion case in Australia and Brazil, as well as the implementation of the safeguards agreements of the member states, including Iran. In the agenda, as reported by IRNA, there is no mention of resolution 2231 and the JCPOA

commitments, and the name of Iran is only mentioned in the Safeguards Agreement, an issue that shows that the pursuit of issues related to the JCPOA has been removed from the agenda of the Board of Governors.

With the end of the 10-year term of Resolution 2231 on October 18, the task of reporting the Director General on the implementation of Iran's JCPOA commitments has ended, and for this reason, Iran's case in the field of non-proliferation is no longer on the agenda of the Board of Governors.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's envoy to Vienna, said earlier that the IAEA would consider Iran's nuclear activities only within the framework of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. "We are witnessing new conditions surrounding Iran's nuclear program."

Meanwhile, the ambassadors of Iran, Russia and China in Vienna, held two diplomatic meetings on the Iranian nuclear issue over the past week and coordinated their positions on the eve of the Board of Governors' meeting. They also met with Rafael Grossi, the director general of

the IAEA, and exchanged views on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the Council.

In a confidential report to members of the Board of Governors, Grossi called on Iran to provide access to the assessment of enriched uranium stockpiles.

The plea was made against the backdrop of differences between Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog, which were intensified after the US and Israeli regime's airstrikes on Natanz, Fordow and Isfahan nuclear facilities during the 12-day war in June. In the report, he claimed that the lack of access to the nuclear material for five months has delayed the review process for a significant period of time and has eliminated the continuation of the Agency's knowledge about previous inventory of Iranian nuclear material.

Iran, Russia and China, in a joint letter to Grossi, recently announced the end of the agency's mission under the JCPOA. However, in the past few weeks, Grossi has been trying to keep the Iranian issue alive since he stressed in an interview at the UN headquarters that the Islamic Republic was neither develop-



File photo shows a view to a meeting of the Board of Governors (BoG) of the United Nations nuclear agency, the IAEA, in Vienna, Austria. ● AP

ing nuclear weapons nor is now in the middle of such a program. The IAEA director general also told the Financial Times that Iran should seriously improve its cooperation with UN inspectors to prevent escalation of tensions with the West. The cooperation between Iran

and the Agency has been limited after the illegal attacks of the United States and the Zionist regime, as well as by the resolution of Iranian Parliament. Iran emphasizes that the basis of cooperation with the IAEA is the law passed by the Parliament and the requirements of

the Safeguards Agreement. The Iranian Foreign Ministry has reiterated that Tehran remains a member of the NPT and the interaction with the Agency will proceed solely within the legal framework of the safeguards and with the guidance of the Supreme National Security Council.

Araghchi lauds Iraq's elections as key to safeguarding security



Abbas Araghchi
● IRNA

International Desk

The Iranian foreign minister congratulated Iraq on holding peaceful parliamentary elections earlier this week, stressing that the vote serves as a "significant step" towards enhancing the country's democratic process. Abbas Araghchi made the remarks in an X post on Friday,

three days after Iraqis voted to elect members of their 329-seat parliament.

"Congratulations to the brotherly people and government of Iraq for successful management of peaceful parliamentary elections," he said. "The election was a significant step forward in consolidating the democratic process in Iraq and in safeguarding the sovereignty and security of the nation."

Araghchi also expressed Tehran's determination to further strengthen cordial relations with Baghdad in all areas of mutual interest. Iraq held parliamentary elections on Tuesday, marking the sixth election held in the

country since a US-led invasion that toppled longtime dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's Reconstruction and Change coalition received 1.3 million votes in election, about 370,000 more than the next closest competitor.

Speaking after the initial results were announced, al-Sudani hailed the voter turnout of 56 percent, saying it was "clear evidence of another success" that reflected the "restoration of confidence in the political system."

'Irresponsible': FM spox rejects G7 statement on anti-Iran US sanctions

International Desk

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman firmly rejected the recent statement from the G7 endorsing the unlawful actions taken by the United States and the European Troika in reinstating UN sanctions over Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

Esmail Baqaei, speaking on Thursday, characterized the anti-Iran claims in the G7's final statement as "unfounded, irresponsible, and false."

Baqaei asserted that the US and E3's attempt to invoke the so-called snapback mechanism for re-imposing sanctions amounts to an endorsement of an international criminal act. He emphasized that such statements cannot legitimize these unlawful measures.

Criticizing the G7 for urging Iran to continue cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Baqaei pointed out their failure to address the joint actions of the US and Israel in attacking Iran's nuclear facilities. He held Washington primarily responsible for the current state of Iran's nuclear program, citing the US's 2018 withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and subsequent military actions against Iran.

"Fundamentally, the United States is the main cause of the current situation due to its illegal and unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 and military attacks on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities," he said.

At their November 11-12 meeting in Niagara un-



Esmail Baqaei
● IRNA

der Canada's presidency, the G7 Foreign Ministers urged Iran to fulfill obligations under UN Security Council resolutions and the Non-Proliferation Treaty, resume full cooperation with the IAEA, and re-engage in direct talks with the US.

On May 8, 2018, Donald Trump announced the US unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal in which Iran had willingly accepted specific restrictions on its nuclear

program in exchange for sanctions relief.

By unilaterally leaving the deal, the US president launched what he called a "maximum pressure" strategy aimed at forcing Iran into renegotiating for a new deal.

The other parties to the agreement — Russia, China, Britain, France, and Germany — expressed regret at the US decision, but some of them failed to take concrete measures to walk the talk.

Iran open to ...

Larijani has said that Iranian leaders have never been hostile toward the West, but Western political and security behavior has led to a crisis in cooperation. In your view, what have been the most damaging actions, and how can Iran overcome them?

One of the most damaging actions was the Western decision to trigger the "snapback" mechanism at a time when they themselves were at fault. That was a clear act of bullying. Saying that Iran must not pursue uranium enrichment is another example of coercion. Enforcing US sanctions against Iran when the country was meeting its commitments is yet another.

The West wants Iran to raise its hands in submission, to fall in line with their demands, but Iran refuses to give in to such pressure. Ultimately, the Western sides will suffer themselves. For instance, when they imposed sanctions on Iran, French and German car manufacturers lost substantial busi-

ness opportunities.

According to Larijani, Iran's leadership has no issue with economic interaction with the West, yet the West uses economic cooperation as a pretext to interfere in Iran's missile range or nuclear capabilities. Given this attitude, how can Iran manage its economic engagement with the West while protecting national interests? Iran will never cross its red lines or adjust the range of its missiles to satisfy Western preferences. After the JCPOA (the 2015 nuclear deal), countries such as France came forward to invest in Iran's oil sector and expand technical cooperation, but they later backed off. They should not have mixed up economic cooperation with political matters.

The range of Iran's missiles corresponds directly to the threats it faces. When American officials openly state that they stood behind Israel in preparing attacks on Iran during the 12-day war, Iran was clearly under threat. The US cannot threaten Iran and

then expect it to limit its missile range to 300 kilometers. Iran is obliged to enhance its defense capabilities in proportion to the level of threat, and all its military development is defensive in nature.

Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has never attacked another country; it was Iraq, backed by Western powers, that invaded Iran, and Tehran only responded. When Israel attacked in June, Iran replied in kind. The missile range is determined solely by the scale of threats.

The current economic separation between Iran and the West will persist as long as Europeans and Western governments refuse to talk to Iran based on justice and equality. Once they are ready to hold fair and balanced discussions without bullying, then constructive engagement will be possible. Also, international organizations, unfortunately, have become puppets in Western hands, and Iran has no illusions about them to help a reconciliation. What needs to change is the West's behavior itself.

Russia, China, Arab nations reject US Gaza plan at UN Security Council

Russia proposed on Thursday its own draft resolution on Gaza at the UN Security Council after a US proposal failed to gain the support of Moscow, China and Arab nations, Press TV reported. In a note to UNSC members, Russia's UN mission said its "counter-proposal is inspired by the US draft." "The objective of our draft is to enable the Security Council to develop a balanced, acceptable, and unified approach toward achieving a sustainable cessation of hostilities," the note, seen by Reuters, said.

Washington formally circulated the draft resolution to the 15 Council members last week. The text would authorize a two-year mandate for a transitional governance body and an international stabilization force. Russia, China, and some Arab states oppose the proposal, citing concerns about a yet-to-be-established board temporarily governing the strip and the absence of any transitional role for the Palestinian Authority. According to four UN diplomats briefed on the matter, who spoke to the Associated Press on condition of anonymity, China and Russia — two veto-wielding members — have



Palestinians search the rubble amid widespread destruction caused by Israeli bombardment in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, October 12, 2025. ● AFP

called for the "Board of Peace" under US President Donald Trump's Gaza ceasefire plan to be removed from the resolution entirely. However, the US maintains the language around the board that the US has proposed as a transitional administration for Gaza in the latest draft released late Wednesday.

The Russian draft requests that the UN Secretary-General identify options for an international stabilization force for Gaza, and does not mention the "Board of Peace". Among the sticking points regarding the US text

are the pathway to an independent Palestinian state and the timeline for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, according to the diplomats. Still, the US mission to the UN urged the Security Council to move ahead with Washington's resolution. "Attempts to sow discord now — when agreement on this resolution is under active negotiation — has grave, tangible, and entirely avoidable consequences for Palestinians in Gaza," a US mission spokesperson alleged.

The diplomats said that the Americans could decide to go forward unilaterally with a force from willing countries that would not have UN backing.

Hamas and Israel agreed last month to the US-brokered Gaza ceasefire, aimed at ending the latter's two-year-long genocidal war against Palestinians in the besieged territory. The truce took effect on October 10, but Israel has continued to violate it by carrying out airstrikes, incursions, shootings, and arrests.

The deal marks the first phase of Trump's 20-point Gaza ceasefire plan, with further stages to be negotiated at a later date.

Iran accelerates massive 2 bcm desalination project to tackle severe drought

Economy Desk

Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said the government is accelerating work on a large-scale seawater desalination program with a capacity of two billion cubic meters, describing the effort as essential to coping with one of the country's harshest multi-year droughts. Aliabadi said current plans target more than 2 billion cubic meters of desalination capacity, a volume that would place Iran "in the first rank of the region," IRNA reported. Speaking Thursday evening at an administrative council of five southern counties in Kerman Province, Aliabadi said the government is determined to complete the initiative. Iran has already embarked on large-scale transfers of desalinated water from the Oman Sea and the Persian Gulf to its eastern and southern regions. The nationwide program, launched in 2021, includes the construction of five desalinated seawater transfer lines designed to help ease water shortages. "The government in-



sists on bringing this project to completion by any means possible," he said, adding that a major seawater-to-freshwater scheme is already underway and that authorities aim to make it operational during the current government's term, which began last August. Aliabadi said Iran is facing "a very severe

drought," adding that the government is prepared to take any necessary step to secure water supplies. He stressed the need to improve water efficiency, urging a shift away from water-intensive farming. "We must move toward efficiency and distance ourselves from water-demanding farming," he said, calling for

expansion of low-water crops, greenhouse cultivation and water recycling. Ensuring access to treatment facilities is a top priority, he added, "No county or village in the region should be without a treatment plant. Public health is vital, and this must be pursued decisively." Aliabadi also highlighted ongoing studies on

the use of brackish water, which has a salinity between fresh and seawater. He said the ministry is evaluating the feasibility of transporting it to central Iran for growing resilient plants such as salicornia and mangrove, which could help supply fodder and make better use of saline resources. He noted that the Caspian Sea, with salinity

around 10,000, offers a useful reference point for research since its levels are relatively low compared with seas where salinity reaches 60,000 to 90,000. During the minister's trip to Kerman, 30 water-supply projects serving more than 22,747 people in southern areas of the southeastern province were inaugurated.

Iran, Tajikistan ink aviation deal



Economy Desk

Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Hossein Pourfarzaneh, said on Thursday Iran and Tajikistan had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on aviation to foster their technical, educational, and operational cooperation. Areas of focus include aircraft maintenance, airport services, air navigation operations, specialized training, and the exchange of professional expertise, IRNA reported. According to the agreement, which was secured during Pourfarzaneh's recent visit to the Central Asian nation, joint working groups will be established to pursue and implement priority issues. As part of his visit, Pourfarzaneh met with chief executives of Tajikistan's leading airlines, including Tajik Air, Shatin Air, and Saman Air. During the meeting, Tajik airline officials presented reports on their current operations and outlined technical and operational needs in aircraft maintenance, fleet expansion, spare parts supply, leasing, and ground handling services. Pourfarzaneh pointed to Iran's capabilities in the aviation industry and offered practical solutions to address the concerns raised and called for leveraging the two countries' shared potentials to expand bilateral and transit flights. Tajik airline executives are expected to travel to Iran soon to gain first-hand insight into the country's aviation infrastructure and capabilities in technical, operational, and training fields.

Government boosts fuel stocks to prepare power plants for winter demand



Economy Desk

Iran is preparing for winter electricity demand by increasing fuel stocks and testing alternative fuels, the country's Thermal Power Generation Company deputy, Nasser Eskandari, said Friday, noting that the government has supplied power plants with low-sulfur mazut to reduce pollution concerns. Eskandari said most of the country's power plants primarily use natural gas, but when supply is limited, they turn to secondary fuels, IRNA reported. In Iran, winter gas supplies are constrained because priority is given to households and small businesses. As a result, power plants also rely on liquid fuels such as mazut and diesel, which can worsen air pollution, especially during temperature inversion periods. Eskandari said that under Iran's fuel standards, high-quality mazut must contain less than 0.8 percent sulfur. He noted that this year the oil industry has supplied low-sulfur mazut to thermal power plants, and with continued deliveries, concerns over its pollutant effects will be resolved. He noted, however, that at the national level, only 14 power plants can use mazut as a secondary fuel, while the rest operate on diesel. Eskandari said more than 91% of power plant storage tanks are currently filled with liquid fuel and expressed hope that this level will be maintained to ensure a smooth winter. He also said the company is testing different fuel methods, including using LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), and coordination with the oil ministry is underway to launch the project. "If successful, it will be used as a fuel for power plants," he said. Also, to ensure stable electricity supply next summer, projects totaling more than 111,000 megawatts in repairs and optimization have been planned, according to Eskandari, with 40% already implemented since September and completion expected by May.

Agricultural exports surge 32% in past 12 months: Minister



Economy Desk

Iran's agricultural exports have grown by 32% over the 12 months, marking a major improvement in the sector's trade balance from minus \$11 billion to minus \$8 billion, Minister of Agriculture, Gholamreza Nouri, said on Thursday. "Iranian produce is increasingly reaching international markets," Nouri said, according to ILNA, citing the recent arrival of Iranian apples in the Philippines as an example. He attributed the feats to "active agricultural diplomacy" and carefully crafted policies aimed at enhancing product quality and

expanding export opportunities for farmers and orchardists. During a visit to the counties of Ahar and Heris in East Azerbaijan Province in northwestern Iran, Nouri pointed to the health standards of Iranian agricultural products, noting that Iran ranked among the world's healthiest producers, based on fertilizer and pesticide statistics. Exported goods, he added, had successfully passed the strictest technical protocols in Europe and Russia, with only one minor issue involving pistachio exports that had been swiftly resolved through cooperation with the European

Union. The minister also said that 23 types of pesticides had been phased out, with plans underway to import higher-quality alternatives from advanced countries. The minister revealed the launch and expansion of "Village Markets," designed to strengthen distribution networks and return greater profits to producers. In recent months, 350 rural markets have been opened, with a target of 3,000 units soon, he said. "These markets will be managed by producer cooperatives to maximize benefits for farmers." Nouri said the ministry's main task was to set sound policies and craft strategic plans that could steer the agricultural sector in line with the country's capacities and production resources. "Producers must first be able to stand on their own feet for production to take shape, and it must be viable and profitable," he said. "Our aim is to avoid any activity that wastes the producer's capital or time."

Iran, China set to bolster cooperation ahead of 55th anniversary of diplomatic ties

Iranian Ambassador to China Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli on Thursday voiced the Islamic Republic's willingness to further work with China in various sectors as part of the consensus reached by the two countries' top authorities. Rahmani Fazli made the remarks in a meeting with China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Miao Deyu as the two countries are drawing up plans to enhance cooperation and celebrate the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties, Press TV reported. He said the development of Tehran-Beijing cooperation was "very important" given the ongoing regional and international developments. "Next year will mark the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and will be an opportunity to further enhance the development of relations between Iran and China," the



ambassador noted. Iran and China signed a landmark 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement in March 2022 in defiance of unilateral sanctions imposed on the two nations by the United States. The deal officially documents the Iran-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and sets the outlines of cooperation in political, cultural, security, defense, regional, and international domains. In a meeting in Beijing in September, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping vowed to fully implement the 25-year strategic cooperation agreement.



Iran's Ambassador to China Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli (L) and China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Miao Deyu shake hands in Beijing on November 13, 2025.

The Chinese vice foreign minister said the Iranian and Chinese presidents met twice over the past year to reach a consensus on deepening relations and setting up guidelines to advance the goal. Therefore, Miao added, China was committed to implementing these agreements and making efforts to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation. He expressed Beijing's readiness to elevate the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement to a higher level.

South Africa offers Iran access to 15 tariff-free markets: Businessman



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Although commercial and economic ties between Tehran and Pretoria have run into trouble due to the lack of direct shipping routes and banking restrictions, the head of the Iran-South Africa Joint Commercial Committee believes South Africa can open the door to strategic trade with Africa and pave the way for Iranian goods and services to reach the vast sub-Saharan market.

He argues that South Africa, thanks to its intra-continental trade pacts and free trade agreements with more than 15 countries — mostly in sub-Saharan Africa — plays a key role in the region's trading network. Using South Africa as an export route, he notes, in effect means gaining access to Africa's large and diversified market.

In his view, if Iran can make the most of these capacities through targeted co-operation, active participation in specialized exhibitions, and by drawing on the technical know-how and business experience of its African partners, then the path will be clear to build up non-oil exports and strengthen its foothold in Africa's economy.

Below is Iran Daily's exclusive interview with Babak Hedayati, head of the Iran-South Africa Joint Commercial Committee.

Babak Hedayati



IRAN DAILY: To begin, could you elaborate a little on the state of trade exchanges between the two countries?

HEDAYATI: Given the nature of our commercial interactions — especially with South Africa — sanctions have made it difficult to ship out our goods directly. Besides, we still don't have a direct shipping line to South Africa, so most of our exporters dealing with bulk goods have to rely on other international routes. In most cases, this goes through the UAE, while others, depending on their products, work through Turkey.

For instance, our goods must first make their way to the Emirates, where trade documents are modified before being re-exported under the UAE's name. This means that in official customs figures, Iran's name doesn't show up, and exports to South Africa technically go down as originating from another country. So, it's impossible to pin down the exact size of our trade volume, and most available figures are based on estimates and projections.

Under these conditions, what really matters is that readers know which goods Iran exports to South Africa and vice versa. Our exports mainly include food items, petrochemical products and their derivatives, and oil-based commodities. Petrochemical goods are exported in bulk and in large quantities. Even though these exports go through the same document-modifying process mentioned earlier, South Africa has long been a reliable buyer in this field. A major part of what Iran sends to South Africa consists of oil derivatives, a trade that has been going on for years.

The next category involves food items such as dates, sweets, chocolates, biscuits, and assorted groceries. A number of reputable Iranian companies are active in these sectors and send their products to the South African market.

Although foodstuffs are not on the sanctions list, financial transactions are, which throws a wrench into the process. South African partners must go by the exact name on the invoice when making payments. For example, I cannot issue an invoice under my Iranian company's name and, at the same time, ask the buyer to transfer payment to a different entity abroad. I, therefore, have to issue a bill that matches both the account and the country of payment, which naturally complicates matters. So, in trade with South Africa, we run up against such procedural hurdles.

We also import a variety of goods from South Africa. One major item is red meat. Much of the government-regulated meat that finds its way into Iran's market comes from South Africa, though at one

point, domestic issues put a stop to that supply for a while. All fresh meat is flown in directly.

We also maintain strong cooperation on agricultural inputs. These items are purchased and shipped from South Africa, and trade in that sector is currently up and running. So, in broad terms, there's a healthy two-way exchange between the two countries.

What advantages does cooperation with South Africa bring in the commercial, economic, and industrial fields?

Mining is one of the key areas of cooperation. South Africa is at the forefront of the mining industry and owns a remarkably diverse range of mines. Iran, in turn, benefits from these resources, particularly by tapping into the extraction and exploration expertise of South African firms. Iranian mining companies now draw on South African specialists, who have extensive experience in this field.

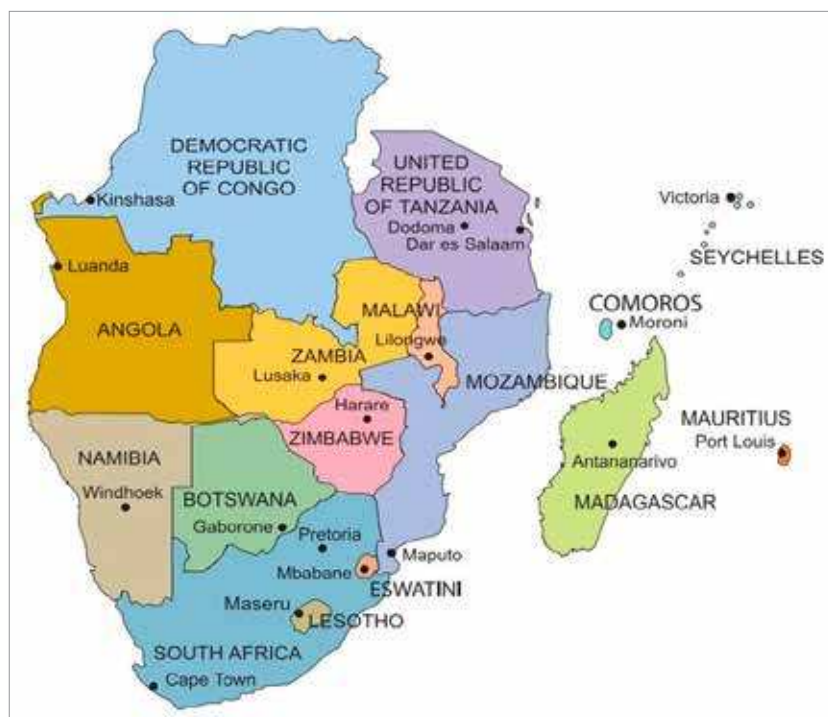
Mining is an industry that has kept moving forward steadily with advancing knowledge. Some of South Africa's mines are extremely deep, while in Iran, technical constraints make deep drilling difficult. The South Africans have the mines and lead the way in exploration, and we take advantage of that experience.

As for machinery supply, there is also indirect trade through South Africa. With the institutional ties between the two chambers of commerce and a series of agreements already in place, one major mission of the Joint Commercial Com-

mittee is to smooth the path for business activity — and we're doing our utmost to make that happen.

Over the past few years, Iranian companies have taken part in many exhibitions in South Africa, mostly in the food industry and resins. Soon, there will also be fairs on the mining and agri-tech sectors, and Iranian firms have shown great interest in showing up at those events since trade with South Africa doesn't end there. Because of its intra-continental agreements with other African nations — particularly in sub-Saharan Africa — our traders can branch out into a vast market through South Africa. In fact, by doing business with South Africa, we effectively build ties with 15 to 16 other African countries.

For example, if a product is manufactured in South Africa, it can be exported to these partner states with virtually no customs duties — just as if something made in the Iranian capital of Tehran were shipped off to the southern Iranian city of Shiraz or vice versa. Although South Africa faces challenges such as energy shortages, Iranian companies can still team up with South African firms for long-term, productive joint ventures. Everything mentioned so far stands as a real example of the ongoing cooperation between the two countries. Despite the obstacles that our traders and busi-



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa (R) shakes hands with his Iranian counterpart, Masoud Pezeshkian, during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the XVI BRICS Summit held in Kazan, Russia, on October 24, 2024.

● X



South African partners must go by the exact name on the invoice when making payments. For example, I cannot issue an invoice under my Iranian company's name and, at the same time, ask the buyer to transfer payment to a different entity abroad. I, therefore, have to issue a bill that matches both the account and the country of payment, which naturally complicates matters. So, in trade with South Africa, we run up against such procedural hurdles.



Map of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, which, as of 2012, allows duty-free trade among 12 of the 15 members under a free trade agreement (FTA).

● RESEARCHGATE

nesspeople come up against, this collaboration is very much alive and moving forward.

How do you view the outlook for trade between the two countries, and what obstacles stand in the way of expanding our economic relations?

As for the outlook of cooperation, thanks to the efforts of officials, Iran has now become a permanent member of BRICS — and as you know, South Africa was one of its founding members. We must make the most of this opportunity. Although, because of financial sanctions and similar restrictions, we have not yet been able to take full advantage of this capacity, we hope that progress in the area of financial transactions will help ease the pressure and bring about tangible results. South Africa, given its extensive interaction with the global financial system, is highly sensitive in these matters, so we have to come up with mechanisms that smooth the way for trade, banking, and financial cooperation between our two countries. As I mentioned earlier, shipments to South Africa currently have to go through a much longer commercial route, which naturally drives up costs for us. When we are unable to issue invoices directly from our companies in Iran and are forced to work through a third country, expenses inevitably pile up, pushing up the final price of goods. In addition, the absence of direct shipping lines adds fuel to transportation costs, which in turn pushes up prices of essential goods in our markets. On top of that, we face stiff competition from countries such as China and India in supplying basic commodities and consumer goods there.

Since we usually operate on our own or in small, scattered groups, our costs shoot up, and, at times, we lose the competition. In my view, the current state of Iranian traders in international commerce resembles a boxing match where the Iranian contender has to fight with one hand tied behind his back — an uneven contest that naturally makes his position much tougher.

What measures should be taken to overcome these trade barriers and raise the level of economic cooperation between Iran and South Africa?

Naturally, South Africa and many African nations, because of the consequences that trading with Iran could bring upon them, are compelled to go along with the sanctions. Therefore, their limited cooperation should not be viewed merely as obeying the domineering policies of the United States or certain Western powers. The reality is that companies in every country, South Africa included, because of

their extensive links with Europe and America, are understandably cautious and prefer to look out for their own interests. Regarding financial transactions and the FATF issue, the matter goes well beyond Iran's membership or non-membership in that body. In practice, much more complex factors are at play — such as overarching and operational regulations in each country's system — that must all line up properly to ensure that trade and money transfers move forward smoothly. But since we still face difficulties in interbank exchanges, we are left with no choice but to stick to the same indirect methods already mentioned to handle commercial transactions with other nations. Africa offers enormous market potential, yet our share of that market remains small. When officials speak of expanding trade with Africa, they always refer to

it as an untouched and promising market brimming with opportunity, often describing South Africa as the "gateway to the African continent." Yet, even now, there isn't a single direct flight between Iran and Africa, and shipping lines to the region are few and far between. Trade is a chain of interconnected tools. Countries that lead the pack in international commerce never go in blind; they always move with structure and planning. When their political leaders travel abroad, dozens of businesspeople tag along to cash in on trade opportunities. They know well that shoring up economic foundations with partner nations naturally lays the groundwork for stronger political ties and aligned views. This is precisely the lesson we must take to heart. Specifically, regarding South Africa, we must step up our trade links and flight connections

— both with that country and the entire continent — because higher trade volumes require matching logistical networks and infrastructure. So far, most of our economic activity with South Africa has boiled down to small, individual initiatives: a few traders, the Iran Chamber of Commerce, or several large firms acting independently by setting up offices in Turkey, the UAE, or Oman to keep trade flowing with Africa. We need to bring in economic experts and trade attachés to our embassies abroad to give a hand to private businesses and commercial players. In many advanced countries, governments make it a point to appoint officials with sharp business acumen to their diplomatic missions so they can stand behind national merchants and industries. I hope our country will move more decisively down this path in the coming years.



⬅ Demonstrators wave Iranian flags as they gather in front of the US Consulate during a protest against the Israel-Iran conflict and to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, seen in Johannesburg, South Africa, on June 21, 2025.
● MARCO LONGARI/AFP

Africa in Iran's new foreign policy



By Esmail Razaghi
Expert in international relations

OPINION

Recent developments in the international system show that the Western unipolar order is giving way to a more fluid and multipolar setup — an order where regional powers and emerging economies are stepping up to shape the new global rules. In this changing landscape, Africa — with its massive mineral wealth and unmatched energy and agricultural potential — has come under the spotlight of global powers. For Iran, which over the past decade has set out to diversify its foreign relations and move toward stronger South-South cooperation, Africa has emerged not only as a promising economic market but also as a stage on which to carve out a new geopolitical and cultural role in the evolving world order.

Potentials, prospects for Iran-Africa cooperation

A close look at the shared capacities reveals that Iran and African nations can work together across four main fronts:

- 1. Economy, energy, and infrastructure:** Drawing on its extensive experience in building power plants, electricity transmission lines, small petrochemical units, and mid-scale refineries, Iran can team up with African states seeking its affordable, domestically-acquired technological know-how.
- 2. Food security and agriculture:** Iran can take part in joint projects on agriculture, irrigation technology transfer, fertilizer production, and grain cultivation. Initiatives like an Iran-Africa food security project, with participation of Russia, can secure fertilizer, seed, and grain supplies — a tripartite model that looks out for the interests of all three partners while shoring up food security.
- 3. Pharmaceuticals, healthcare, and indigenous technologies:** Iran's pharmaceutical industry enjoys a competitive advantage. Exports of Iranian medicines to African countries are growing and could expand into "regional drug production hubs" in eastern and western Africa. Such cooperation falls under health diplomacy and helps burnish Iran's soft power image.
- 4. Higher education, science, and technology:** More than 3,000 African students are studying at Iranian universities. Building on this momentum through joint research centers and academic exchange programs could build up a network of African elites with ties to Iran — a factor that, in the long run, lays the groundwork for deeper cultural and political relations.

Challenges ahead

Despite these opportunities, Iran's Africa policy is facing several structural hurdles:



Iran's First Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (back) speaks at a meeting with the heads of missions of African countries in Iran, on February 20, 2025.
● YJC

- **Lack of a cohesive national strategy:** The country's Africa policy remains scattered across ministries and agencies — from Foreign Affairs to Trade, Health, and beyond.
- **Weak financial and banking infrastructure:** The absence of shared banking and insurance systems has held back trade, forcing it into limited and informal channels.
- **Shortage of direct transport links:** The lack of regular sea and air routes between Iranian and African ports has driven up trade costs.
- **Fierce competition from active players:** Turkey, the UAE, and China have moved in on Africa's markets, leaving Iran little room to maneuver.
- **Traditional outlook in policymaking bodies:** Many Iranian institutions still cling to a Western-oriented approach that pushes Africa down the priority list.

A proposed roadmap for Iran's Africa policy

To break out of the current impasse and make the most of Africa's vast potential, Iran must beef up its existing frameworks and revamp its operational approach toward the continent. The fol-

lowing strategies should be built into this agenda:

- **Strengthening the Africa Task Force as a steering body:** The Africa Task Force needs special authority to coordinate among the Foreign Ministry, the Ministries of Industry, the Ministry of Health, and related chambers of commerce and cooperatives.
- **Focusing on key countries and regional synergy:** Iran should smartly zero in on pivotal nations such as Ethiopia (home to the African Union headquarters), Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Senegal, and Ghana. Each serves as a gateway to a strategic subregion and can tie together the broader Iran-Africa cooperation network.
- **Tapping into Iran-Africa conferences:** The three Iran-Africa conferences held in recent years have paved the way for stronger links between governments and both private and public-sector economic players. Keeping these events on a regular schedule — along with more specialized forums — can set up enduring networks of thinkers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers.
- **Developing trilateral diplomacy and joint projects:** Joint ventures involving

Iran and its eastern partners, such as China and Russia, can draw in African countries in balanced, non-competitive trilateral initiatives — an approach that eases financing.

- **Boosting public and media diplomacy:** Utilizing African media platforms, making cultural collaborations, and sending Iranian artists and intellectuals abroad can help lift Iran's image from a purely political plane to a civilizational level. Today, Africa is not only rich in resources but also central to reshaping the global order. If Iran builds on the success of its three previous Iran-Africa conferences and activates its Africa Task Force to keep up institutional ties, it could cement a more stable and influential position across the continent. Within such a framework, Iran's Africa policy would shift from diplomatic rhetoric to a strategy-driven, development-oriented engagement — one that broadens the nation's foreign relations and reclaims its historic and cultural role on a continent that is clearly coming into its own.

The article first appeared in Persian on Iranian Diplomacy.



Delegates enter the conference hall before the Third Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Summit begins in Tehran, Iran, on April 27, 2025.
● IRNA



For Iran, which over the past decade has set out to diversify its foreign relations and move toward stronger South-South cooperation, Africa has emerged not only as a promising economic market but also as a stage on which to carve out a new geopolitical and cultural role in the evolving world order.

Riyadh 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games: Shahsavari shines in table tennis; Iran strikes men's volleyball gold



● Neda Shahsavari celebrates with Shima Safaei after the Iranian duo won the women's table tennis doubles title at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Nov. 13, 2025.
● ISNA



● Iranian players celebrate on the podium after winning the men's volleyball gold at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Nov. 13, 2025.
● AMIRHOSSEIN KHEIRKHAH/volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Neda Shahsavari headlined Iran's gold rush on the sixth day of the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, capturing both the women's singles and doubles titles in table tennis. Elsewhere on Thursday, the Iranian men's volleyball team capped its dominant run in the Saudi capital with a 3-1 victory over Türkiye in the final. Another final featuring Iran and Türkiye saw Shahsavari team up with Shima Safaei to rally past Ece Haraç and Özge Yılmaz in four games (9-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-8) in the women's doubles showdown. The victory marked a second

medal in Riyadh for Shahsavari and Safaei, who were part of the Iranian trio – alongside Seta-yesh Illoukhani – that settled for bronze in the team event earlier in the Games. Shahsavari then completed her glittering campaign later on Thursday, pulling off a sensational fightback to defeat Syria's Hend Zaza 4-2 (7-11, 10-12, 11-9, 11-8, 13-11) in the singles final. Shahsavari's gold rounded out an impressive run for Iranian table tennis at the multi-sport event, which also yielded a team silver and a doubles bronze in the men's competition.

Volleyball dominance

Iran proved to be in a league of

its own in the men's volleyball, completing a clean sweep of six victories. In a rematch of the round-robin encounter, which had also finished in four sets, Peyman Akbari's men took the first two sets by identical 25-20 scorelines, before Türkiye capitalized on a somewhat complacent Iranian performance in the third to win 25-17. The European side, however, was denied a comeback in the fourth, as Iran closed out the match 25-17 to celebrate a fifth men's gold in six ISG editions. "Given the team's success in the previous editions, the pressure was always on Iran to clinch the gold once again, and I am glad

that it happened tonight," Akbari said after the final victory. "Türkiye's first team had finished in the top six at the World Championship [in September], and we also had two tough matches against them. Aside from Chad, I think all the other five teams put up a solid performance here," added the Iranian coach. "We played six matches in this tournament, and our approach was to utilize the entire roster to avoid placing too much strain on just a few key players. With the Iranian League starting in just a few days, these players need to be ready for their clubs. Therefore, we made a conscious effort to give everyone playing time so that the minutes were distribut-

ed evenly. We hope they return to their clubs in good form." There was further glory for Iranian volleyball on Thursday, as the country's women's team finished with a consolation bronze, thanks to an emphatic straight-set victory (25-2, 25-7, 25-8) over Tajikistan. Iranian girls got off to a slow start in the round-robin phase, suffering back-to-back 3-0 defeats against Azerbaijan and Türkiye, but bounced back with comfortable wins against Afghanistan and Tajikistan to book a place in the third-place match. "I had higher expectations for my players, regarding their final standing here, though it's

my job to work on the players' strengths and weaknesses to help them perform at a higher level," Iran head coach Lee Doh-see said. "The players' self-confidence, their conduct at their clubs, and their focus on high-ball defense are all areas that require more work. I think after what we saw from the team here, we will have to make changes to the squad for future events," added the South Korean. "Three or four players from the U18 squad will be promoted to the senior team for the future," said Lee, as she looks to build on Iran's gold-winning campaign at the Asian Youth Games last month.

Qalenoee hails 'disciplined defense' after shootout win over Cape Verde

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee was pleased with his team's disciplined defensive display following a shootout victory over Cape Verde at the Al Ain International Cup on Thursday. Chances were few and far between for the two sides, both of which will be present at next year's World Cup finals in North America, as the game finished goalless in normal time, forcing a shootout decider. While Omid Nourafkan, Ali Alipour, Mohammad Mohebbi, Saeid Ezzatollahi, and Mahdi Taremi all converted from the spot, Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand denied Laros Duarte's effort to guide Team Melli to a 5-4 win. "I'm glad we won a game of World Cup caliber, though the result is the last thing that matters in friendly matches," Qalenoee said after the game. "Friends are all about identifying your strengths and weaknesses. Our main objective in this match was to work on our defensive shape, and I think we managed to do that effectively. I think we delivered a decent performance, especially in the second half, against a team that had been unbeaten in nine games before today's encounter," added the Iranian. "With a bit more luck, we could



● Iranian fullback Milad Mohammadi (2nd R) goes up for a header during a game against Cape Verde at the Al Ain International Cup in Al Ain, UAE, on November 13, 2025.
● FFIRI

have won the game before it went to penalties. But for me, the real victory was the significant improvement in our defensive structure. Many critics are just waiting for us to drop a game so they can attack us, but our philosophy for these matches is clear: we aim to identify our weak spots in both defensive and offensive setups," said Qalenoee, who still regretted the absence of several key players in the squad, namely Sardar Azmoun, Mahdi Qayedi, Alireza Jahanbakhsh, and Ali Qolizadeh, during this international break. "The return of injured players

surely makes a difference, as Majid Hosseini contributed to our disciplined defense today." When asked about the team's quick transition from defense to attack, and whether this style is what to expect from his side at the World Cup, Qalenoee said: "Definitely. We started from the midfield and reduced the length of the pitch to under 30 meters for the team. One of our key objectives was to create chances through quick counter-attacks, which we did successfully on several occasions, though the most important thing was not conceding and denying the opponent oppor-

tunities." Iranian skipper Taremi, meanwhile, echoed manager's assessment of the game, saying: "Our main priority was our defensive structure and maintaining the compact shape we needed throughout the game, and I believe we executed that quite well." "We also had a couple of chances on the counter-attack that we failed to convert, but overall, I think it was a good performance. Our gameplan wasn't overly aggressive, but relative to what we had designed, the team delivered a suitable performance."

WASL West Asia League: Shahrddari beat Astana to stay on perfect run

FIBA – Iran's Shahrddari Gorgan sent some strong warning signals to the rest of the fray with a comfortable, but compact 89-73 win over debutants BC Astana of Kazakhstan in 2025-26 FIBA WASL West Asia League on Thursday night. The Iranian outfit, a twice former WASL runners-up thus earned their second win from as many games and are now locked for the top place in the five-team round-robin with reigning three-time champions Al Riyadi Beirut. Jordan Hamilton led the charge for the Iranian champions for the second game on the trot with 25 points one rebound shy of a double-double. Parrish Petty and Mobin Sheiki lent support with 14 points each. Having endured oscillating fortunes in the first two periods of a hitherto even-keeled encounter, Shahrddari

closed the first half strong. Meisam Mirzaei nudged Gorgan ahead and Petty reeled in a long-ranger to swell that lead further as the teams headed into the break. Gorgan went into the locker-room with that lead and never fell back when they returned to action for the second half. "We needed to tighten the screws a little in the second half," said Gorgan coach Saleh Makhdoomi. "We began to share the ball better and we were focussed to thank our fans who travelled long with this win," he added. Mohammed Hassan-zadeh pulled down a game-high 11 rebounds for the home side, while Adas Juskevicius was the leader of Astana's rally with 25 points. Shahrddari will stay at home to welcome Syria's Al Wahda on Thursday next.



● Shahrddari Gorgan's Jordan Hamilton goes up for a basket during a victory over Astana at the FIBA WASL West Asia League in Tehran, Iran, on Nov. 13, 2025.
● FIBA

Lawmaker urges action to develop infrastructure in Lut Desert

Iranica Desk

Tourism development in the Lut Desert, registered on UNESCO's List, will be achieved only when integrated tourism routes are established across the provinces of South Khorasan, Kerman, and Sistan and Baluchestan, enabling visitors to experience the diverse attractions of eastern Iran in a single trip, said Mostafa Nakhai, Parliament representative for Nehbandan and Sarbisheh.

Speaking at the Fourth International Conference on Lut Desert hosted in Nehbandan, South Khorasan Province, on Thursday, he stated, "If we want the Lut Desert to be properly introduced and developed, we must adopt creative planning and take initiative. Holding conferences alone is not enough; a clear route must be designed for tourists that passes through key attractions in all three provinces."

He added that tourists should not enter the region solely to visit the Kaluts (natural sand and clay formations shaped by wind) of Kerman, but should also be able to explore the world's tallest sand dunes in Rig-e Yalan, the hottest point on Earth, the Martian mountains of Nehbandan,



Shahdezh Castle
● kojara.com



Martian mountains of Nehbandan
● shahraranews.ir



Mostafa Nakhai

Khajeh Mountain in Zabol, and the ancient Burnt City (Shahr-e Sukhteh) in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, chtn.ir wrote.

Nakhai emphasized the need to establish "airport-to-airport" routes between the cities of Kerman, Nehbandan, Zabol, and Birjand in order to form cohesive tourism circuits. He also

called for greater use of media outlets and tourism influencers to promote the Lut Desert and the attractions of eastern Iran. He expressed hope that these recommendations would be put into action and that cooperation among the three provinces would lead to increased tourism and investment. He noted that Parliament is prepared to support executive plans related to the Lut Desert.

Nakhai added that by future editions of the conference, many infrastructural shortcomings should be resolved and the region should see greater investment, rising numbers of

domestic and foreign visitors, and improved presentation of eastern Iran's cultural and natural heritage.

Despite the unique historical, cultural, and natural capacities of Nehbandan and the global Lut Desert, he said, inadequate infrastructure and failure to implement approved measures have hindered effective utilization of these opportunities.

He continued that Nehbandan, with a history spanning several millennia, has long played a key cultural, economic, and civilizational role among the three provinces, yet many of its valuable historical sites are now at

risk of neglect and destruction. Referring to historic Shahdezh Castle of Nehbandan, more than 2,000 years old and one of the few well-preserved remnants of the Parthian era, Nakhai called for urgent restoration efforts. He noted that not only has no significant conservation work been carried out in recent years, but some unregulated construction has even caused damage. He also criticized the slow progress on the Nehbandan-Shahdad road, one of the main tourism routes into the Lut Desert, stating that only five kilometers of the route have been improved despite several years

of work and repeated Parliamentary follow-ups.

Emphasizing that tourism cannot develop without adequate infrastructure, Nakhai said the numerous conferences on the Lut Desert will only be effective if they lead to investment and real projects; otherwise, they will remain mere repetition of slogans.

He noted that with its ethnic and religious diversity, remarkable unity, authentic handicrafts, and unique desert landscapes, Nehbandan deserves greater attention and has the potential to become a major tourism hub in eastern Iran.

Nature reveals hidden wonders in Laft

Iranica Desk

Imagine the gentle breeze of the Persian Gulf brushing against your face, the soft rhythm of the waves syncing with your heartbeat, and the scent of damp earth mingling with the aroma of coastal plants filling your senses.

This is Laft — a historic village in Hormozgan Province, where every step through its narrow alleys tells the story of thousands of years of coastal life and human perseverance. The tall windcatchers and sun-dried clay houses not only reflect the artistry and traditional architecture of southern Iran but also stand as a testament to the ingenuity of people who built homes that speak with the wind in the heart of a hot and humid climate, IRNA wrote.

In Laft, every well and every stone carries a memory of the past — from the rain-harvesting wells that preserved precious water to the ancient fortresses once inhabited by Portuguese watchmen. Walking through this village is an experience that unites history and nature, where mangrove forests and coastal trees blend seamlessly with traditional architecture to create a scene both beautiful and unforgettable. Laft is more than a geographical location, it is a living harmony of humanity and nature, past and present, culture and art. Every traveler who visits this village not only delights in its natural and historical charm but also connects with the soul and spirit of its people whose lives have long been intertwined with the sea and the land.

Laft village, with its diverse attractions, offers visitors a rare opportunity to explore the intertwined stories of history, culture, and nature in southern Iran. One



of its most iconic features is the traditional windcatchers, which rise gracefully toward the sky, showcasing the artistic and engineering mastery of the people of southern Iran. These windcatchers not only provide natural ventilation for the homes, but also create a striking visual landscape — a photographer's paradise that reveals the rhythm of daily life in the region.

At the heart of the village lie the Tala Wells, a collection of 366 ingeniously designed rainwater reservoirs. This ancient hydraulic system stands as an enduring example of early environmental engineering, demonstrating how people of the past skillfully adapted to water scarcity. Visiting these wells allows travelers to glimpse the resourcefulness and everyday life of those who once inhabited this remarkable coastal settlement.

Ancient castles and cemetery

Among Laft's most prominent historical landmarks is the Portuguese Castle, a sturdy stone fortress that once housed barracks, an armory, and a church — silent witnesses to the era when the Portuguese controlled parts of the Persian Gulf. The fortress



● IRNA

symbolizes the region's strategic importance in maritime trade and defense centuries ago. Nearby stands the Naderi Castle, built during the Afsharid period. Its architecture closely resembles that of the Portuguese forts, and it has been officially registered as a national heritage site of Iran. A visit to this site recalls the significant historical and political chapters of southern Iran's past.

Close to these ancient structures lies the old cemetery of Laft, dating back to the 7th century CE. Located near the Shrine of Seyyed Shams al-Din, it invites visitors to walk among weathered gravestones that whisper stories of faith, tradition, and continuity. This quiet site offers



● IRNA

a profound sense of connection with the lives and legacies of those who shaped the region's history.

Hara forests

Beyond its deep-rooted history, Laft's natural landscape is equally captivating. The Hara mangrove forests, stretching along the nearby tidal creeks, form a pristine and rare ecosystem that shelters a variety of bird and aquatic species. A boat ride among the mangrove trees immerses visitors in a serene world where the silence of nature meets the gentle lapping of the tide — an experience that embodies peace and wonder.

The sandy and rocky shores surrounding Laft offer ample oppor-

tunities for fishing, swimming, and boating, providing a delightful escape into the maritime life of the Persian Gulf.

Traditional bazaar

Equally vibrant is the traditional bazaar of Laft, where the scent of fresh fish, the sweetness of dates, and the artistry of local handicrafts fill the air. Visitors can browse through handwoven mats, pottery, and seashell souvenirs while engaging with local vendors whose warmth and hospitality define the character of southern Iran.

For those seeking adventure, the natural caves and rock formations near the village provide ideal settings for hiking, photography, and exploration — a perfect way to experience Laft's untamed beauty up close.

Neighboring villages

Visiting the neighboring villages around Laft also reveals the traditional seafaring lifestyle of the region's inhabitants. These excursions allow travelers to witness centuries-old fishing techniques, wooden boat craftsmanship, and the enduring bond between the people and the sea — a bond that continues to shape their culture and livelihood.

Port

In earlier centuries, Laft Port (Bandar-e Laft) was one of the most important harbors on Qeshm Island, playing a vital role in regional trade and economy. Its strategic location made it a key stop for merchant ships and trading vessels navigating between the Persian Gulf and the coasts of India. Though its commercial role has evolved over time, Laft Port remains a thriving center for fishing and recreational boating. Visitors to the harbor can still observe the rhythms of maritime life — fishermen repairing their nets, boats gliding through the calm waters, and the horizon shimmering in the southern sun.

Today, Laft village and its historic port stand as a vivid example of the seamless interaction between history, culture, and nature on Qeshm Island. With its windcatchers, ancient fortresses, Tala wells, Hara forests, and bustling maritime life, Laft embodies the enduring spirit of southern Iran. The local markets and handicrafts offer a tangible connection to the daily life of its people, allowing visitors to experience a living culture that bridges generations.

A journey to Laft is more than sightseeing — it is an immersion into the authentic rhythm of coastal life. Preserving this cultural and natural heritage, while promoting sustainable tourism, can ensure a bright and resilient future for Laft and its people, keeping this historic village alive for generations to come.

Ultimately, a visit to Laft is an unforgettable experience — a journey through time and tide, where history breathes in every breeze, and every traveler departs with a lasting sense of serenity and awe.

Paniz Faryousefi makes history

First woman to lead Tehran Symphony draws full houses at Vahdat Hall

Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran Symphony Orchestra performed under a woman conductor for the first time in its decades-long history as Paniz Faryousefi took the podium for two packed concerts at Vahdat Hall on November 12 and 13, according to the Roudaki Foundation.

Faryousefi, joined by violin soloist Pedram Faryousefi, opened on November 12 with a taut, clear-cut reading of Jean Sibelius's 'Impromptu Op. 5,' delivered by the string ensemble to a hall so still that one musician later called the atmosphere "almost weightless".

The baton then shifted to homegrown repertoire. Works by Iranian composers Golfam Khayam and Aftab Darvishi followed, with 'Simorgh' and 'Zamzameh' setting a hushed, inward tone before Pedram Faryousefi stepped forward to lead Darvishi's 'Diyar.' Both composers were invited on stage to acknowledge pro-

longed applause.

The orchestra switched gears after the interval, expanding to full forces for Franz Schubert's 'Symphony No. 8 in B minor, the Unfinished.' The 'Allegro moderato' and 'Andante con moto' unfurled with a slow tension that held the audience in tight focus. Several listeners described the hall as "locked in" to the orchestra's phrasing.

A more hard-hitting finale came with Aram Khachaturian's 'Sabre Dance' from 'Gayaneh,' its driving rhythm bringing the two-night program to a head and prompting a wave of cheers across the venue.

Faryousefi, closing the evening, thanked the musicians, the Roudaki Foundation's management and its artistic council for trusting her with what she called a "milestone responsibility".

She added, "A special thanks to Nasir Heydarian, who stood by me and the orchestra with genuine care and made this program possible."

She dedicated both performances to "Iranian mothers and women", singling out her own mother.

Heydarian, invited on stage afterwards, said he was "glad" to see decision-makers opening space for younger conductors.

"We must gradually hand the world to the young," he told the audience, adding that the "maternal sensitivity" and artistic nuance of women musicians had been audible "last night and tonight [November 12 and 13]".

At the end of the November 12 performance, commendation plaques from the Roudaki Foundation were presented to Paniz Faryousefi, Golfam Khayam and Aftab Darvishi by Heydarian, pianist Raphael Minaskanian and music scholar Farimah Ghavamsadri. Senior cultural figures, including composer Mohammadreza Darvishi, mezzo-soprano Nesrin Nasehi, pianist Bahnaz Zakeri, and Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Zahra Behrouz-Azar, were among the attendees.



Iranian composer Paniz Faryousefi conducts a performance by Tehran Symphony Orchestra at Vahdat Hall in Tehran, Iran on November 13, 2025.
● PANA

Brazil welcomes three-day Iranian film showcase



Arts & Culture Desk

A three-day Iranian film festival opened in the Brazilian capital on Thursday, showcasing four titles that explore environmental, social, and animated storytelling, subtitled in Portuguese for local audiences.

The event, staged from November 13 to 15 in a Brasilia cultural complex, features four Iranian works, 'Sweet Taste of Imagination,' 'In the Arms of the Tree,' 'Fragrant' and the animation 'Loupetoo,' all subtitled in Portuguese.

The program folds environmental, social and animated storytelling into what organizers describe as a compact survey of contemporary Iranian filmmaking.

Speaking at the opening ceremony attended by foreign envoys, Brazilian cultural authorities and Iran-watchers, Iran's Ambassador to Brazil, Abdollah Nekounam framed the 123-year diplomatic relationship between Tehran and Brasilia as a "long-standing friendship".

He argued that cinema, like other performing arts, has become

a shared medium through which nations "speak beyond race, borders and politics".

He said Iranian cinema, much like the country's visual and performing arts, is rooted in a "thousand-year-old cultural heritage" and remains committed to portraying "respect for human dignity", alongside ideals of freedom, justice and spirituality.

The ambassador also pointed to Iranian filmmakers' recurring concern for "the rights of all living beings" and nature.

Curators leaned into that environmental thread on the opening night, screening 'Sweet Taste of Imagination', a feature with strong ecological motifs, to echo the timing of COP30-related climate discussions under way in Brazil's Amazon region. Festival guests said the overlap "struck a chord", giving the film added resonance.

Screenings run daily through November 15, with organizers billing the showcase as a cultural bridge for Brazilian audiences keen to probe Iranian narratives at close quarters.

Cassette tape, sound of nostalgia in digital pulse

How an obsolete medium found its way back into heart of America's music market

By Alireza Sepahvand
Journalist

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In an era where music is just a few clicks away and endless streams flow through digital platforms, the return of cassette tapes to record store shelves once seemed impossible. Yet after two decades of silence, this small magnetic medium has come alive, sparking a fresh wave of cultural excitement in America's music scene.

Gentle crawl of two reels in one frame!

According to recent data from the Recording Industry Association of America, cassette sales have experienced an unprecedented rise over the past five years. Although the numbers are tiny compared to billions of online streams, their cultural weight is far greater. The cassette has transformed from a forgotten format into a symbol of tangibility in a world where everything has become weightless and placeless. Cassette production companies in Tennessee and Chicago have resumed their operations, and alongside digital releases, major artists are surprising the market with new physical editions.

Pop stars lining up for nostalgia

When names like Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish, and Harry Styles joined the list of artists embracing cassette tapes, the movement gained real momentum. Swift, who deeply understands her audience's sense of memory and culture, released cassette editions of her recent albums with cus-

tom designs, printed signatures, and even handwritten notes. This cleverness turned the cassette from an audio product into an emotional, collectible object. Swift's fans often buy these editions not to listen to them, but to take home a small, tangible piece of their fan identity.

A sound whose flaws are beautiful

The cassette lost to digital long ago, its hiss, crackle, and fading sound once flaws now become its charm. Young listeners raised on compressed, sterile audio embrace its raw, uneven tone as more authentic. Playing a cassette, waiting for the tape to spin, and letting the music unfold offers a slow, human rhythm in stark contrast to the relentless pace of modern life.

Gen Z in search of authenticity

The cassette revival cannot be explained merely by the nostalgia of older generations. Today's main buyers are young people who never lived through the format's golden age. They are not reconstructing memories; they are searching for authenticity and a sense of ownership in a virtual world. For Gen Z, the cassette has become a symbolic form of resistance against digital saturation, a quiet, poetic, and cultural protest. The cassette reminds them of a time when patience and duration were part of the joy of listening to music.

Cassette's charm in marketplace

Rising demand has brought factories back to life. Companies like Missouri's National Audio Company report artist and label orders have doubled

in three years. The growth is cultural more than economic, as each cassette carries emotion beyond its commodity value. What began with vinyl has now reached cassettes, where people pay to touch the past. Cultural psychologists call this the nostalgia economy, where old objects gain new emotional meaning.

Independent artists finding different path

Amid this wave, many independent American musicians have turned to cassette releases. Producing a cassette is far cheaper than pressing vinyl or running large-scale digital campaigns. Alternative, punk, and indie groups release small runs of tapes that simultaneously serve as physical artifacts and declarations of identity. This medium lets them address listeners directly, without intermediaries.

Beyond a passing trend

At first glance, the cassette comeback might look like a passing fad. But the signs point to something deeper. The cassette recalls a time of more human connection with music — when every album had its own identity, and every listener built a personal relationship with their tape. In a world of streaming and artificial intelligence, the cassette stands as a reminder that music is not just data, it's a human experience.

Cassette culture, consumption in Iran

Cassette tapes first reached Iran in the 1970s as a cheaper, more portable alternative to vinyl. After the 1979 Revolution, they became central to music distribution, shaping the nation's listening culture

in the 1980s and carrying both legal and underground works. In the 1990s, as pop music gradually returned, cassette albums hit peak popularity. Though sidelined worldwide, cassettes have recently resurfaced, yet in Iran they remain limited and collectible. Online stores now sell rare originals at notable prices, a reminder of a market once intertwined with underground music through home duplications, street kiosks, and roadside vendors.

Over the past two decades, with the rise of digital formats and declining purchasing power, physical releases (cassette, CD) have decreased significantly. Nevertheless, limited editions, special prints, or nostalgic designs could attract collectors or listeners who want to experience music through the cassette format. Since digital publishing has become nearly effortless, using cassettes as a "special physical edition" could strengthen an album's identity and appeal to loyal fans. Of course, using cassettes also presents serious challenges. Playing them requires tape decks that few households now possess. The audio quality is technically inferior to digital or even CD formats.

Producing new cassettes may be costly, and Iran's current market might not be large enough to justify mass production, meaning this format would likely remain a special edition or collectible item rather than a mainstream channel for music distribution. Finally, it must be acknowledged that Iran's music publishing environment is complex, and releasing physical formats such as cassettes could still face legal challenges, much as it did in the past.