

Veep calls on SCO to spur regional economic convergence

International Desk

Iran's first vice president said on Tuesday that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) should turn into one of the driving forces of economic convergence across the region owing to its great capacities. "The great human capacities, rich natural resources, strategic geographical position, and developing infrastructure among the members of this organization have provided us with exceptional opportunities to expand cooperation," Mohammad Reza Aref told the 24th meeting of the SCO Prime Ministers in the Russian capital, Moscow. "We need collective resilience in the face of future shocks; shocks such as energy insecurity, food insecurity, climate change, threats arising from new technologies, and the growing risks posed by monopoly and the existing dominance within global financial and monetary systems,

which cannot be ignored."

Given the current situation, the SCO member states need a collective move toward "inter-twined economy" and the formation of "resilient national and regional economies."

Referring to the previous meeting of the SCO member states, which was held in Chinese city of Tianjin from August 31 to September 1, the Iranian official said the drafting of the SCO's ten-year development strategy, the roadmap for cooperation in the energy sector, and the issuance of numerous statements in various areas are among the important achievements of the Tianjin Summit.

Aref added that Iran is ready to play an active role in implementing the decisions of the Tianjin Summit and in achieving the goals of the organization. He also called the active role of the private sector one of the key factors in the success of the Shanghai Cooperation Organi-



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref speaks in the 24th meeting of the SCO Prime Ministers in the Russian capital, Moscow, on November 18, 2025.

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zation which comprises Iran, Russia, Belarus, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Aref said that Iran emphasizes the expansion of the activities of the SCO Business Council and the Interbank Consortium, as well as strengthening their operational functions and their connection with joint economic and industrial projects.

The Business Council can become an important platform for expanding direct connections between the private sectors, developing trade and investment in the member countries, and facilitating the implementation of joint projects, especially in the areas of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and green technol-



ogies, Aref said.

The SCO covers about 24% of the world's land area and 42% of the global population. Mem-

ber states account for roughly one quarter of global GDP, with total trade increasing nearly 100-fold in the past two de-

cades.

It is the world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population.

Iran cannot enter doomed-to-fail nuclear negotiations:

Deputy FM to CNN

International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh said Iran cannot enter a nuclear negotiation that is doomed to failure and ultimately becomes a pretext for another war.

He made the remarks in response to a question about possible resumption of nuclear talks with the United States in an exclusive interview with CNN.

Khatibzadeh said that if the US accepts the logic of negotiation and abandons some of its illusions and stops its plot to use political-diplomatic tools to achieve what it failed to through a military campaign, "then we can proceed within the framework of the directives of the Leader."

Any future dialogue with the US over Iran's nuclear program would be contingent on an agreement that would allow Iran to pursue uranium enrichment, he underlined.

"Delusions of zero enrichment inside Iran or trying to deprive Iran from its basic rights is not going to be an option for Iran."

Iran and the United States held five rounds of negotiations through Omani mediators before Israel launched a 12-day aggression against the country on June 13.



Saeed Khatibzadeh
● CNN

US President Donald Trump's decision to join Israel in striking Iranian nuclear facilities effectively ended the talks which were set to resume on June 15. The aggression claimed the lives of more than 1,000 Iranians, most of them civilians.

Separately, Khatibzadeh said Iran has "legitimate military programs to defend our national interests and our national security." Asked by CNN if Tehran is expanding its missile program, he said the program was going through "repair and recovery" following the Israel's aggression against Iran in June. Khatibzadeh also described his country's nuclear program as still "intact" despite the damage caused by US and Israeli strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities including Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan.

Trump initially claimed that For-

dow had been obliterated. An early US intelligence assessment suggested that the three nuclear facilities had been badly damaged, but Iran's nuclear program may have only been set back by up to two years.

While Khatibzadeh said that Israeli and US strikes had "ruined many of our infrastructure, machineries" and "buildings," he noted that the nuclear program was "very much based on our indigenous knowledge, very much spread across our country, which is a huge country – 90 million people."

"And this country is not a country that you can bomb and then think that you are going to ruin everything," the minister said.

Khatibzadeh's assessment comes as Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said Sunday that no uranium enrichment was taking place "right now" because the country's enrichment facilities had been "attacked." The enrichment process produces fuel for nuclear power plants.

Asked if he had a message to the Trump administration regarding its relationship with Iran, the deputy minister said his country is the "oldest living, continuous civilization on earth... This country and this nation are (a) master of survival."

and prosperity.

China is Iran's largest trade partner. Relations between the two countries have been expanding in recent years due to the Islamic republic's "Look to the East policy" policy. Their relations have further strengthened following the West's pressure on Iran over its nuclear program.

Back in 2021, Tehran and Beijing signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement to reinforce their long-standing economic and political alliance. Both states are subject to different levels of illegal sanctions imposed by the United States.

Iran has never sought to make nukes:

Pezeshkian

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Tuesday that Iran had never pursued to develop nuclear weapons, stressing that the country's nuclear program solely aimed to meet the needs of the nation in the fields of health, medicine, industry, agriculture, science, and technology.

"Some countries, through baseless and false claims and extensive propaganda, have attempted to misrepresent Iran's peaceful nuclear activities while the Islamic Republic of Iran has never sought to produce nuclear weapons," Pezeshkian said as he met new Austrian Ambassador to Tehran Friedrich Stift, who delivered his credentials to the president, IRNA reported.

Pezeshkian took a swipe at what he called "country's ill-wishers" for trying to disrupt the path of Iran's "positive interactions" with the international community since the day he assumed office in August 2024.

He noted that cooperation and the development of ties with all countries, based on friendship, peace, and mutual interests, were the cornerstone of Iran's foreign policy. Iran's nuclear program has been a source of contention with Western 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, the United States, Britain, France,



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets new Austrian Ambassador to Tehran Friedrich Stift (L) in Tehran on November 18, 2025.

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and Germany, have long expressed concern that Tehran could be seeking the capability to develop nuclear weapons.

The Austrian envoy said that Vienna had always emphasized resolving issues through dialogue, interaction, and diplomacy, adding that his country was ready to support diplomatic processes.

"Austria has always been ready to host negotiations and facilitate the path of dialogue. We hope the coming years for the world — especially for the country and people of Iran — will be filled with stability, tranquility, peace, and progress."

Iranian president also held separate meetings with new ambassadors of Oman, the UAE and Ghana.

China says aims to deepen long-term strategic partnership with Iran

International Desk

Chinese Ambassador to Iran Cong Peiwu said Beijing seeks to deepen cooperation with Iran and steadily advance the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership for the long term.

The year 2026 marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan and also the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Iran, the Chinese ambassador said in an article published by IRNA.

He said that China is willing to work together with the Iranian side to enhance cooperation in the exchange of



Cong Peiwu
● IRNA

governance experiences.

Cong said that China is interested in contributing to the development of a more just and equitable global governance system and offering more of its capacity to promote regional peace and sustainable global development

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