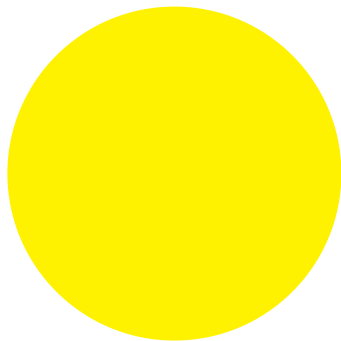




IRGC flexes naval muscles with ballistic, cruise missile launches

2 >



Iran Daily

Vol. 7995 ● Saturday, December 06, 2025 ● Azar 15, 1404 ● Jumada al-Thani 15, 1447 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages



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Iran calls Persian Gulf islands ‘inseparable part of Iran’s territorial integrity’

2 >



The combo photo shows the Iranian islands of Abu Musa (top), the Greater Tunb (L) and the Lesser Tunb (R) in the Persian Gulf.

● MEHR

Pezeshkian hails multibillion-dollar investment plan by private sector in SW region

3 >



A teenage boy dressed in a traditional outfit offers flowers to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during the latter's visit to Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province in southwestern Iran on December 4, 2025.

● pezeshkian.ir

Quiet cooperation, colossal consequences Why Iran-Turkey alignment is determinative for region

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

3 >



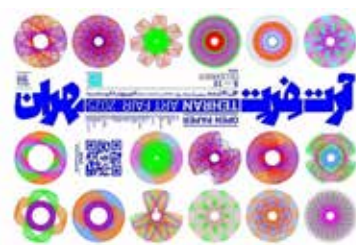
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6 >



Weaving identity through Lor traditional attire

7 >



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8 >

Economic interdependence could help protect Iran's territorial sovereignty

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE



Iran and the United Arab Emirates have long been locked in a dispute over the three Persian Gulf islands, Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb. While Tehran insists the issue is not even open to discussion, the UAE has sought to build up international backing for its claim, at least from the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Iran, in response, has taken more assertive steps in recent years to underline its sovereignty, including designating an official “National Day

of the Three Islands,” initiating development and settlement projects, and maintaining a formal presence as well as holding military drills. But in its latest communiqué, the GCC adopted markedly harsher language, condemned Iran's actions, and threatened to pursue the case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). According to regional-affairs analyst Javad Heyran-nia, preventing this trajectory requires Iran not only to continue de-escalation with neighboring states but also to build broader shared economic interests with other countries, raising the political cost of siding with the UAE.

IRAN DAILY: Given the GCC's latest statement, which employs a stronger tone than its previous communiqués on the three islands, what legal and diplomatic mechanisms can the UAE utilize at the international level to

advance its claims?

HEYRAN-NIA: Since the formation of the UAE, Abu Dhabi has consistently attempted to internationalize the islands dispute and bring on board other states, institutions and international organizations. One of these bodies has been the GCC, which ever since its creation in 1981, has routinely addressed the dispute in its annual or emergency meetings, emphasizing the UAE's sovereignty claim. In the most recent 46th GCC summit, the language and substance of the statement stood out compared with previous years. Beyond recognizing the UAE's claim over the islands, the communiqué also addressed territorial waters, airspace, the continental shelf, and the exclusive economic zone surrounding the islands, asserting these as integral parts of UAE territory. The statement demonstrates the new

domains into which the GCC has ventured and the extent to which it has linked support for the islands issue to its collective-security framework. If the UAE seeks to take the dispute to the ICJ on its own, it will be unable to do so because the tribunal operates on the principle of mutual consent. And Iran, which does not consider the matter disputable in the first place, would not refer the case to an international court. Thus, direct access to the ICJ is not an option for the UAE. However, the General Assembly or the UN Security Council can request an advisory opinion from the ICJ. In such a scenario, the matter would be referred by either body for a non-binding advisory ruling. Even though advisory opinions do not carry compulsory legal force, the mere referral of the case to the court, regardless of the ICJ's eventual opinion, could be damaging to Iran politically and legally, as it

would cast doubt over the issue under international law.

Given existing historical documents, legal records, and judicial precedents, how do you assess the UAE's prospects of success in pursuing its claims in international bodies?

Considering the UAE's current capacity to build international consensus, and in light of its earlier joint statements with Arab and Islamic states, whether through the GCC, the Arab League, or Western actors such as the European Union, as well as bilateral communiqués with China and Russia, if the matter reaches the UN, the UAE would likely obtain an advisory opinion from the ICJ in its favor. Although such an opinion would not be binding, it could nonetheless influence customary law, shape international legal norms, and function as a judicial precedent.

Page 2 >