

Tehran, Beijing mull expansion of cultural ties in high-level arts meeting

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian disembarks from a plane as he arrives in Astana, Kazakhstan on a state visit to the Central Asian nation on December 10, 2025.
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Tehran and Baku; a neighborhood shaped by history, a partnership toward future



By Abbas Araghchi
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OPINION

The relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan goes beyond mere geographical proximity. It represents a profound narrative of historical, cultural, and civilizational kinship rooted in the longstanding and unbreakable bonds between the peoples on both sides of the Aras River. These deep ties are so intricately woven into the fabric of our societies that imagining the history, literature, art, religion, and identity of one without the other is difficult. In this narrative, the political borders drawn on maps are just lines, while hearts and shared heritage have beat in unison for centuries.

A glance at contemporary history reveals that the Islamic Republic of Iran has, at every critical juncture, been a reliable partner and steadfast supporter for its brothers north of the Aras. When the breeze of independence began to blow, Iran was among the very first

countries to recognize the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and by promptly upgrading its consulate to an embassy, it sent a clear message to the world of its all-out support. This support continued in the early years of consolidating Azerbaijan's national sovereignty through significant assistance, and even during the long period of the Karabakh conflict, Tehran's principled policy consistently rested on respect for territorial integrity and the return of occupied territories.

Perhaps the passage of time has blurred some truths, but historical documents testify that the "Tehran Declaration" of May 1992 was the first international document in which Armenia explicitly recognized the territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan—a document that underscores Iran's pivotal and benevolent role during that critical period. Our firm support in the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has also consistently affirmed this principled policy.

Today, this relationship—bolstered by its historical foundation—has expanded in multiple dimensions of economic

and transit, political and security, and cultural and social. This combination of historical interconnectedness, concrete support, and multifaceted cooperation has elevated Iran-Azerbaijan relations far beyond simple neighborhood ties, opening bright horizons for sustainable, long-term cooperation in line with the shared interests of the two nations.

In the realm of connectivity and geopolitics, Iran's role as a reliable and vital partner is indisputable. Over the past 34 years, based on its neighborly and humanitarian responsibility, Iran has provided the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan with access to other regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan through its territory. Throughout these years, even at the height of external pressures or political fluctuations, Iran never allowed the connection between Nakhchivan and mainland Azerbaijan to be severed.

Today, to further facilitate and improve this access, the "Aras Corridor Project" is being pursued with determination. This strategic project is not only a transit route but also a symbol of the two countries' resolve to diversify com-

munication pathways. Currently, four other border crossings between the two countries operate round the clock, serving as vital arteries for trade and passenger movement. But the encouraging news is that with the imminent completion and commissioning of the "Kalaleh-Aghband" bridge, the fifth border crossing between the two countries will begin operation. This new crossing will create fresh opportunities for economic cooperation and complete the regional connectivity puzzle.

Iran-Azerbaijan relations are multifaceted, and one of their most important dimensions is cooperation in energy and water resources. The Aras River, which was once a symbol of separation in the literature of the two countries, has now become a symbol of connection and cooperation. Numerous joint border projects including dams and power plants are underway. The construction and operation of several hydroelectric power plants are on the agenda of both countries. Some are already active, and work on others is progressing rapidly. In addition, the interconnection of electricity grids and gas

pipelines between the two countries ensures regional energy security. We are planning for electricity exchange and for a trilateral grid connection with Russia, which would transform the Caucasus into an energy hub. In the gas sector as well, gas-swap agreements to supply Nakhchivan are being implemented, reflecting the depth of mutual trust.

In the political sphere, consultations between senior officials of the two countries are ongoing. Although bilateral relations have experienced ups and downs in recent years—a natural occurrence between neighbors—the overall trajectory has been positive, with the clear resolve of both countries' top officials to overcome misunderstandings and expand these relations comprehensively. Reciprocal delegations and recent meetings, especially the two visits of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian to the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the agreement to continue presidential meetings in the near future, affirm the determination of both Tehran and Baku to enhance relations.

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