

Iran's rich history, diversity contribute to documentary cinema: Minister

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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) shakes hands with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov before a meeting in Moscow, Russia, on December 17, 2025. IRNA



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## Russia serves as viable partner, opportunity for Iran



By Mahmoud Reza Sajjadi  
Former Iranian ambassador to Russia

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi paid a high-level visit to Moscow where he met with his Russian counterpart and other senior Russian officials on Wednesday. The trip is one of several visits by officials of the two countries this year, alongside bilateral meetings held on the sidelines of international events.

Given that Iran has long been the target of Western propaganda and that Western media campaigns against Russia have been particularly intense, such exchanges of officials can contribute to a clearer and more balanced understanding between the two nations. During the 50-year Pahlavi era (1925-1979), many Iranian students studied

in the West and later returned home, a process that helped foster an atmosphere of Western orientation within the country. Today, sustained interaction with Russia can help alter and rebalance those conditions, while also enabling the two countries to cooperate in shared crises.

Nevertheless, the most significant challenges facing Iran-Russia relations are rooted in the residual influence of this Western-oriented mindset in Iran. Many actors remain trapped in history and base current policies on the past. France, as an instance, was occupied by Germany during World War II and suffered heavy casualties, yet today the two countries cooperate within a single union and safeguard each other's interests. In Iran, however, the dominance of Western-oriented thinking has been so strong that it has rendered any engagement or agreement with Russia ineffective. The principal obstacle to political agreements between Tehran

and Moscow is precisely this mindset. One factor drawing Iran and Russia closer together is Iran's nuclear issue and Western pressure aimed at restricting or dismantling it. Iran unquestionably views its nuclear program as a legitimate right, and Russia shares this perspective. Moscow maintains that Iran should not be subjected to undue pressure or prevented from advancing its nuclear capabilities. This convergence places both countries side by side in opposition to what are described as the West's hegemonic approaches.

In the early days following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia harbored considerable goodwill toward the West, and Iran's groans about Western aggression and excessive demands were not widely believed. However, subsequent developments, including the Ukraine war and Western positions surrounding it, led Russians to conclude that the West is a wild entity

that considers itself civilized. This realization has further narrowed the gap between Tehran and Moscow and encouraged joint efforts to work out suitable economic solutions and expand shared activities. At present, cooperation between the two countries stands at a relatively solid level, partly because the true face of the West has become clearer to Russia.

Beyond state-to-state relations, the Russian people are religious and peace-loving, and regardless of governmental issues, they are capable of maintaining friendly ties with Iran. It is the West that consistently gets in the way. For instance, since the British occupation of India, London sought to sow discord between Iranians and Russians, fueling wars between them to sap their strength and divert attention from India and the East India Company. Similarly, during World War II, conflict between Russia and Germany was stirred up in a way that

ultimately served Western objectives. Iran, therefore, must remain vigilant. History shows that Western powers are duplicitous, and their concern for religious and humanitarian values extends little beyond rhetoric.

Russia, as a suitable country for cooperation, is a significant and noteworthy partner, and Iran should not miss out on this opportunity. Tehran should strive to maintain its independence while at the same time cultivating friendship with Moscow.

Regarding military cooperation in the context of tensions involving Israel, the issue is complex due to the presence of around 1.5 million Russian-speaking Jews in Israel. Moreover, the financial power and influence of the Jewish lobby in Russia are considerable, even though the Russian public harbors deep resentment toward Zionists. Despite these constraints, Russia's political posture continues to signal support for Iran against aggression.



# No message sent to US on resumption of nuclear talks: *Tehran*

## Iran, Russia FMs sign cooperation document

### International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday dismissed some speculation about resumption of nuclear negotiations between Tehran and Washington, saying that, "No message has been sent to the American side from Iran."

Iran and the United States were in the middle of negotiations to resolve a decades-long dispute over Iran's nuclear program when Israel launched an unprovoked aggression against Iran in June.

The US also joined the attacks and carried out strikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities.

The attacks derailed the negotiations which had been started in April. Speaking during a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow, Araghchi said, "We did not leave the negotiation table; rather, it was the Americans who betrayed diplomacy in the



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (4th R) and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov (4th L) hold a meeting in Moscow, Russia, on December 17, 2025.  
● IRNA

middle of the negotiations by launching military aggression against Iran."

"If the Americans correct their approach and are ready to negotiate on equal footing and mutual respect and based on mutual interests, we will consider it (resumption of talks) again."

However, he said that based on the experience Iran has gained over the past year, what they (Americans) mean by negotiation is dictating their positions.

### Negotiations with Europe

He also referred to the possibility of any talks with the European parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement – Germany, France and the UK, saying that the European powers have no



longer any capacity for negotiation due to their illegal activation of the snapback mechanism under the 2015 nuclear agreement.

"They have practically lost their last tool and capacity for negotiations; therefore, Iran sees no

reason to enter into dialogue again with these three countries," the Iranian foreign minister told reporters.

### Russia's support for Iran

Citing Russia's support for Iran's right to uranium enrichment, its

positive role in the 2015 nuclear talks and Moscow's "constructive and decisive" position at the UN Security Council regarding Europeans' anti-Iran moves as well as US-Israel strikes on Iran, Araghchi said that the Islamic Republic appreciates Russia for

its supportive stances, stressing that, "We trust Russia and its goodwill" toward Iran.

### Cooperation roadmap

The Iranian foreign minister also announced the signing of a cooperation document between the two countries' foreign ministries. He said the strategic partnership between Iran and Russia has entered "a new, accelerated phase" following the signing of a three-year cooperation roadmap with his Russian counterpart.

Araghchi confirmed that the newly signed document establishes the agenda for the two foreign ministries from 2026 to 2028, acting as a "roadmap for future three-year cooperation."

Russia's foreign minister, for his part, said, "Without any doubt, the main and key document in our relations is the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was signed this year and has entered into force."

The comprehensive strategic partnership treaty, signed in January by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart, Masoud Pezeshkian, and ratified by both countries' parliaments, commits Moscow and Tehran to closer cooperation across political, economic, security and technological fields.

## Venezuela's president hails Iran as model in fight for int'l rule of law

### International Desk

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro praised Iran as a global example in defending international law, appreciating the Islamic Republic's unwavering support for Caracas amid escalating threats from the United States. Speaking during his weekly television program "With Maduro," the Venezuelan president expressed appreciation for Iran's steadfast stance and principled positions on the global stage.

He offered details of a recent phone conversation with President Masoud Pezeshkian, saying he was informed of Iran's full support for Venezuela's sovereignty and stability. Maduro said President Pezeshkian conveyed the "comprehensive and unequivocal support" of the Leader of the Islamic Rev-



Nicolas Maduro  
● AFP

olution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the government, and the Iranian people for Venezuela.

### 'Comprehensive support'

"When I say comprehensive support, I mean total and unconditional," Maduro said, adding that the support is directed toward Venezuela's fight for peace, sovereignty, dignity, and stability, "not only for today or tomorrow,

but forever."

Highlighting Iran's role in international affairs, Maduro described Iran as "a shining example in the struggle to establish international rule of law". The US government has escalated pressure on Venezuela through a military buildup in the Caribbean, accusing it of pursuing an anti-drug trafficking mission without offering evidence. The US has also carried

out at least 21 strikes on alleged drug vessels in the Caribbean and Pacific since September, killing more than 80 people.

### 'Warmongering threats'

US President Donald Trump has also ordered "a total and complete" blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela – a move that Caracas has denounced as "warmongering threats". Trump wrote that Maduro's government had been designated a foreign terrorist organization (FTO), which had also engaged in "Drug Smuggling, and Human Trafficking". His remarks come after the US seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela last week – a move that was seen as significant given Venezuela's reliance on oil.

## Iran summons Cyprus envoy over remarks on trio islands

Iran summoned the Cypriot ambassador to Tehran to express strong protest to the country's recent meddlesome remarks regarding Iran's territorial integrity, particularly about the three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf.

Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Cyprus ambassador to Tehran, Petros Nacouzis, on Tuesday after a joint statement issued by officials from Cyprus and the UAE included claims regarding Iran's Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb, Press TV reported. Mohammad Alibek, Assistant Foreign Minister and Director General for the Persian Gulf at Iran's Foreign Ministry, handed over a formal written protest to Nacouzis, conveying the Iranian government's strong objections to the provocative statement.

Alibek reminded the Cypriot ambassador that the three islands in question are inseparable parts of Iranian territory, emphasizing the Islamic Republic's undisputed and long-standing sovereignty over these islands. He stressed that Iran's historical and effective control over the islands is beyond question.

Alibek also reiterated Iran's firm stance in condemning any territorial claims against its sovereignty, stressing that such actions violate the fundamental principle of respecting national sovereignty and territorial in-



Iran's Foreign Ministry  
● IRNA

tegrity of states.

During the meeting, he further reminded the Cypriot envoy of Iran's longstanding policy of non-interference in the sovereign affairs and territorial integrity of other nations, including Cyprus.

Alibek called for swift action by Cyprus to rectify the false stance and avoid repeating such mistakes in the future.

The three Persian Gulf islands have been part of Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world. However, the United Arab Emirates has repeatedly laid claim to the islands. The islands fell under British control in 1921, but on November 30, 1971, a day after British forces left the region and just two days before the UAE was to become an official federation, Iran's sovereignty over the islands was restored.

## Iran envoy, Lebanon's speaker hold talks on bilateral ties, regional issues

### International Desk

Iran's ambassador to Lebanon and the Arab country's Parliament speaker discussed a range of issues during a meeting on Wednesday, amid western-fueled tensions over the disarmament of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah.

According to IRNA, Iranian Ambassador Mojtaba Amani and Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri reviewed the latest political developments in Lebanon and the region, bilateral relations, and Israel's repeated violations of a ceasefire between Tel Aviv and Hezbollah.



Nabih Berri

Mojtaba Amani

After the meeting, Amani said that the meeting was held within the framework of his ongoing consultations with Lebanese officials.

The Iranian ambassador emphasized Iran's support for Lebanon's independence and its commitment to preserv-

ing the country's unity and territorial integrity.

Amani added that the meeting also addressed prospects for Iran's participation in Lebanon's reconstruction process and support for the Lebanese people. He further said the two sides discussed the resumption of direct flights between Iran and Lebanon via Iranian or Lebanese airlines, a move that could facilitate travel for tourists, students, and businesspeople between the two countries.

Foreign-instigated tensions between Tehran and Beirut have increased in recent months over Lebanon's decision to disarm Hezbollah under pressure from Israel and the United States. Hezbollah has long been defending Lebanese soil against Israel's frequent acts of aggression.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

### CARTOON





# Pezeshkian: Gov't prioritizing rail corridors, electric public transport



Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the government's top transport priority is expanding public fleets — especially trains and buses — and completing national rail corridors, while steering public transport toward electrification to slash pollution and long-term costs. Speaking in Tehran on Tuesday at a specialized meeting reviewing the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development's actions on suburban and regional rail development around the capital, Pezeshkian outlined requirements for managing rail transport projects, according to president.ir. "The government's strategy is to move public transport toward electrification as much as possible, because this approach will reduce air pollution, improve energy efficiency and lower long-term costs," Pezeshkian added. He said universities and research centers play a key role in rail development, adding that leveraging the scientific capacity of universities and national elites is essential so that the rail network can

be designed, implemented and operated in a principled, scientific manner based on precise studies. The meeting assessed progress on presidential directives and examined the latest status of Iran's rail fleet, particularly across Tehran and surrounding cities. Officials presented updates including the relaunch of halted rail-buses, implementation of a national management structure for the suburban trains development headquarters, preparation of a draft strategic document for Tehran's suburban rail development, and reviews of financing plans for related projects. At the meeting, Pezeshkian said he had received "the progress report on the Tehran Province suburban train projects in person today," adding, "It is planned that within three years, with secured funding, passenger capacity will rise from 6.9 million to 160 million trips." According to Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd, there is a shortfall of 6,000 intercity buses, and two key measures have been taken to address the gap,

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) chairs a specialized meeting reviewing the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development's actions on suburban and regional rail development around Tehran on December 16, 2025. [president.ir](#)

with results expected by the end of next year. According to Sadeq Malvajerd, beyond infrastructure and the completion of rail corridors — which have been emphasized at the highest levels — locomotive shortages and a sharp decline in availability have been among the most serious challenges in recent years, with the number of operable locomotives falling below 50% last year, an unprecedented level in the railway's history. Under Iran's Seventh Development Plan, 30% of the country's freight must be transported by rail, with at least 40 million tons moved via rail transit by the end of the plan (2028). Parliamentary Civil Commission Chairman Mohammad Reza Rezaei Kouchi has said, "This shows that any level of investment in this sector will be in line with the law and the interests of the people."

## Iran strikes preliminary extra-terrestrial farming deals on 1.7m hectares, minister says

Economy Desk

Iran's Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah said on Wednesday that the ministry has reached preliminary agreements for extra-terrestrial farming on about 1.7 million hectares of land in Russia, Kenya and Tanzania. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran, Nouri Qezeljah said, "In extra-terrestrial cultivation, preliminary agreements have been reached for about 200,000 hectares in Russia, 500,000 hectares in Kenya and 1 million hectares in Tanzania," IRNA reported. He added that the executive guideline for overseas agriculture has been uploaded to the government portal, a move aimed at facilitating the implementation of the



policy. Iran has introduced major plans to boost its agricultural output in recent years as it strives to keep pace with rising food demand. The country has a population of more than 86 million people and a rising demand for food. According to an official in the ministry, Iran has set a target to expand its overseas farming to two million hectares by 2029. In November, Reza Fo-

touhi, who leads overseas farming projects in the ministry, said that lands used for corn farming in Brazil by Iranian companies had reached 50,000 hectares, adding that the country is also engaged in overseas farming of barley, oil seeds, and soybean in Kazakhstan and also in smaller projects in Belarus and Russia. He said private Iranian companies have also launched extra-terrestrial farming projects in

Ghana, Armenia, and Pakistan.

### Performance in fisheries sector

On the ministry's performance in the fisheries sector, an assessment of achievements aligned with the development of the maritime-based economy showed strong growth, Nouri Qezeljah said. "We have seen about 30% growth in fisheries and fishing — from shrimp farming to distant-water fishing and aquaculture — which shows the high capacity in this field," he said. "In this regard, investments are being directed toward infrastructure so that we can make maximum use of this God-given potential and the opportunities available in our land and surrounding waters," he added.

## Japan eyes post-sanctions investment in Iran's energy sector: Envoy

By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

### INTERVIEW

Japan is interested in investing in Iran's oil, gas and petrochemical sectors and in partnering on the construction and rehabilitation of the country's energy infrastructure, the Japanese ambassador to Tehran said, stressing, however, that any such engagement depends on the removal of international sanctions against the Islamic Republic. In an interview with Iran Daily, Tamaki Tsukada said Japan is particularly focused on investment and joint participation in Iran's petrochemical sector and refinery construction, adding that Japanese companies had cooperated with Iran in such fields for many years before sanctions were imposed. "Japan had long-standing cooperation with Iran in these areas prior to the sanctions, and joint investment in oil, gas and petrochemicals is of great importance to us," Tsukada said, adding that anti-Iran sanctions have placed severe constraints on economic relations. The Islamic Republic has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear activities. Beyond affecting the oil and energy sectors, the embargoes have imposed costs even on humanitarian areas, including access to medicines. He said the restrictions are not limited to Japan-Iran ties, but affect all countries seeking economic engagement with Iran due to the sanctions. "We hope Iran can resolve its nuclear issue as soon as possible and normalize relations with other countries, so that sanctions and economic restrictions can be lifted," he said. "Once sanctions are removed, we will be able to expand our relations further." On Japan's potential role in maintaining dialogue and reducing tensions between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Tsukada referred to Japan's experience following the Fukushima nuclear disaster about 14 years ago, when an earthquake and tsunami led to reactor failures and radioactive leaks. After the incident, Japan strengthened its relations with the agency, he said. "Japan can use its good relations with the IAEA, and whenever Iran's cooperation with the agency resumes, we can help



Tamaki Tsukada  
IRAN DAILY

strengthen that cooperation and play an important bridging role between Iran and the IAEA," he added. The Board of Governors of the IAEA in November adopted an anti-Iranian resolution, drafted by the European Troika — France, Germany and the UK — and the United States that urges Tehran to "without delay" report on its enriched uranium stockpile and facilities damaged in the June aggression by Israel and the US, while omitting any mention of Iran's longstanding cooperation with the agency. Tsukada also highlighted shared priorities between the two countries in sports, science and technology, saying both nations place great importance on these fields and strive to achieve significant accomplishments. He said Japan-Iran relations have consistently been based on mutual respect and deep cultural and historical ties, with the two nations having a strong understanding of each other due to their long-standing relationship. Despite their geographical distance — with Japan located at the easternmost edge of Asia and Iran in one of its westernmost regions — Tsukada said history has linked the two countries for centuries, including through the ancient Silk Road. "As a result, relations between Iran and Japan date back around 1,500 years," he said.

## NGL 3100 plant starts feeding processed flare gas into national grid

Economy Desk

An associated petroleum gas (APG) processing plant in western Iran pumped treated gas into the national trunkline for the first time, as cold weather pushed up energy demand in the country. The NGL 3100 plant in Ilam Province near the Iraqi border launched its first phase in August to capture APG from local oil fields and put an end to the wasteful practice of flaring. APG is a by-product of oil and gas production that is routinely burned off due to shortcomings in infrastructure and technical capability. Peyman Imani, chief executive of the state-owned Iranian Central Oil Fields Company, which runs the facility, said the launch of the full gas processing cycle had enabled methane to be injected into the national pipeline network, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday. "Currently, the methane gas produced at this refinery, with a daily capacity of 70 million cubic feet (about 2 million cubic meters) per day, is entering the national



grid," Imani said. The NGL 3100 project includes a gas refining plant and a natural gas liquids processing unit, nine pipelines for feedstock and product transfer, and associated infrastructure. The facility is designed to capture up to 6.8 mcm per day of APG from five oil fields in southern Ilam province, including Cheshmeh-Khosh, West Paydar, East Paydar, Dehloran and Azar. Its main outputs are lean gas, or methane, and natural gas liquids such as C-plus, including C2-plus components such as ethane and heavier hydrocarbons, helping Iran cut back flaring and bring onstream additional gas supplies.



# UAE will not sacrifice own security for adventurism

## Necessity of establishing equilibrium in Iran's foreign policy



By Kourosh Ahmadi  
Former Iranian  
diplomat to  
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### OPINION

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) began advancing claims regarding three of Iran's islands predominantly from 1992. The antecedents of these claims revert to Britain's claims from 1903 onward. In that year, Britain requested, from the two sheikhs of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah, that they install their flags on the islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb, and assert ownership thereof. Declassified British documents demonstrate that Colonel Kemball, who was the British resident representative in the Persian Gulf, after obtaining instructions from London, traveled by ship to these two sheikhdoms and transported the two sheikhs, with flags designed by Britain, to the islands and installed them there. This occurred while Britain, in numerous documents and several official maps of the British government, had acknowledged Iran's sovereignty over these islands. Among these, in a map prepared by the British War Office, which was presented by the British Minister Plenipotentiary, with an official note, as a gift from the British Queen to Naser al-Din Shah in 1888, and which exists in the Iranian archives, the three islands were colored as part of Iranian territory. Less than one year later, in April 1904, Iranian agents removed these unidentified flags and re-installed the Iranian flag. Britain, since it held the Arab sheikhs under its protection pursuant to the 1892 treaty, intended to gain control of these islands for itself, through claiming their affiliation with these sheikhs, and to utilize them for the deployment of forces and naval patrols. A similar claim was advanced by Britain, regarding most other Iranian islands as well, and naturally, it led nowhere. Britain, at the Security Council session on December 9, 1971, renounced this claim and, despite the insistence of the Iraqi representative, declined to raise it again. For a 20-year period after the restoration of Iran's sovereignty over these islands on November 30, 1971, the UAE advanced no claim over them. With the establishment of the United States in the Persian Gulf, after the Kuwait War, the UAE resumed raising these claims and



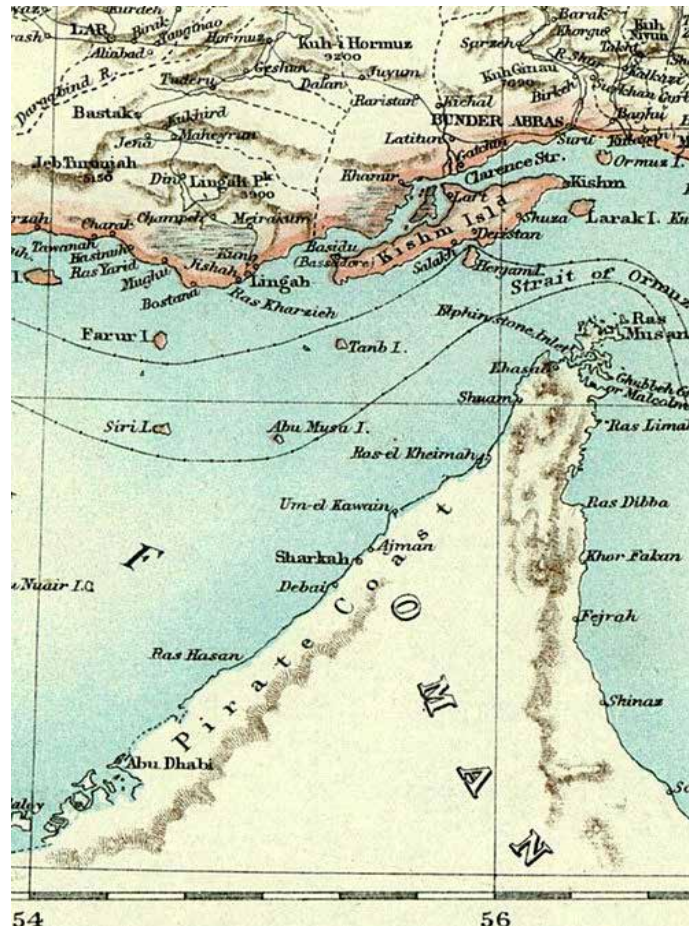
People walk and drive past a billboard covering the facade of a building on Vali-Asr square, depicting as postage stamps the Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb islands, in Tehran on October 26, 2024.  
● ATTA KENARE/AFP

has continued doing so, almost annually. Of course, during the two or three years after 1997, and the improvement of relations between Iran and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, the raising of these claims was either suspended or presented in a highly diluted and cursory manner, and therefore, the Emirati claim is absolutely and entirely devoid of any foundation. Naturally, whatever Iran does or does not do, within its own territory, concerns only itself, and foreign countries possess no right to interfere in Iran's internal affairs. No country, absolutely ever, conducts any negotiation concerning a part of its own territory with any foreign country. Essentially, no such custom or precedent exists in international relations. Of course, because on November 30, 1971 — the eve of Britain's withdrawal from the Persian Gulf and the restoration of Iran's sovereignty over the three Iranian islands — a memorandum of understanding was agreed upon between Iran and the Ruler of Sharjah, and it was agreed, among other things, that Emirati residents of Abu Musa could, if they so wished, continue residing on that island, Iran, during a certain period, declared readiness to engage in dialogue, regarding matters related to the residence of these Emirati nationals, and in general matters pertaining to the memorandum of understanding, with the authorities of Sharjah or the UAE. In light of the hostile conduct of Emirati officials regarding these three islands, I do not know

whether that declaration of readiness, by Iranian officials, still remains in force or not. Of course, I do know that Iran fulfills its responsibilities toward Emirati nationals residing on Abu Musa. In relation to the Emirati claims of taking the case to international courts, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) possesses jurisdiction to adjudicate. However, pursuant to the Statute of the ICJ, states may request adjudication by the Court only with the consent of both parties to a dispute. Despite Iran's entirely full hand in terms of documentary evidence proving historical legitimacy, it is self-evident that Iran will never cede a part of its territory to the judgment of a supranational body, and should not do so. On the other hand, insofar as territorial, land, and boundary matters are concerned, Iran has not accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court. In theory, the only possible avenue that the UAE may have is to request the United Nations Security Council that within the framework of paragraph 3 of Article 36 of the United Nations Charter, it "recommend" to the parties to recourse to the International Court of Justice. Following the complaint of four Arab countries (Iraq, Libya, South Yemen, and Algeria), on December 3, 1971, in connection with the restoration of Iran's sovereignty over the three islands, to the Security Council, and after the holding of one session on December 9, the matter was left in abeyance. This issue remains on the agenda of the Security Council. Even if the Council was willing to consider such a complaint, and even if it was to issue a decision recommending to the two parties recourse to the Court, or examination of the possibility of recourse to the Court, such a decision would fall within Chapter VI of the Charter and would be recommendatory in nature, and Iran would naturally have no obligation to accept it. The issuance of a recommendation, even to this limited extent, is highly improbable because the record of the Security Council demonstrates that such action has rarely been undertaken by this body. The only cases include the Corfu Channel case between Britain and Albania in 1947, and a dispute between Britain and France over two islands in 1951. It is highly improbable that the UAE would wish to sacrifice its

security and its economic prosperity to such adventurism. Of course, unfortunately, in view of the perception that has formed, at the international level, regarding Iran's weakness, Emirati officials may also have fallen into delusion that — under conditions in which Iran's relations with the West and the United States are severely strained, it is exposed to threats from Israel, and China and Russia have also supported the Emirati position regarding the three islands — it might be able to benefit from the silence of some of these powers and from the intelligence, logistical, and advisory support of some others. In any case, a threat against national security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity is the greatest threat that can confront a country, and even if it amounts to only 1%, it must not be ignored or treated with complacent simplicity. Nevertheless, some countries have supported the statements and claims of the UAE. Unfortunately, the roots of this support revert to the problems of our foreign policy and have no connection whatsoever with the nature and weight of the baseless claims of the UAE. The entirely anomalous and imprudent support of the European Union for the UAE in October 2024 and October 2025, and its exceedingly harsh and abnormal tone, before having any connection with the positions of the UAE, stems from the severe deterioration of relations between Iran and Europe in connection with Russia's attack on Ukraine. The support of China and Russia for the Emirati position, which occurred respectively in December 2022 and July 2023, and was repeated within a one-year interval, also unfortunately has its roots in the imbalance in our foreign policy. Essentially, countries do not intervene in territorial disputes between two states. The problem is that China and Russia regard their goals on Iran as already achieved and believe that, in relation to Iran, they do not face competition from their Western rivals, and that, regardless of how they behave, there will be no danger of Iran inclining toward their Western rivals. As a result, they prioritize courting other countries in the region and balancing with Westerners in those countries. These supports are certainly detrimental to Iran and can further encourage the UAE to continue along its erroneous path. The only way for Iran to silence the UAE is to establish equilibrium in its own foreign policy. In the event that equilibrium is established in Iran's foreign policy, both at the international level and at the regional level, the UAE will rapidly lose its supporters and will fall silent. Our problem with the UAE is not a legal problem, but rather a problem that arises from our foreign policy. So long as this particular type of foreign policy that we have continues, the audacity of the UAE will persist and will increase in magnitude.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



A map by George Curzon dated 1891 shows the Islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb, and the Lesser Tunb colored in the same color as Iran (orange), not in the color of the sheikhdom of the yet-to-exist United Arab Emirates (white).  
● ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY



The photo depicts Abu Musa, one of Iran's Persian Gulf islands sitting at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from a plane.  
● ICANA

Declassified British documents demonstrate that Colonel Kemball, who was the British resident representative in the Persian Gulf, after obtaining instructions from London, traveled by ship to the two sheikhdoms of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah in 1903 and transported the two sheikhs, with flags designed by Britain, to the Iranian islands and installed them there. Britain, since it held the Arab sheikhs under its protection pursuant to the 1892 treaty, intended to gain control of these islands for itself, through claiming their affiliation with these sheikhs, and to utilize them for the deployment of forces and naval patrols.



# UAE at a strategic crossroads

## As US shifts its focus, China expands its influence in Abu Dhabi

  
By Alice Johnson  
Policy analyst

**OPINION**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has long projected an image of confidence that an emerging power with global ambitions, technological sophistication, and increasing diplomatic reach has. But beneath that polished exterior lies a more complex reality: a state whose influence has grown rapidly, often through interventions that left deep human and political scars, and whose security remains tied to a superpower that has repeatedly shown uncertainty in its long-term commitments.

Today, Abu Dhabi stands at a crossroads. It has accumulated leverage across multiple regions, yet also vulnerabilities that are far more pronounced than official narratives suggest. Its partnership with Washington is significant but no longer straightforward, shaped by competing global powers and by an American foreign-policy establishment that often oscillates between engagement and fatigue. Understanding the UAE's position requires acknowledging both sides of its identity: a forceful regional actor and a deeply dependent one.

### A rising power with a costly footprint

Much of the UAE's influence has been built through assertive military and political interventions. In Yemen, its role extended well beyond coalition participation. Emirati-backed forces shaped local power structures in ways that contributed to fragmentation, while the conflict itself produced one of the worst humanitarian crises of the century. In Libya, its support for armed groups escalated the violence and prolonged the civil war. In the Horn of Africa, from Eritrea to Somalia, its activities ranged from training local forces to establishing bases and supporting factions aligned with its broader strategic goals. A pattern that continues today through its deepening engagement with Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF), whose power struggles have further destabilized the region. These interventions were not bloodless experiments in statecraft. They left behind shattered communities, displaced populations, and political landscapes that remain unstable today. While the UAE gained influence, it also gained responsibility for outcomes that continue to shape regional instability. This is the part of the UAE's rise that rarely features in celebratory narratives of innovation and modernization.

### Illusion, limits of autonomy

Despite its global visibility and assertiveness, the UAE's autonomy is often overstated. The country remains structurally dependent on the United States in several key ways that are difficult to replace. First, American troops and assets continue to operate from Emirati territory, ensuring a significant US military presence. Second, the UAE's advanced



● GHELEYNE BASTIAEN/MO\*

air-defense and intelligence systems are heavily reliant on US support, creating a deep security dependency. Third, Western financial and regulatory frameworks play a crucial role in shaping the UAE's economic stability, further entrenching its ties to the US system. Fourth, arms transfers, maintenance, training, and interoperability all tie Abu Dhabi to Washington's security orbit, further cementing this dependence. In conclusion, while the UAE has sought to diversify its international partnerships, it cannot easily pivot away from the United States. Its growing relationship with China — particularly in technology, AI, ports, energy optimization, and data systems — does not diminish the centrality of American influence in its strategic calculations. Abu Dhabi has expanded its options, but these alternatives should not be confused with true independence.

### Washington's uneasy view of Emirati ambition

The United States has always valued the UAE as a financially capable, diplomatically agile, and strategically located partner. But the relationship has never been anchored in unconditional trust. As the UAE deepens cooperation with China, American policymakers have grown increasingly uneasy. Concerns in Washington focus on: dual-use port facilities, AI systems linked to critical infrastructure, energy-sector technologies with strategic implications, data-storage ecosystems, and surveillance capabilities that intersect with Chinese companies. These concerns are not driven purely by technology; they reflect Washington's broader anxiety about losing influence in regions once considered secure. The UAE's diversified diplomacy clashes with Washington's old expectation that Persian Gulf allies align closely and predictably with US priorities.

### A partner that contributes to instability as much as it manages it

While Washington's unpredictability creates real risks for the UAE, it is also true that the UAE's own actions have shaped its current vulnerabilities. Its interventions abroad have generated controversy across think tanks,

rights organizations, and even among policymakers within the United States. Quiet skepticism toward Abu Dhabi has grown in Washington circles not because of its autonomy, but because of its increasingly militarized approach to regional politics. This skepticism matters. It reduces Washington's willingness to incur political or diplomatic costs on behalf of the UAE if tensions escalate. The UAE finds itself in a paradoxical position: It wants recognition as a decisive actor, yet its decisiveness has produced outcomes that weaken sympathy where it matters most.

### A superpower that rewrites its commitments

American foreign policy has shown over decades that alliances are not fixed; they are periodically recalibrated according to shifting priorities. The United States has reduced or withdrawn support from allies across continents, often abruptly: South Vietnam, the Shah's Iran, Kurdish partners, Afghanistan, and, more recently, Ukraine. These cases differ in context but share a core lesson: US support lasts only as long as it aligns with national interest and political mood. The UAE is not likely to be abandoned overnight, but the idea of an unshakeable partnership is increasingly outdated. Subtle changes are already visible: stricter export controls on sensitive technologies, growing congressional scrutiny, broader debates about China's role in the Persian Gulf, and quieter diplomatic signaling about limits. None of these amounts to a rupture. It is a recalibration, a change in tone rather than structure. But tone matters. It shapes future decisions, opens the door to new constraints, and narrows the policy space available to both sides.

### A small state with big ambitions, real vulnerabilities

The UAE's strengths are clear: financial power, robust infrastructure, advanced technology initiatives, and a growing diplomatic corps. However, its vulnerabilities are equally significant: a small national population, reliance on global labor markets, proximity to volatile shipping lanes, exposure to fluctuations in energy markets, and dependence on US military infrastructure.

These vulnerabilities constrain the UAE's freedom to maneuver even if its rhetoric suggests otherwise. The country's political and economic ecosystem is built on stability, and stability relies on predictability. Washington no longer offers the predictability it once did.

### A relationship entering a new phase

The historical record of US foreign policy reveals a pattern that many prefer not to confront: Washington's commitments to its partners often shift when strategic pressures rise or global dynamics change. Loyalty, in the American lexicon of statecraft, has rarely been unconditional. It has been adjustable, sometimes abruptly, whenever broader geopolitical priorities demand recalibration. This is not an anomaly in US behavior; it is one of its defining consistencies. Against this backdrop, the UAE now finds itself positioned between two powers whose rivalry is reshaping the international system. Its expanding cooperation with China across technology, energy, logistics, and data ecosystems may reach a threshold that Washington no longer finds tolerable. The United States has demonstrated, repeatedly and across multiple regions, that it reacts decisively when competitors gain influence within the orbit of its longstanding partners. At the same time, the emerging global landscape is far from stable. The world is edging toward a deeper, more rigid strategic divide, and if competition between the United States and Chi-

na intensifies, countries caught between these poles will face escalating pressure to choose sides. Such choices have historically carried consequences for states whose position was less about ideological alignment and more about pragmatic survival. Given Washington's long-standing tendency to reassess partnerships when the costs rise or the strategic environment shifts, there is no guarantee that the UAE's current position will remain sustainable. The foundation of this relationship is more volatile than it appears. It is shaped not only by shared interests but also by American calculations that can change without warning. The path ahead does not point to equilibrium. It points to uncertainty. As rivalries sharpen and expectations harden, even small shifts in the global balance could expose states navigating between great powers to risks they cannot fully control. And if history offers any reliable insight, it is that the United States ultimately protects its own strategic priorities first, often long before it considers the fate of the partners standing beside it. In that sense, the UAE is not immune to the broader forces now redefining the international order. It is part of a landscape in which alignment, loyalty, and security guarantees are becoming increasingly conditional. The dangers lie not in dramatic breaks, but in the slow, accumulating pressures of a system entering a far more unforgiving era.

The article first appeared on Eurasia Review.

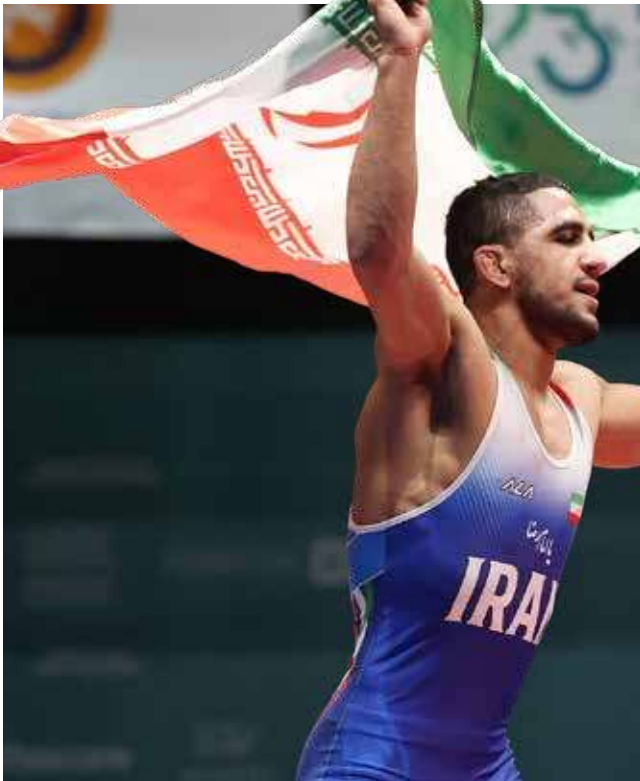
Today, Abu Dhabi stands at a crossroads. It has accumulated leverage across multiple regions, yet also vulnerabilities that are far more pronounced than official narratives suggest. Its partnership with Washington is significant but no longer straightforward, shaped by competing global powers and by an American foreign-policy establishment that often oscillates between engagement and fatigue.

 Aero Engine Corporation of China showcases its latest technologies to an Emirati at the Dubai Airshow 2025 on November 18, 2025.  
● CUI HAIPEI/CHINA DAILY





# Amouzad, Esmaeili among UWW's top-ranked wrestlers in 2025



Iran's Rahman Amouzad (L) and Saeid Esmaeili are pictured during their gold-winning campaigns at the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in November.  
● IAWFIR

## Sports Desk

Iran's Rahman Amouzad and Saeid Esmaeili led their respective weight classes as the United World Wrestling announced its top-ranked wrestlers for 2025 across all 30 men's and women's categories.

Ranking points were calculated based on wrestlers' results at the 2025 World Championships, continental championships, and the four Ranking Series events.

Amouzad topped the freestyle 65kg division, while Esmaeili ranked No. 1 in the Greco-Roman 67kg.

Amouzad, 23, enjoyed a glorious two-month period by collecting back-to-back gold medals at the World Championships and the Islamic Solidarity Games. Avenging his final loss at the Paris Olympics against Kotaro Kiyooka, Amouzad secured a superiority victory over the Japanese wrestler in the first period of the 65kg showdown in Zagreb in September to claim his second world title in three editions.

Picking up where he left off, the Ruthless Rahman then cruised to the final at November's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh without conceding a single point, before demolishing Tajikistan's Abdulmazzhid Kudiev (12-2) to claim his second major gold of the international season.

Reigning Olympic champion Esmaeili, meanwhile, began the international season with a gold-winning campaign at March's Asian Championships in Amman, and then marked his World Championships debut in style by edging Azerbaijan's Hasrat Jafarov 1-0 in the final. The pair met again for gold in Riyadh two months later, where the 22-year-old Iranian came within two seconds of

suffering only the second defeat of his senior international career – and his first since June 2024 – before producing a trademark four-pointer to defeat Jafarov 8-3 in a thrilling showpiece.

Both Amouzad and Esmaeili are on the 10-man shortlist – alongside fellow Iranians Amirhossein Zare', Mohammad-Hadi Saravi, and Gholamreza Farrokhi – for the UWW Most Dominant Wrestler of the Year.

Meanwhile, the United States featured three reigning world champions in Zahid Valencia (86kg), Trent Hidlay (92kg), and Kyle Snyder (97kg) as the top-ranked wrestlers in the freestyle division. Bahrain also had top-ranked wrestlers, with Khidir Saipudinov and Shamil Sharipov finishing atop the 79kg and 125kg rankings, respectively.

North Korean world champion Chong-song Han (57kg), Russian sensation Zavur Uguev, who won the world 61kg title as a neutral participant, Japan's Yoshinosuke Aoyag (70kg), and Slovakia's Tajmuraz Salkazanov (79kg) complete the freestyle list.

In Greco-Roman, Uzbekistan emerged as the most successful country with three top-ranked wrestlers: world champion Aytjan Khalmakhanov (63kg) at the weight, Alisher Ganiev (60kg), and Abdullo Aliev (72kg).

Georgia and Hungary had two wrestlers each at the top. World champion Vakhtang Lolua earned himself the top rank at 55kg, while his Georgian compatriot Gela Bolkvadze topped the 82kg. Hungary's Alex Szoke and Darius Vitek placed atop the 97kg and 130kg divisions, respectively.

Türkiye's Ahmed Yilmaz (72kg) and Serbian world gold medalist Aleksandr Komarov (87kg) are also in the 10-man Greco-Roman list.

## Sports Desk

Iranian rower Bahman Nasiri has set his sights on gold at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games after rejoining the Iranian national rowing team.

The 28-year-old, who won the Asian gold in the men's single sculls in 2019, recently returned to the national setup after representing Azerbaijan at various international competitions over the past three years.

Nasiri switched nationality after being excluded from Iran's delegation to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, held in 2021, despite having secured a quota place for the Games. Under International Olympic Committee regulations, Iran was allocated a single rowing berth in Tokyo, which ultimately went to Nazanin Malaee, a six-time Asian champion.

Nasiri said the appointment of Mohsen Shadi as president of the Iranian Rowing Federation played a decisive role in his decision to return.

"Mr. Shadi and I were teammates and competed together in several

Asian tournaments. When he contacted me for a meeting after his appointment, I was encouraged by his proposal," Nasiri told Mehr News Agency.

He also welcomed the appointment of Ahmad Donyamali as Iran's Minister of Sports. "I was pleased to see Mr. Donyamali take office, as he played a key role in introducing rowing to Iran," he said.

Reflecting on his move to Azerbaijan, Nasiri admitted the decision was driven by frustration. "I was deeply disappointed after missing out on the Tokyo Olympics. Joining the Azerbaijani team was a way to pursue my personal goals, although it was certainly not an easy choice," said Nasiri, who was also part of Iran's quadruple sculls crew that won Asian gold in 2017.

Asked whether his objectives were achieved during his time with Azerbaijan, Nasiri said they were partially fulfilled. "I was able to compete in more international events that had previously been out of reach. With a higher-level coach, better facilities and more frequent international

travel, I made significant progress," he said.

Although he did not compete at the World Championships, Nasiri said he took part in several high-profile European regattas and posted respectable results.

"It's a special feeling to be back with the Iranian team. This flag is always worth fighting for," he said. "I intend to continue working with the same coach I had in Azerbaijan, but within the Iranian national team. I want my progress and results to come here."

Looking ahead, Nasiri said international regulations mean he must wait until the start of the 2026 season to compete under the Iranian flag again.

"I am currently training in Iran with a Russian coach to prepare for the Asian Games. My times have improved significantly in recent years, and I'm aiming for a strong performance in Nagoya," he said.

"It will still be a tough challenge, and I can't afford to miss any training sessions. I'll also need to compete in several events along the way," Nasiri added.

## Nasiri eyes Asian Games glory after rejoining Iranian rowing team



● DETLEV SEYB/WORLD ROWING

## Iran makes bid to host 2028 Asian Weightlifting Championships

## Sports Desk



● IWF

Iran has submitted a bid to host the 2028 Asian Weightlifting Championships, Sajjad Anoushiravani, chairman of the Iranian Weightlifting Federation, announced on Wednesday. The tournament will serve as a qualification event for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Iran has previously hosted the Asian Championships on six occasions, most recently in 1993, when Tabriz staged a men-only edition of the event. Anoushiravani said Mohammed Jalood, the Iraqi president of the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), has already pledged his support for Iran's bid. The proposal will now be reviewed at a meeting of the Asian Weightlifting Federation's Executive Board, to be held on the sidelines of the 2026 Asian

Senior Championships.

"I have discussed the bid with Mr. Jalood and Iran's Sports Minister, Mr. [Ahmad] Donyamali," said Anoushiravani, the 2012 Olympic silver medalist. "I will travel to the Asian Confederation's headquarters in Doha in the coming days for further consultations on hosting the event. After that, the final decision will rest with the IWF Executive Board."

Asked whether the annual International Fajr Cup in Tehran could serve as an Olympic qualifying event if Iran fails to secure hosting rights for the Asian Championships, Anoushiravani said it would not be possible.

"When the Fajr Cup previously served as an Olympic qualifier, the IWF selected qualifying events on a year-by-year basis," he said. "The International Olympic Committee has now established a fixed qualification pathway,

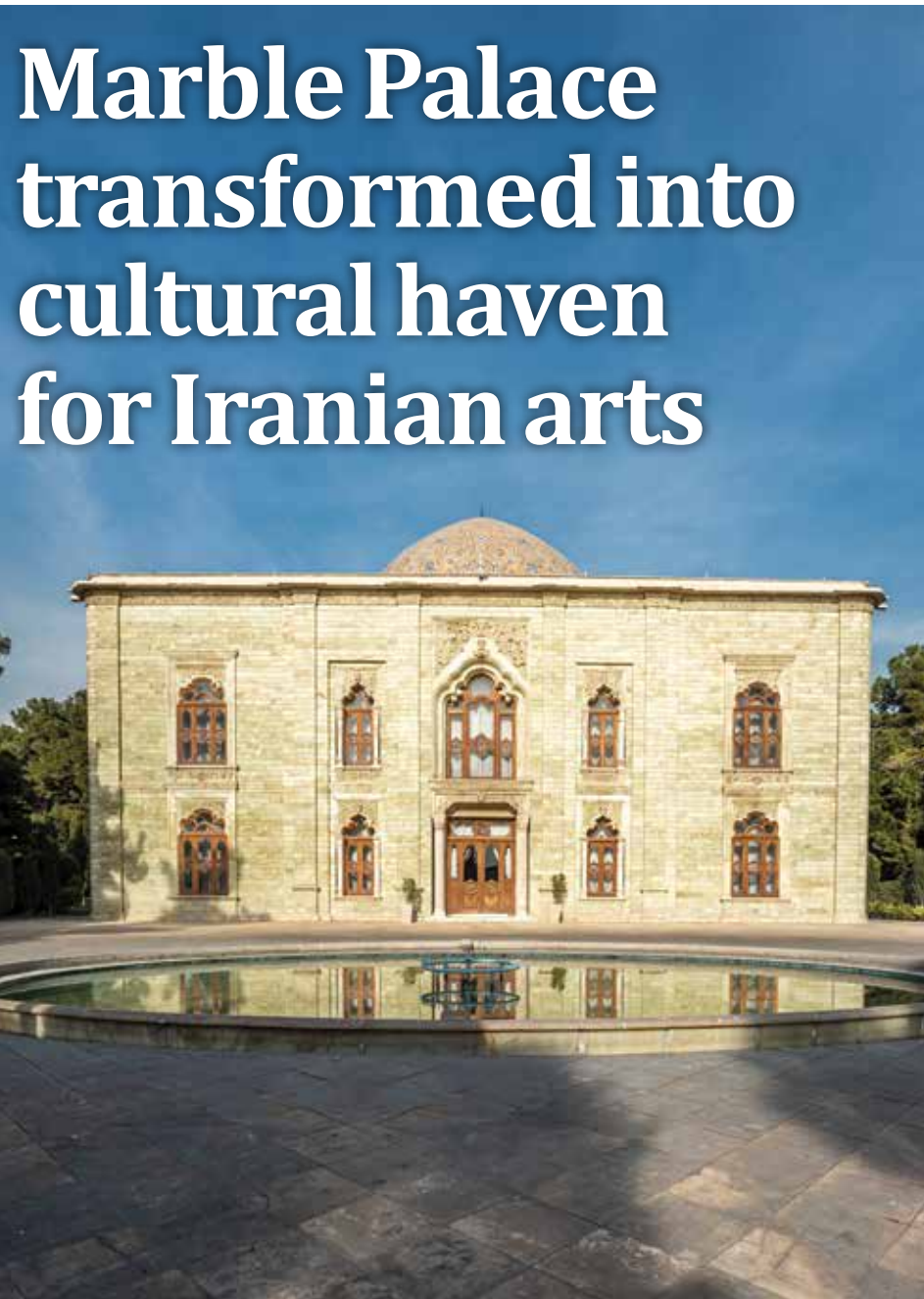
consisting of three World Championships, two Continental Championships and five Grand Prix events. The Fajr Cup is not included in the official Grand Prix calendar."

Under former Olympic champion Behdad Salimi, a rejuvenated Iranian team was represented by three weightlifters at May's Asian Championships in Jiangshan, China, winning a total of eight medals across two men's weight categories.

In the 96kg class, Alireza Moeini and Ali A'alipour claimed an all-Iranian one-two in the snatch, before A'alipour went on to secure gold in the clean and jerk and the total. Moeini added a bronze medal in the total.

In the +109kg category, Ayat Sharifi won silver in the snatch before producing a stronger showing in the clean and jerk to claim double golds in the lift and the overall total.





# Marble Palace transformed into cultural haven for Iranian arts

● wikipedia.org

## Iranica Desk

The Marble Palace, a lasting symbol of the early Pahlavi era and one of Tehran's most iconic historical landmarks, has been transformed into a museum that brings together the full spectrum of Iranian art — from intricate mirror work and marquetry to plasterwork and high-relief paintings — a heritage still unfamiliar to many Iranians. A walk through the Marble Palace offers visitors a glimpse into the grandeur of Iranian architecture. From walls to ceilings, every corner showcases a unique blend of traditional arts, including mirror work, marquetry, plasterwork, and high-relief paintings depicting iconic Iranian landmarks such as the Veresk Bridge and Persepolis. Regarded as one of the country's premier venues for experiencing Iranian and Islamic art, the museum's collection spans from the 5th millennium BCE to contemporary works. On June 20, 1978, the palace was officially registered as one of Iran's National Heritage Sites under registration number 1606, IRNA wrote. The building was initially converted into a museum in 1976, aimed at familiarizing the public with the Pahlavi era, and was named the "Pahlavi Museum." Following the Islamic Revolution and the fall of the monarchy, the Marble Palace underwent nearly four decades of administrative use. It first served as the headquarters of the Revolutionary Committee, later accommodating offices for senior judiciary officials, former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and hosting sessions of the Expediency Council. In 2017, the palace was transferred to the Mostazafan Foundation. After extensive restoration, it reopened in 2019 under its new name, the "Iran Art Museum," offering the public a major cultural destination.



● kojara.com



● kojara.com

Sajad Samani, Director of the Iran Art Museum (Marble Palace), explained that the museum now operates under the Mostazafan Foundation's Cultural Institution of Museums. "Although the palace has functioned as a museum for several years, many people are still unaware of its existence," he said. Samani acknowledged that the museum's location presents certain challenges for visitors but emphasized that efforts are underway to improve accessibility and comfort. "All forms of Iranian art — from mirror work and marquetry to plasterwork and high-relief paintings — can be seen here in one place. Visitors leave the museum with a sense of joy and in-

spiration," he added. Addressing questions about why the museum is sometimes closed and lacks visible signage, Samani noted, "We cannot leave the doors open all the time. However, to make it clear that this is a museum, a signboard crafted by Isfahan artisans using tiles matching those above the entrance will soon be installed." In addition, the museum actively promotes its programs through social media, environmental advertising in metro stations, and tourism networks to introduce both domestic and international visitors to the richness of Iran's art, culture, and architectural heritage.

## Efforts underway to bring Mirza Kochak Khan Ship back to Caspian Sea

### Iranica Desk

Local authorities in Bandar Anzali, in the northern part of Gilan Province, coordinate inter-agency efforts to accelerate the restart of Iran's first Caspian passenger ship, the Mirza Kochak Khan, into service. According to IRNA, the meeting featured reports from participating executive bodies on actions taken and prerequisites within their respective responsibilities. The participants stressed the importance of ongoing coordination

and interagency collaboration among the relevant entities to hasten the process of resuming operations for the ship. The Mirza Kochak Khan measures 74 meters in length, 12 meters in width, 20 meters in height, and weighs 2,000 tons, with a passenger capacity of 150. The vessel entered the Caspian Sea in 1992 CE and was placed under the management of the Caspian Sea Shipping Company. From 1999-2006 CE, the ship was under the control of the IRGC Navy, after which it was

purchased by a private sector party. It underwent undersea and afloat repairs as well as modernization of navigational electronic equipment and auxiliary navigation gear by September 2009, achieving coastal waterways navigation certificates. Between 1991-1996, the ship made several voyages to the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, due to the lack of modern weather forecasting and navigation systems at the time, along with passenger discomfort and resulting low passenger num-

bers, the service was halted. The ship was relaunched but shortly afterward ran aground again. Bandar Anzali remains a focal point for Caspian maritime initiatives, with ongoing discussions and pilot programs geared toward reviving regional passenger and freight services. Local ports, universities, and maritime authorities in Anzali have expressed continued interest in showcasing the city as a hub for safe, modern, and tourist-friendly Caspian travel.



● IRNA

## ATU hosts first international Iranian studies forum



● atu.ac.ir

### Iranica Desk

The first international Iranian studies forum, hosted by Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU), was held for four days in Tehran and Shiraz in November attended by Iranologists from Turkey, Sri Lanka, China, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Tunisia. This forum, which was with the cooperation of the University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University, the University of Science and Culture, the Iranology Association and Foundation, and organized by the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, hosted 48 international guests from 23 countries. The significance of this forum lay in the examination of diverse dimensions of Iranian studies by admirers of Iran, according to atu.ac.ir. At the beginning of the session held at ATU on Nov. 16, Ali Guzel Yuz from Turkey delivered a speech on Iranian Studies in Turkey from the Ottoman period to the present, outlining the history of these studies. Yu Gui Lee from China, while introducing her university

and the growth of the Persian language there, noted the interest of Chinese students in Iranian culture and language and recited verses of her own poetry regarding her love for Iran. Azizi from Tunisia addressed topics of shared interests and economic issues between Iran and the Arab world, identifying resistance against the oppression of superpowers as a characteristic of Iranian society. He described his authorship of a book on the "Sociology of Resistance" as an effort to explain the methods of resistance of Iranian society against the enemy and the invaluable experience of Iranian resistance, which is noteworthy and a model for other Arab countries. Azizi stated, "The Tunisian experience has a Western framework, while the Iranian experience is rooted in religious heritage, allowing for the examination of development within a new, anti-colonial framework." Momeni, the scientific secretary of the conference, also stated, "The political category is far more in-

fluent than the category of organization. We are geographically connected with many countries, so we must not allow politics to be the defining influence; for today's world is a world of people-to-people connections, and it is necessary for people to interact more." Japaridze from Georgia also delivered a speech at this session regarding Persian linguistic remnants found in the Mizdakhan hills in tombs dating back to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, which indicate the staged progression of the Khwarazmian, Pahlavi, and Sogdian languages. Continuing the session, Al-Samadi stated, "Due to the absence of dialogue, the Arab world is deprived of Iranian studies, and political barriers can be counted as one of the reasons. Many researchers believe that the economic or cultural aspect is also of special importance. The absence of Iranians in many scientific and cultural forums is also one of the reasons for this deficiency." Kambarbekova, referencing the poems of Hafez during a part of

this session, added, "The 'Turk of Shiraz' is a symbol of solidarity between Iran and Kazakhstan. Had any other word been used in its place, the beauty and harmony would have been lost." She pointed to the number of Persian language students in Kazakhstan compared to Bangladesh and deemed the strengthening of the Persian language department in Kazakhstan necessary. Mohammad-Amir Jalali and Mahsa Nazari, referring to related carpets and cultural relations between Iran and China, pointed to historical documents in the city of Dunhuang, Manichaean documents in China, and images of the Simurgh, the dragon, and other animals in Chinese and Iranian symbols. Mandana Tishehyar, Vice President for Research at ATU, serving as the closing speaker of this forum, expressed appreciation for the presence of the Iranologists in the country and hoped for the continuation of these dialogues for the development of Iranian Studies.



## Curtains down on Haqiqat Cinema

# Iran's rich history, diversity contribute to documentary cinema: Minister

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi said Iran's long, uninterrupted history and vast cultural and climatic diversity give documentary-makers an unrivalled range of subjects, at the closing ceremony of the 19th Cinema Verite (Haqiqat Cinema) international documentary film festival at Vahdat Hall on December 16.

Salehi thanked filmmakers who documented the conflict "despite difficulties", saying they preserved collective memory under pressure and left records "for us and the world". Their work, he said, showed an Iran that does not "yield" or "bow", urging unity and restraint so as not to cloud what he called a "sacred unity", IRNA

reported.

Invoking veteran filmmaker Mohammadreza Aslani, Salehi said Iran's subject depth is unrivalled. "From the standpoint of subjects, few countries have such capacity," he said, calling the claim no exaggeration.

He pointed to Iran's ancient history as a generator of endless narratives, noting research by the late Kamran Fani on glass from the Achaemenid era as an example of how even a single material can anchor compelling films.

Beyond history, Salehi cited Iran's varied geography and ethnography, with its micro-cultures, literatures, rituals and layered identities, from traditional to modern, as an engine for story-building.

Positioned at a global and geographic crossroads, Iran has expe-



rienced repeated shocks over the past 150 years, he said, including the recent conflict, sharpening the

urgency of documentation. Head of the Cinema Organization of Iran Raed Faridzadeh framed

documentary cinema as more than record-keeping, describing it as a phenomenological practice that fuses "now", memory and foresight. The past year, he said, delivered on an ambition for the genre to secure a stronger foothold within Iran's image industry, with the festival showcasing pluralism and "multi-voiced" work that energized audiences and rights-holders. Festival Secretary Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam said the six-day festival convened a new generation of filmmakers from across Iran alongside established voices, creating productive friction and exchange.

The breadth of national and international entries, he said, reinforced Cinema Verite's standing as one of the region's most authentic documentary platforms.

He characterized Iranian docu-

mentary cinema as a "national asset" capable of extending its reach beyond borders through co-production and regional partnerships, citing joint work produced in Gaza amid crisis as proof that new pathways can amplify diverse voices. The festival also placed emphasis on documentary photography, hosting workshops to address skills gaps.

A dedicated "Iran" section honored history and culture while reflecting the 12-day war. Screenings attended by families of those killed paid tribute to victims, organizers said, framing solidarity as a through-line of the program.

The evening concluded with awards across national and international competitions, the Shahid Avini Prize, the Iran section and student documentaries.

## 'Just a Fist' wins best screenplay at Turkey's Göbeklitepe festival

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film 'Just a Fist' won the Best Screenplay Award at the fourth Göbeklitepe International Film Festival in Şanlıurfa, southern Turkey, festival organizers said, marking a regional breakthrough for independent Iranian cinema rooted in social storytelling.

Written and directed by Iranian filmmaker Mostafa Yeganeh, the film prevailed in the international competition as the festival wrapped up in the historic Anatolian city, which hosts the UNESCO-listed Göbeklitepe archaeological site, ILNA reported.

The jury cited the work's disciplined narra-

tive architecture, humane characterization and socially alert perspective. The festival, named after one of the world's oldest known ritual sites, has positioned itself as a fast-rising cultural platform linking cinema with ancient heritage, cultural identity and cross-border dialogue.

Its curators aim to brand Şanlıurfa as a regional cultural and cinematic hub, leveraging the city's deep historical capital to attract filmmakers working in arthouse, independent and documentary formats.

'Just a Fist' centers on a detainee being escorted to court by a soldier along with the evidence of an alleged crime. During the journey, the accused makes an unusual re-



quest that disrupts the expected trajectory of events, steering the story towards a morally charged and socially resonant turn.

## Unreleased Shajarian recordings from 2014 European concert unveiled

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran unveiled two previously unreleased albums drawn from the final European concert of Mohammad Reza Shajarian, the towering master of Persian classical vocal music, at a ceremony held at Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art on December 17.

The albums, 'Sar dar Gariban' (Head Bowed in Contemplation) and Bang-e Dohol (The Beat of the Drum), capture Shajarian's last live performances in Europe in 2014 and were presented during a special program titled 'An Enduring Keepsake,' giving audiences first access to rare, lesser-heard

a career spanning more than half a century, Shajarian recorded about 60 albums, performed extensively at home and abroad, and lent his voice to film scores including 'Delshodegan' (The Heartbroken). He was an accomplished calligrapher in the Nasta'liq script, chaired Iran's Music House high council, founded the Shahnaz ensemble, and established cultural ventures ranging from Delavaz to the Bam Art Garden.

He received the Aga Khan Foundation's "Godfather of Music" award, earned two Grammy nominations, and was named by the Asia Society as the most celebrated figure in Iranian classical music. In 2010,

## First Imam Khomeini World Award concludes in Tehran

### Arts & Culture Desk

The first edition of the Imam Khomeini World Award reached its final stage on Wednesday with a closing ceremony in Tehran, marking the culmination of a long-delayed international initiative aimed at recognizing individuals and institutions that have contributed to the promotion of the intellectual legacy and values of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Defined in its official statute as the Islamic Republic's highest distinction for advancing the name and path of Imam Khomeini, the award is designed to highlight his thought across a wide spectrum, including justice, spirituality, resistance, dignity and service to society. The prize seeks to frame Imam Khomeini's legacy as a living, globally relevant discourse

rather than a purely historical reference, IRNA reported.

The award's implementation follows more than a decade of institutional suspension. Initially proposed by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and formally approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 2013, the project remained dormant due to structural and executive constraints. Revised statutes adopted in 2023 clarified its governance, scope and evaluative mechanisms, enabling the inaugural operational round to proceed and conclude in 2025.

Structurally, the award is overseen by a high-level policymaking council, with the secretariat housed at the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization. The secretariat manages international correspondence, submission intake, coordination with advisory

bodies and the logistical execution of the ceremony. The scientific dimension of the award is supervised by an academic committee chaired by Mahmoud Vaezi, a professor at the University of Tehran.

Substantively, the prize is conferred in two principal categories. The theoretical section honors outstanding scholarly and research works addressing Imam Khomeini's intellectual system, while the practical section recognizes influential social and political initiatives that have operationalized his ideas at scale. Evaluation criteria prioritize intellectual rigor, societal impact and the capacity to inspire institution-building processes.

The award's thematic architecture spans ten specialized working groups, covering fields such as Imam Khomeini's intellectual framework and

practical conduct, Islamic ethics and spirituality, justice and human dignity, Islamic civilization and progress, interfaith dialogue, people-centered governance, resistance to oppression and racism, just peace and collective security, religion-based lifestyles, and the promotion of women's roles within a family-oriented social model.

From a geographical standpoint, the award is explicitly defined as global, with no national or disciplinary boundaries.

Functionally, the Imam Khomeini World Award operates both as a reference point for scholarly engagement with his thought and as a cultural diplomacy instrument.

Plans are in place to develop a comprehensive platform to host academic dialogues, multilingual resources and educational programs, with the stated aim of fostering deeper, evidence-based and systematic understanding of Imam Khomeini's legacy in contemporary global debates.



material from the late singer's closing years, IRNA reported.

The recordings were released by Delavaz, the label he founded, and revive what organizers described as the "fervor" of Iranian vocal music shaped by five decades of his distinctive sound.

Shajarian, was born in Mashhad on September 23, 1940, and died on October 8, 2020, aged 80, after a prolonged illness. He was buried in Tus, in Iran's northeastern Khorasan Razavi Province. Across

Canada's Vancouver Sun listed him among the year's most significant musical artists worldwide, later ranking him among the world's top 50 voices.

Shajarian was also revered for his Qur'anic recitation, notably the supplication 'Rabbana,' (Our Lord) which became emblematic for generations. In his later years, he introduced several newly designed instruments, including the Sorahi and Shahrashoub, unveiling them publicly in Tehran in 2011.