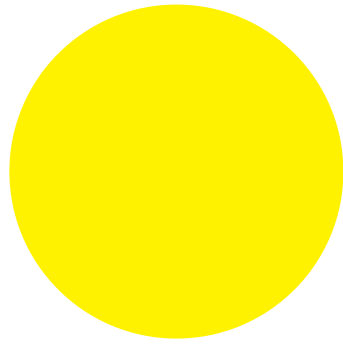


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Tractor beats  
Persepolis in  
shootout thriller  
to advance  
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# Iran Daily

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## Canadian resolution vote signals waning compliance with Western lobbying at international bodies

By Delaram Ahmadi  
Staff writer

INTERVIEW  
EXCLUSIVE



Canada's annual human rights resolution against the Islamic Republic of Iran was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday evening local time. The resolution passed with 78 votes in favor, 27 against and 64 abstentions, while 24 countries were absent from the vote. The number of votes in favor was lower than the combined total of oppos-

ing and abstaining votes and also declined compared with last year, when the resolution received 80 affirmative votes.

Iran has voiced its firm opposition to the resolution, describing the move as entirely politically motivated, selective and destructive. Questions remain, however, as to why Canada pursues this initiative every year and why it focuses so specifically on Iran's human rights record among so many countries.

In an interview with Iran Daily, international affairs expert Mohsen Farkhani examined the dimensions of the issue. Farkhani said Canada's move was not an independent action but part of broader Western pressure. He added that the relatively low and declining number of votes in favor pointed to a weakening of

the effectiveness of Western alliances against Iran within international organizations.

**IRAN DAILY: What message does the decline in affirmative votes compared with last year convey?**

**FARKHANI:** Within the division of labor among US Western allies aimed at exerting pressure from multiple angles on the Islamic Republic and the Iranian nation, Canada's activism in pursuing pressure and human rights resolutions serves as a complementary piece of Washington's maximum pressure puzzle.

Despite the marginal nature of the decline in votes condemning Iran on human rights grounds, this reduction reflects a growing awareness among many countries of the dual use of international organizations as

instruments designed to serve and safeguard Western interests. This perception has been reinforced over the past two years, during which, despite Israel's human rights violations, the United Nations, the UN Human Rights Council and international courts have failed to act effectively or hold Israel and its main backer, the United States, accountable.

Accordingly, the decline in support can be interpreted as diminished acceptance of the Western narrative on human rights norms. This shift among countries in pushing back against Western interpretations, and in reassessing how states engage with international organizations vis-à-vis Western-backed votes, represents another blow to confidence in liberal institutionalism.

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# US sanctions against ICC judges grant 'impunity' to wanted criminals: *FM spox*

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei on Friday denounced a recent move by the United States to sanction more staff members at the International Criminal Court (ICC), saying the measure amounts to granting brazen and brutal impunity to wanted criminals.

"While genocidal war criminals continue to freely commit crimes against humanity, the US Department of State is intensifying a campaign of intimidation and sanctions against those who seek to hold these criminals accountable," Baqaei wrote on his X account on Friday.

"This represents impunity in its most blatant and brutal form — a profound moral aberration." On Thursday, the US issued a new round of sanctions against ICC staff members, citing a recent ruling blocking Israel's effort to halt a Gaza war crimes investigation.

The sanctions target two judges — Gocha Lordkipanidze of Georgia and Erdenebalsuren Damdin

of Mongolia.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the two judges "have directly engaged in efforts by the ICC to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute Israeli nationals, without Israel's consent, including voting with the majority in favor of the ICC's ruling against Israel's appeal on December 15."

The ICC described Washington's move as a "flagrant attack" on the independence of an impartial judicial institution. In its statement, the ICC warned that threatening judges for upholding the law jeopardizes the entire international legal framework.

The top court emphasized that such measures undermine the rule of law and reaffirmed its support for its personnel and the victims of atrocities.

The US is Israel's biggest ally and has supported its genocidal war in Gaza by continuing to supply the occupying regime with billions in military and economic aid.

"The ICC has continued to en-



The exterior of the International Criminal Court is seen in The Hague, Netherlands, September 22, 2025.  
● REUTERS

gage in politicized actions targeting Israel, which set a dangerous precedent for all nations," Rubio said in the statement.

The sanctions are the latest in a series of economic restrictions the administration of US President Donald Trump has placed on ICC members and their associates.

Critics warn such actions could chill investigations across the world and have wide-ranging implications for prosecutors, judges and even witnesses.

In February, for instance, the Trump administration issued broad sanctions targeting ICC staff and anyone assisting the court's investigations against the US and its allies.

The White House continued by issuing individual sanctions against judges and prosecutors it disagreed with.



In June, four judges were sanctioned, two of whom participated in probes regarding US personnel in Afghanistan. The other two were involved in the decision to issue arrest warrants

for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant.

Then, in August, the US expanded the sanctions, taking actions

against two more judges and two ICC prosecutors.

Even entities outside the ICC have been hit with economic penalties as a result of their participation in its investigations.

## Israeli violations against Syria pose 'direct threat' to West Asia security: *Iran*

The Iranian ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations warned that Israel's occupation of Syrian territory and acts of aggression against the Arab country endanger peace and security in West Asia.

Speaking at a UN Security Council meeting on Syria on Thursday, Amir Saeid Iravani said the Israeli regime has, over the past year, intensified its unlawful use of force, expanded its military footprint, and sought to consolidate its occupation of Syrian land, Press TV reported.

"Israel's actions are neither defensive nor incidental; they are part of a deliberate strategy to entrench occupation, fragment Syria, and weaken its national cohesion by exploiting ethnic and sectarian dif-



● GETTY IMAGES

ferences and promoting separatist agendas," he added. "Such conduct constitutes a direct threat to regional peace and security."

Iravani also condemned last month's Israeli attack on the town of Beit Jinn in the Damascus countryside, which killed 13 people and injured 25 others, as a grave war crime under international law.

The criminal assault and the local resistance to Israeli attacks, he said,

underscore the "destabilizing consequences of prolonged occupation and repeated acts of aggression."

The Iranian envoy further called on the Security Council to take concrete measures to compel the regime to respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. "Continued inaction, selective silence, or the political shielding of Israel by a permanent member of this Council serves only to normal-

ize and legitimize its (Israeli) occupation and acts of aggression and renders the Council's resolutions ineffective and unenforceable," he said, referring to the US support for Israeli occupation and violations of international law.

After the collapse of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government in December 2024, Israel has launched frequent aerial assaults across Syria and ground incursions in the southern part of the country.

Israel has also set up numerous checkpoints in Syria and abducted its citizens. The regime has further expanded control over the occupied Golan Heights, taking over a demilitarized buffer zone in violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

## Tehran condemns Canada's new sanctions against Iranian officials



Forouzandeh Vadiati

● ISNA

### International Desk

The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Friday strongly condemned the Canadian government's move to impose sanctions on four Iranian officials based on "unfounded" human rights allegations.

Forouzandeh Vadiati, the director general for women and human rights at Iran's Foreign Ministry, in a statement described the sanctions as a meddling move stemming from the arrogant mindset of Ottawa's decision-makers.

Vadiati emphasized the lack of any legal or moral basis for Canada's action. "The Canadian government, as the inheritor of the systematic repression of Indigenous peoples' human rights and as a party with a long record of complicity with Israel's genocidal regime

in the killing of the Palestinian people and aggression against other countries in the region, has no legitimacy to make hypocritical human rights claims against Iran," she said.

She also stressed that Canada's unilateral sanctions against Iran target the economic, social, and cultural rights of the Iranian people, and that the Canadian government must be held accountable for the consequences of its actions, which in some cases amount to crimes against humanity.

Her remarks came after Canada in a Monday statement announced a new round of sanctions on four senior Iranian officials over their role on what it claims to be crackdown on protests and dissent in Iran.

Canada's Foreign Minister Anita Anand said that the four officials are being listed under the Special Economic Measures (Iran) Regulations for what she called facilitating and directing repressive policies in the Islamic Republic.

With its latest move, Canada has imposed 18 rounds of sanctions since October 2022 on Iranian officials and entities over alleged human rights violations. It has sanctioned more than 210 Iranian individuals and 254 Iranian entities.

## Russia calls on UN nuclear chief to maintain impartiality on Iran

### International Desk

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov voiced Moscow's call on Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi to maintain an unbiased professional position of Iran's peaceful nuclear program. "We call on [IAEA] Director General Grossi who pushes for restoring contacts with Tehran to strictly adhere to the principles of work of the IAEA Secretariat, including the neutral,



Sergey Lavrov

● TASS

unbiased professional nature of assessments being presented and the broader activity of this organization," Lavrov said.

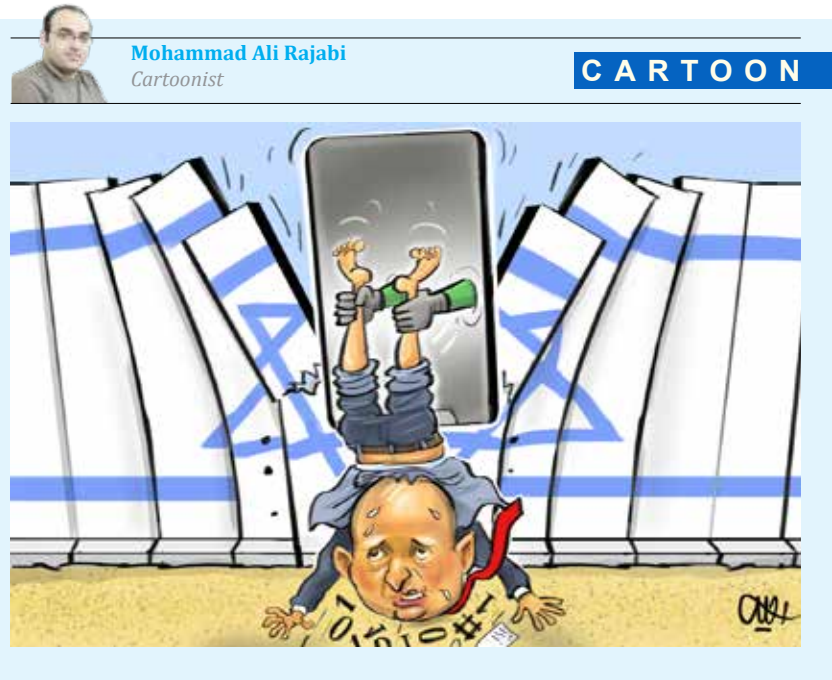
Tensions between Iran

and the UN nuclear watchdog have repeatedly flared in recent years, with relations being further strained in the wake of a 12-day aggression in

June that saw Israeli and US strikes on key Iranian nuclear facilities.

Iran suspended its cooperation with the IAEA after the aggression against Iran as per a law adopted by Parliament.

Tensions escalated as Iranian officials said the IAEA effectively provided cover for the strikes by declaring the country in violation of its non-proliferation obligations shortly before the bombardment and then failing to condemn the aggression.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi

Cartoonist

CARTOON



# Iran shifting to clean energy as president cites oil savings via resource cuts

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian announced on Thursday that the country is implementing operational plans to cut fossil fuel dependence and expand clean energy, stressing, however, that just a 10% reduction in the consumption of water, electricity, gas and fuel could preserve 900,000 barrels of oil and gas per day.

Speaking at the end of the government's provincial visit to South Khorasan, Pezeshkian highlighted plans to complete a strategic railway linking the eastern province to the north-south transit corridors, aimed at reshaping regional trade routes, president.ir reported.

Pezeshkian said the government's goal goes beyond fixing existing problems and aims instead at reducing dependence on fossil fuels by developing renewable energy, particularly solar power, while also curbing the long-standing waste of associated gas that had been flared for years, costing the country billions of dollars. He said efforts to capture and control such gas flows are now underway.

In separate remarks at a meeting with provincial investors and economic actors, Pezeshkian stressed that efficiency gains could deliver far greater results than costly production increases. "If we save 10% in energy, water, gas, electricity and fuel consumption, we can preserve 900,000 barrels of oil and gas per day," he said. "Right now, we are struggling to add 250,000 barrels of production and for that we have to spend \$5 billion to \$6 billion, but 10% savings mean 900,000 barrels."

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said earlier in the month that an emergency plan to boost crude output by 250,000 bpd, supported by \$3 billion, was on track for full implementation by March 2027.

The president said the government inherited a severe power shortfall when it took office in last June. "When we took over the government, we had a 20,000-megawatt electricity deficit. There was also no rain, and hydropower plants that could have helped with about 14,000 megawatts delivered less than half of that, and in practice the deficit reached

around 30,000 megawatts. We had to manage it," he said. According to Pezeshkian, the government's energy strategy began with cutting consumption as the first step.

Iran has been seeking to expand solar capacity as part of a broader push to diversify its energy mix and ease pressure on the power grid, particularly during peak demand periods.

Turning to water management, Pezeshkian said a comprehensive plan is being developed with the participation of academics and more than 80 prominent professors from such fields as economics, agriculture, environmental studies, sociology and management.

"These programs are being finalized and will form the basis of future decision-making," he said, adding that the aim is to manage water resources based on scientific, economic and social perspectives.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a meeting with provincial investors and economic actors in Birjand, South Khorasan, on December 18, 2025. ● president.ir

Strategic rail link

Highlighting South Khorasan's priorities, Pezeshkian said completing the railway and connecting the province to the north-south transport corridors is a strategic priority.

He added that linking South Khorasan to the network is vital not only for domestic mining and transport, but also for regional

countries including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Russia, and could reshape regional trade routes.

"The platform that exists in this province is gold — from mines to the border with Afghanistan, proximity to Pakistan, access to Chabahar and connection to the ocean," Pezeshkian said. "On the other side, northern countries are look-

ing for routes to reach the sea from here; such an opportunity does not exist everywhere."

Linking infrastructure to economic growth, Pezeshkian said development starts with infrastructure, including mining, transit, transport and trade. "The cheapest and most important platform is the rail. If we fix the rail issue, we unlock the vital issue of trade," he said.

## IRICA: Foreign transit hits 13.5m tons in eight months as trade values slip



● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's foreign cargo transit reached 13.5 million metric tons in the first eight months of the current Iranian year starting March 21, while non-oil trade values declined despite modest gains in volumes, official data showed.

According to IRNA, citing figures from the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran exported 105.231 million tons of non-oil goods worth about \$37.0 billion (\$36.997 billion) in the eight-month period. Export volumes rose 1.17% year on year, while the dollar value fell

3.48% compared with the same period last year. Imports totaled 25.823 million tons valued at \$39.540 billion over the same period. While import volumes increased by 3.03%, their value dropped by \$6.590 billion, or 14.29%, year on year. In the first eight months of the previous year, Iran recorded more than \$46.130 billion in imports.

China was Iran's top export destination in the period, accounting for \$9.255 billion, or 25.02% of total export value. Iraq followed with \$6.719 billion (18.16%), the United Arab Emirates with \$5.216 billion (14.10%),

Turkey with \$4.393 billion (11.87%), and Afghanistan with \$1.660 billion (4.49%). On the import side, the United Arab Emirates ranked first among Iran's trading partners, supplying goods worth \$12.152 billion and accounting for about 30.73% of total import value. China followed with \$10.760 billion (27.21%), Turkey with \$6.190 billion (15.66%), India with \$1.327 billion (3.36%), and Germany with \$1.184 billion (2.99%).

Iran's foreign transit volume of 13.5 million tons in the eight-month period was down 9.25% from the same period a year earlier, the data showed.

## Officials urge stronger branding, market strategies to boost Iran exports to India

Economy Desk

Iranian trade officials highlighted the need for stronger market-building and branding strategies to increase the country's exports to India during the second seminar on market recognition and trade opportunities, held in Tehran on Wednesday.

Hamidreza Karbalaee Esmaeili, deputy head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) for the Indian subcontinent, said companies seeking sustained access to India's vast market must focus on market-building criteria.

"Market-building is a prerequisite for marketing, and companies that want to maintain a continuous presence in the large Indian market must pay special attention to market-building standards," he said on Wednesday, ILNA reported on Thursday.

Esmaeili noted that India, with a population of over one billion, represents a significant opportunity for Iranian companies, but Iran currently captures only a small share due to certain policy missteps and restrictive conditions. He stressed the importance of branding, saying, "Market analysis involves various criteria, but branding is a more important priority that compa-

nies pay less attention to. If we want to enter global markets, we must give special attention to this issue." He added that selecting the right trade partner is another key factor in sustaining trade relations.

Addressing the seminar, Hossein Bamiri, Iran's commercial counselor in India, emphasized India's potential as a market for Iranian exports. "India is one of our largest customers in the petrochemical sector, but organizing pavilions there can be challenging," he said.

"India is not a commercial competitor but a complement to us. Currently, most of our exports to India consist of agricultural goods, mostly traditional items such as pistachios, almonds, apples, kiwis, and dates. For years, we have been trying to add other processed and agricultural products such as confectionery and other fruits like cherries, which can be achieved through stronger participation in Indian trade fairs and product promotion."

He added, "We must diversify our market policies. The traditional export approach needs to be reformed by changing the perspective of companies and economic actors. India has 31 states, and just one of them has a population

of 250 million — a huge export potential where we currently have no presence because we do not participate in trade events and are not familiar with these capacities."

At the seminar, India's commercial attaché in Iran highlighted ongoing efforts to address trade challenges between the two countries. "Correspondences are underway to remove export barriers with Iran, and the embassy is ready to resolve existing issues in trade interactions and matters related to exports and imports," he said. He noted that almonds, pistachios, kiwis, and apples remain key Iranian exports to India, alongside pharmaceutical products, and expressed hope that India's strong relations with Europe and other countries could help expand Iranian exports.

Iran exported about \$2.217 billion worth of goods to India in the Iranian calendar year ending March 19, and imported approximately \$1.916 billion from India, turning the trade balance in Iran's favor. According to United Nations Comtrade data, India exported about \$1.25 billion worth of goods to Iran and imported about \$1.06 billion from Iran in 2024.

## Belarus to launch new rail route to Iran, cutting INSTC to two weeks

Economy Desk

Belarus is set to activate a new rail route to Iran that will enable containerized cargo transport along the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) with a transit time of about two weeks, Belarusian state news agency BelTA reported.

According to IRNA on Thursday, BelTA and other regional media, including Azerbaijan's Trend news agency, cited

remarks by Natalia Kananovich, deputy chief executive of Belarusian state company Beltamozhservice, who said the launch of the new route would significantly diversify export products, strengthen the position of domestic suppliers in international markets, and expand their geographic reach.

Under the plan, Beltamozhservice will introduce a new international container transport service along the "Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan-Turkmen-

istan-Iran" corridor, the reports said. By cutting delivery times to around two weeks, the route is expected to become one of the fastest and most convenient transportation options in the region.

"This innovative logistics solution will improve trade efficiency and strengthen links with West Asian markets, especially Iran," Kananovich said. She added that "implementation of this project is of particular importance given rising demand for reliable transit corridors."

The remarks came as Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd, in a meeting with her Belarusian counterpart Andrei Kuznetsov on December 8, said Tehran was ready to expand cargo transport and transit cooperation with Minsk within the framework of the INSTC.

The International North-South Transport Corridor is a multimodal trade route linking Iran to Europe, Russia and Central Asia via three main pathways



● IRNA

through the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Caspian Sea.



# Israel instigates, Iran manages aftermath



By Annunthra Rangan  
Senior research officer  
at Chennai Centre for  
China Studies

## OPINION EXCLUSIVE

When it comes to public debates on the Iran-Israel clash, it has often been dominated by military analysis, so much so that it focuses completely on the nuclear agreements, missiles, the Mos-sad's so-called "success," and Iran's nuclear programme. Beneath the strong words lies the complex interplay of geopolitical economy, information warfare, and growing interference of regional players whose interests are more into the resources and the support they can gain by standing with Israel.

A broader examination of the conflict reveals three underexplored dimensions. The first one concerns the impact of Western sanctions and energy route disruptions. The second dimension discusses how the media/information centres portray or report an incident surrounding the conflict, where the perception always carries a huge signal on the military dimensions and the concept of Iran as a threat to the world. The third dimension is about the involvement of Persian Gulf states, Central Asian countries, and India; looking into their strategy, it's purely about their economic interests, investments, and the diplomatic balancing acts that heavily alter the landscape of the region.

### Economic geography, pressure of sanctions

Over the past decade, Iran has operated heavily under a tightening web of international sanctions. These restrictions have not only slowed down the country's economic growth but have forced it to work on its economic model multiple times. As a result, Iran has become heavily reliant on informal channels, shadow tankers, and barter-based exchanges with select partners. The latest escalation with Israel is further straining this already fragile system.

Energy is the major focus point of the crisis. The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most critical shipping lanes. Almost one-fifth of global crude oil exports and a large share of liquefied natural gas pass through this, making it central to international energy flows. Any disruption in this corridor immediately affects global markets. In the weeks following the initial exchange of strikes between Iran and Israel, global oil prices climbed noticeably, and freight costs for tankers surged. Insurance premiums for vessels entering the Persian Gulf increased sharply as underwriters began pricing in geopolitical risk.

For Iran, especially, these disruptions are particularly blemish. Tehran is continuously working to stabilise its energy exports despite mounting sanctions, using alternative methods, i.e., with its discounted prices and alternative routes on shipping lanes. Even temporary interruptions in gas processing facilities or oil storage terminals can reduce Iran's export capacity, affecting state revenue and domestic consumption. When Israeli-Iranian tensions



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (c) looks menacingly at the camera.  
● AP



Both sides do good PR work, publicising their opinions and messages to shape perceptions. However, Israel takes a little extra effort to frame it with three-fourths lies. Iran has frequently released footage of missile tests or naval patrols reiterating the fact that it has the ability to strike sensitive targets or disrupt maritime traffic. These are not only designed for domestic morale but also to warn adversaries and influence neutral states that rely on Persian Gulf shipping.



Commuters drive past a billboard bearing pictures of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd-L), Iran's late armed forces chief of staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri (L), former US president Joe Biden (2nd-R), and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tehran on October 27, 2024.

● ATTA KENARE/AFP

spike, global insurance companies classify the Persian Gulf as a higher-risk zone. This causes higher war-risk insurance premiums for vessels carrying Iranian cargo, increased cost of energy transportation, and additional charges on Iranian shipping lines. For Iran, which relies heavily on maritime exports of oil and petrochemicals, these cost increases directly cut into revenue.

Although Iran has ways to sell oil despite US sanctions, buyers become more cautious during a crisis with Israel. Importing Iranian oil becomes riskier due to the fear of Israeli strikes on Iranian infrastructure, the possibility of Israeli naval action, and pressure from Western powers to avoid Iranian energy during escalations.

This uncertainty delays purchases, leads to renegotiations of prices, or pushes buyers to diversify toward safer suppliers like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or Russia. This shockwave is not only limited to Iran but also to the countries that are dependent on Middle Eastern energy. They have begun to reassess their exposure. India, in particular, sources half of its crude oil imports from the Persian Gulf. The prolonged crisis raised import bills, as well as transportation and insurance costs, which risk transitioning into domestic inflation. The balance between global supply and demand grows even more unstable when shipping companies use this opportunity to add heavy security charges to their routes.

A single missile exchange occurring far from Asia's waters can end up altering shipping routes, reshaping debates on energy security, and pushing governments to reconsider long-term plans for diversification.

### Information battlefield

Next to the physical confrontation, there lies information warfare as the real battleground. Modern conflicts are often shaped by narratives, real-time inputs, and carefully choreographed articles. The Iran-Israel clash has become the most debated topic online.

Both sides do good PR work, publicising their opinions and messages to shape perceptions. However, Israel takes a little extra effort to frame it with three-fourths lies. Iran has frequently released footage of missile tests or naval patrols reiterating the

fact that it has the ability to strike sensitive targets or disrupt maritime traffic. These are not only designed for domestic morale but also to warn adversaries and influence neutral states that rely on Persian Gulf shipping.

Israel, meanwhile, focuses more on intelligence disclosures and international media engagement. Its objective is often to build diplomatic legitimacy for its actions while signalling resolve to regional adversaries. Markets respond quickly to these signals. A single announcement about a potential threat to shipping lanes can trigger price fluctuations in oil, adjustments in airline routes, or the temporary suspension of cargo movements. In this sense, the information war becomes a powerful economic tool. It shapes expectations and behaviour long before any physical disruption occurs.

Israel has long invested in advanced cyber warfare tools, intelligence platforms, and digital surveillance systems, allowing it to strike Iranian networks, disrupt infrastructure, and leak selective intelligence in ways that influence global perception before Iran even responds. Episodes involving cyber intrusions, anonymous intelligence briefings to major media outlets, and rapid deployment of digital narratives show how Israel often seizes control of the information space within minutes of an escalation. These operations usually present Israel's actions as purely defensive while casting Iran as reckless, even when the underlying situation is more complex. Misinformation and curated leaks, sometimes released through Western security commentators or friendly media networks, shape international opinion by amplifying Iran's vulnerabilities and downplaying the consequences of Israeli actions on regional stability.

Iran, meanwhile, struggles to match this pace. Although it has its own cyber capabilities and state media outlets, it lacks Israel's access to influential global communication channels. As a result, Iran's diplomatic statements, calls for de-escalation, or explanations of regional security concerns often receive limited visibility.

The speed and scale of today's digital ecosystem amplify these effects. Satellite images, unofficial reports, and viral social

### Role of regional players

Although the confrontation appears to be primarily between Iran and Israel, many other states are directly a part of its consequences. Persian Gulf countries, India, and Central Asian republics each bring their agendas, interests, and economic calculations to the table. Iran is a crucial player in connectivity projects linking Central Asia, South Asia, and the Caucasus. These include the North-South Transport Corridor, Chabahar-linked routes, and Iran-Iraq trade.

Persian Gulf countries maintain a diplomatic stance as they heavily depend on stable maritime flows and are consequential players in global energy markets. Any inflation in the Strait of Hormuz directly threatens their export revenues, overall economic stability, and logistical networks. Hence, their stance has been cautious, focusing more on de-escalation and regional stability (the narrative that they are willing to show the world) while avoiding channels that could draw them directly into confrontation.

Central Asian states are also a part of the affected parties. Their trade mostly relies on southward routes through Iran

and the Persian Gulf. Initiatives like the International North-South Transport Corridor give these states a potential pathway to the Indian Ocean, yet Iran's internal volatility makes those goals harder to realise. They now have to balance their ties with Tehran, safeguard their economic priorities, and manage their strategic alignment with bigger players, including Russia and China.

India's position is particularly complicated. The country relies heavily on energy from the Persian Gulf and maintains strong economic relationships/partnerships with both Israel and Iran. Any rise in freight charges or disruptions along key sea routes immediately affects Indian exports, especially in industries like textiles, agriculture, and machinery. Major connectivity projects involving Iran, including the Chabahar port and its linked transport corridors, now face fresh uncertainty. Yet India's reputation as a stabilising force in the Middle East also gives it diplomatic leverage. It can use this position to support de-escalation, broaden its energy suppliers, and strengthen its role in emerging regional connectivity networks.

When tensions rise, investors become cautious about funding Iranian corridors, partner countries fear their goods might get caught in a conflict zone, and overland trade through Iran slows as companies seek safer alternatives. Countries like India, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan temporarily





pause or reevaluate their plans that depend on Iranian territory. Investors already wary because of sanctions become even more hesitant when Iran enters a cycle of confrontation with Israel. Foreign investors respond to tensions between Israel and Iran with considerable caution, often delaying infrastructure and energy projects, pausing technology or mining partnerships, and cancelling long-term exploration or trade plans altogether as the

psychological weight of uncertainty makes Tehran a far less attractive destination for capital. Countries that maintain ties with both sides also adopt subtle protective measures, such as slowing bilateral trade, adding extra checks on Iranian shipments, and restricting banking channels to avoid secondary risks. Inside Iran, markets react almost immediately; the rial typically weakens on fears of escalation, import prices for

essentials like food, machinery, and medicine increase, stock markets become volatile, and households and businesses begin stockpiling goods, which further fuels inflation.

#### Continental consequences

Disruptions in the Persian Gulf immediately alter pricing models for crude benchmarks used in Europe and Asia, forcing energy-importing economies such as India, South Korea, and Japan to adjust

procurement schedules and hedge more aggressively. Escalation also affects the calculations of major transport corridors: freight moving through the Suez Canal faces rerouting pressures, European buyers reconsider the reliability of East-West supply chains, and Central Asian states reassess the long-term viability of corridors that depend on Iranian territory. Cyber exchanges between Israel and Iran trigger precautionary reviews across global

financial networks as banks and payment systems in Asia and Europe increase monitoring for spillover attacks. At the diplomatic level, the confrontation complicates the strategic balancing acts of countries that engage with both sides, particularly India, Turkey, Qatar, and the UAE, pushing them to recalibrate voting patterns in multilateral forums and reassess defence procurements tied to either bloc.

Iran-Israel is a classic example

of how a conflict can extend far beyond its major participants. Any conflict between countries alters the course of economic routes and global trade, accelerates conversations about energy diversification, and pushes the others to take sides.

The crisis is not only about weapons, retaliations, and power show off. It majorly decides and dictates the instability in the region and how it will cause rippling effects across the world.

# Arab role in averting war between Iran, Israel



By Jasser Al-Shahed  
Expert on Middle Eastern affairs

## OPINION

The Arab region is facing one of its most volatile periods in decades as rising tensions between Israel and Iran spill across the region, driven by deep ideological divisions, prolonged shadow wars, and confrontation over nuclear development. This complex, multidimensional rivalry has had wide-ranging consequences for Arab states. It has drawn them into the trajectories of the conflict, threatened their national security and critical infrastructure, and pushed them into unprecedented arms races.

Given the strong possibility of a new military confrontation between the two sides, Arab states must urgently move to explore alternatives for managing this potential escalation in order to avoid its negative repercussions. This article argues that convening an international conference on “security in the Middle East” could achieve this goal by adopting implementable interim measures.

Recent statements by military and political officials in both Iran and Israel reflect an unprecedented escalation in tensions, amid mutual warnings of an approaching confrontation. Leaders of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and armed forces have announced heightened military readiness, stressing their preparedness to respond to any Israeli attack in a “strong and surprising” manner. Following the end of the 12-day war, Iran also strengthened its missile and air-defence capabilities, intensified military exercises, and prepared for multiple scenarios, including direct strikes or actions carried out through regional allies.

On the other side, the Israeli military has continued to update its operational plans and raise readiness levels on multiple fronts, in anticipation of a direct Iranian response or attacks by Iran-aligned armed groups. Israeli officials have warned that the confrontation with Iran is approaching a “decisive point” aimed at destroying its nuclear programme and eliminating its backed groups in the region.

In the absence of urgent political intervention and effective mechanisms to contain this escalation, the risks of the region sliding into deeper instability continue to grow, especially amid increasing provocations, the overlap of regional arenas, and the possibility of miscalculation by both sides.

In this context, international and regional powers must move to establish frameworks capable of preventing escalation and sparing the region from new wars.



Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit (2nd-R) speaks with the foreign ministers of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt in Amman, Jordan, on June 1, 2025.  
● ALAA AL SUKHNI/REUTERS



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However, pursuing comprehensive regional security mechanisms, such as those proposed in academic discussions, or aspiring to resolve all disputed issues between Israel and Iran in a sweeping manner, remains unrealistic under current conditions.

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Accordingly, peace initiatives, including the recent cease-fire agreement following the 12-day war or confidence-building measures, are often viewed as tactical manoeuvres that allow the other side to buy time and reposition, rather than as genuine tools for reducing tensions.

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Nevertheless, neither US pres-

sure policies nor Egypt’s “firefighting” diplomacy have succeeded in halting the escalation trajectory.

Zero-sum calculations continue to dominate Israeli–Iranian relations, deepening regional instability and keeping the prospect of a wider war alive.

It can be argued that Israel will push to sustain this tense status quo, driven by domestic electoral considerations, the stance of the far right, fears of a faster resumption of Iranian nuclear activities, and uncertainty surrounding the fate of approximately 450 kilograms of enriched uranium, whose whereabouts remain unknown following the attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.

This reality compels Arab states to reassess their approaches to this issue, which casts a long shadow over regional security and Arab stability.

Rather than pursuing ambitious frameworks aimed at fundamentally changing the policies of both sides or waiting for a breakthrough in one of the disputed files, such as a comprehensive resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue that satisfies all parties, decision-makers should

prioritize incremental, reciprocal arrangements that are politically acceptable and capable of reducing escalation risks.

Such arrangements should establish a minimum set of constraints to prevent the region from sliding into a full-scale war, without necessarily delivering immediate solutions to the underlying disputes.

Within this framework, an international conference on “Security in the Middle East,” held under the auspices of major powers and the United Nations, could serve as a platform to agree on practical, temporary measures. These steps would aim to reinforce the fragile cease-fires in Gaza and Lebanon, limit the risk of regional escalation, and prevent further deterioration or a slide into a new military confrontation.

Naturally, such a conference would not seek to resolve the core disputes between Israel and Iran or broker grand bargains, but rather to provide space for regional actors, in coordination with international parties, to agree on specific, narrowly defined security measures designed to prevent the recurrence of confrontations. Despite the clear challenges facing the implementation of such ideas, they offer a political opportunity to launch joint efforts to preserve regional stability and reduce risks, without making comprehensive settlements a precondition.

At a moment when the region faces the possibility of renewed military confrontations affecting several Arab states, the proposed Middle East security conference, or the temporary regional security measures it might produce, may not resolve the disputes between Israel and Iran. However, it could at least provide an urgent exit by containing escalation, preserving a degree of fragile stability, and avoiding wide-ranging negative repercussions for the Arab world.

The full article first appeared on *Ahram Online*.



A missile is fired from a ship during the Eqtadar 1404 missile exercise held by the Iranian Navy in the Sea of Oman and the northern Indian Ocean.  
● MEHR



pause or reevaluate their plans that depend on Iranian territory. Investors already wary because of sanctions become even more hesitant when Iran enters a cycle of confrontation with Israel. Foreign investors respond to tensions between Israel and Iran with considerable caution, often delaying infrastructure and energy projects, pausing technology or mining partnerships, and cancelling long-term exploration or trade plans altogether as the

psychological weight of uncertainty makes Tehran a far less attractive destination for capital. Countries that maintain ties with both sides also adopt subtle protective measures, such as slowing bilateral trade, adding extra checks on Iranian shipments, and restricting banking channels to avoid secondary risks. Inside Iran, markets react almost immediately; the rial typically weakens on fears of escalation, import prices for

essentials like food, machinery, and medicine increase, stock markets become volatile, and households and businesses begin stockpiling goods, which further fuels inflation.

#### Continental consequences

Disruptions in the Persian Gulf immediately alter pricing models for crude benchmarks used in Europe and Asia, forcing energy-importing economies such as India, South Korea, and Japan to adjust

procurement schedules and hedge more aggressively. Escalation also affects the calculations of major transport corridors: freight moving through the Suez Canal faces rerouting pressures, European buyers reconsider the reliability of East-West supply chains, and Central Asian states reassess the long-term viability of corridors that depend on Iranian territory. Cyber exchanges between Israel and Iran trigger precautionary reviews across global

financial networks as banks and payment systems in Asia and Europe increase monitoring for spillover attacks. At the diplomatic level, the confrontation complicates the strategic balancing acts of countries that engage with both sides, particularly India, Turkey, Qatar, and the UAE, pushing them to recalibrate voting patterns in multilateral forums and reassess defence procurements tied to either bloc.

Iran-Israel is a classic example

of how a conflict can extend far beyond its major participants. Any conflict between countries alters the course of economic routes and global trade, accelerates conversations about energy diversification, and pushes the others to take sides.

The crisis is not only about weapons, retaliations, and power show off. It majorly decides and dictates the instability in the region and how it will cause rippling effects across the world.

# Arab role in averting war between Iran, Israel



By Jasser Al-Shahed  
Expert on Middle Eastern affairs

## OPINION

The Arab region is facing one of its most volatile periods in decades as rising tensions between Israel and Iran spill across the region, driven by deep ideological divisions, prolonged shadow wars, and confrontation over nuclear development. This complex, multidimensional rivalry has had wide-ranging consequences for Arab states. It has drawn them into the trajectories of the conflict, threatened their national security and critical infrastructure, and pushed them into unprecedented arms races.

Given the strong possibility of a new military confrontation between the two sides, Arab states must urgently move to explore alternatives for managing this potential escalation in order to avoid its negative repercussions. This article argues that convening an international conference on “security in the Middle East” could achieve this goal by adopting implementable interim measures.

Recent statements by military and political officials in both Iran and Israel reflect an unprecedented escalation in tensions, amid mutual warnings of an approaching confrontation. Leaders of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and armed forces have announced heightened military readiness, stressing their preparedness to respond to any Israeli attack in a “strong and surprising” manner. Following the end of the 12-day war, Iran also strengthened its missile and air-defence capabilities, intensified military exercises, and prepared for multiple scenarios, including direct strikes or actions carried out through regional allies.

On the other side, the Israeli military has continued to update its operational plans and raise readiness levels on multiple fronts, in anticipation of a direct Iranian response or attacks by Iran-aligned armed groups. Israeli officials have warned that the confrontation with Iran is approaching a “decisive point” aimed at destroying its nuclear programme and eliminating its backed groups in the region.

In the absence of urgent political intervention and effective mechanisms to contain this escalation, the risks of the region sliding into deeper instability continue to grow, especially amid increasing provocations, the overlap of regional arenas, and the possibility of miscalculation by both sides.

In this context, international and regional powers must move to establish frameworks capable of preventing escalation and sparing the region from new wars.



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Within this framework, an international conference on “Security in the Middle East,” held under the auspices of major powers and the United Nations, could serve as a platform to agree on practical, temporary measures. These steps would aim to reinforce the fragile cease-fires in Gaza and Lebanon, limit the risk of regional escalation, and prevent further deterioration or a slide into a new military confrontation.

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● MEHR



# National Greco-Roman Senior Championships: Iranian wrestlers begin quest for World Championships spots

## Sports Desk

The race for a place at next year's World Championships kicked off with the opening phase of the Iranian trials at the National Greco-Roman Senior Championships in Ahvaz.

The final day of the competition saw Mohammad Alghousi demolish Soroush Ranjbar 10-0 in the 130kg final, while four-time Asian gold medalist Nasser Alizadeh defeated Amirreza Moradian 3-1 for the ultimate prize in the 97kg class.

Mohammad-Amin Hosseini bagged the 82kg gold, defeating Mohammad Arjmand 6-5 in the final showdown, with Mohammad-Javad Rezaei claiming the 72kg title with a 3-1 final win against Omid Bahmani.

Mohammad Kamali outclassed Mohammad Eskandari 10-2 to

grab the 67kg gold.

On Thursday, 2021 world champion Meisam Dalkhani produce a statement run in the 63kg class, throwing down the gauntlet to his compatriots — including reigning world bronze medalist Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar — in the battle for a world spot in Manama.

Dalkhani, also a former world U23 champion and Asian silver medalist, capped his emphatic campaign with an 8-0 superiority victory over Reza Bahmani in the final.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Hosseinvand Panahi edged Mohammadreza Tavakkolian 4-3 in a thrilling 55kg final, while in the 60kg event, 2020 Asian champion Pouya Nasserpour defeated Mohammad Ashiri 7-3 to claim the gold medal, while former world junior and cadet gold

medalist Amirreza Dehbozorgi rebounded from a semifinal setback to secure a consolation bronze medal alongside Milad Rezanejad.

Ali Oskou, a world U23 bronze medalist last year, defeated 2024 world U17 champion Amir-Mahdi Saeidi Nava 6-5 to capture gold in the 77kg division.

Aliasghar Samdaliri defeated Asian Games silver medalist Amin Kavianejad 3-1 to win one of the bronze medals, alongside reigning Asian champion Mohammad Naqousi, who beat Aref Habibollahi 7-1 in the other third-place bout.

Behrouz Hedayat emerged as the surprise gold medalist in the 87kg category, thanks to a 3-1 victory over Mohammad-Hossein Ostad Mohammad in the final.



● IAWFIR

## Iranian Hazfi Cup:

# Tractor beats Persepolis in shootout thriller to advance to last 16



## Sports Desk

Iranian international goalkeeper Ali-reza Beiranvand produced a heroic shootout performance against his former club as Tractor edged Persepolis 8-7 in Tabriz to progress to the round of 16 of the Hazfi Cup.

Mahdi Torabi, also an ex-Persepolis player, broke the deadlock 11 minutes into the second half when his set piece from the left flank lobbed Persepolis keeper Payam Niazmand and went in off the post.

Just when the hosts appeared to be



Tractor goalkeeper Ali-reza Beiranvand celebrates with teammates after the shootout victory over Persepolis in the Iranian Hazfi Cup in Tehran, Iran, on December 18, 2025.

● ATA DADASHI/FARSNEWS

on their way to a first win in seven attempts against Persepolis since October 2022, Reds center-back Hossein Kan'anizadegan headed home a corner kick with virtually final touch of the match in the sixth minute of stoppage time to force extra time.

The momentum shifted dramatically just before the end of the first period of extra time as Tractor went down to 10 men following a second booking for fullback Mohammad Naderi. Persepolis, however, failed to capitalize on the one-man advantage, and the match moved to a penalty shootout.

The shootout itself was full of twists and turns. Tractor missed its first two efforts: Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh hit the post and Danial Esmaeilifar was denied by Niazmand, either side of Kan'anizadegan's successful attempt. Beiranvand then kept out Marco Ba-

lic's effort to give Tractor a lifeline. Persepolis defender Morteza Pouraliganji sent his effort wide to level the score, but Niazmand saved Tractor's fifth penalty by Farshad Faraji to put Persepolis on the brink of victory. Beiranvand, however, had other ideas, coming to Tractor's rescue again with a save against Mohammad Omri.

It all came down to the 11th kick. Beiranvand denied Kan'anizadegan to send his side into the next round against Shams Azar, while Persepolis crashed out at this stage for a third successive season.

Tractor will be back at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium to take on Qatar's Al Duhail in the AFC Champions League Elite on Monday, while Persepolis will play away to Mes Rafsanjan in the Iranian top flight on Friday.

## Former Iran coach Bana takes charge of Azerbaijan GR team

## Sports Desk

Former Iran coach Mohammad Bana has been named as the new head coach of Azerbaijan's Greco-Roman team.

The appointment marks the 67-year-old Iranian's return to a major coaching role since he parted ways with Iran's national team after a below-par campaign at the 2022 World Championships in Belgrade, where his 10-man squad settled for two silver medals and one bronze, finishing fourth in the team standings.

Widely regarded as the mastermind behind Iran's Greco-Roman success over the past two decades, Bana reached the pinnacle of his coaching career during the London 2012 Olympics, where Iran collected three gold medals through lightweight sensation Hamid Sourian, Omid Norouzi, and Ghasem Rezaei across seven weight classes.

A world silver medalist in 1983, Bana led Iran to its first world team title in 2014 — courtesy of a gold from Sourian plus one silver and two bronze medals. His most productive campaign, however, came at the 2021 World Championships in Oslo, where Iran bagged four golds and two bronzes to finish as runner-up to the

Russian Wrestling Federation.

Under his leadership, Iran consistently ranked among the world's top teams at World Championships and continental events. At the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, his athletes added two bronze medals, maintaining Iran's elite status in the sport despite a highly competitive field.

Beyond medals, Bana is credited with developing a generation of technically refined and mentally resilient wrestlers who defined an era for Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling. Known for his uncompromising standards, Bana built his success on discipline, tactical precision, and psychological preparation.

His demanding methods have long been associated with peak performances on the sport's biggest stages. His career has also included periods of tension with sporting authorities and repeated departures from the Iranian

national team, reflecting the pressures of elite-level coaching.

Azerbaijan has remained a consistent presence among Europe's leading Greco-Roman nations. However, the decision to recruit Bana signals a clear intention to strengthen the program, particularly in translating potential into sustained Olympic success. His appointment is widely seen as a strategic move to introduce a proven winning methodology into the national setup.

Now facing a new professional chapter outside Iran, Bana enters a different sporting and cultural environment, where success will be measured not only by medals but by the long-term impact of his work.

● UWW

## Iran confirms men's roster for World Kurash Ch'ships on home soil



● IRNA

## Sports Desk

Iran announced its eight-man men's lineup for the 15th World Kurash Senior Championships, which will kick off in Bojnord, northeast Iran, on January 31. Former world and Asian Games silver medalist Majid Vahid Barimanlou will spearhead the Iranian squad, competing in the 66kg class.

Joining Barimanlou in the Iranian team are Mohammad-Kazem

Barati (60kg), Reza Ahmadzadeh (73kg), Ramin Ahmadzadeh (81kg), Mohammad-Hossein Babaeian (90kg), Sadeq Azarang (100kg), Masoud Qavibazou (120kg), and Abolfazl Torabi (+120kg).

The World Championships will be held in accordance with the current rules of the International Kurash Association (IKA), and WSP ranking points will be awarded based on the results of the competition.



# Gorgan’s historic fabric hosts Chelleh Event

Iranica Desk

The Chelleh Event was held on December 18 in the historic urban fabric of Gorgan, the capital city of Golestan Province, aiming to preserve traditional Iranian rituals and introduce the historical and cultural capacities of the region. The event was organized by Rozas Handicrafts House.

The cultural and artistic ceremony was attended by Ali Darabi, Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Fereydoun Fa’ali, Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Golestan Province, along with a number of officials, artists, cultural activists, and enthusiasts of intangible cultural heritage, chtn.ir wrote.

During the event, a wide range of cultural and artistic programs was presented, including an introduction to Gorgan’s historic district, performances of Chelleh (Yalda) Night rituals,

Shahnameh narration, Hafez poetry recitation, a music caravan, Daf ensemble performances (a traditional Iranian frame drum), the exhibition and sale of handicrafts, and other cultural and artistic activities.

The Chelleh Event was designed and implemented with the objectives of keeping ancient Iranian traditions alive, promoting social vitality, and strengthening intergenerational bonds within the historic fabric of the city of Gorgan.

The event was held concurrently with the 17th International Festival of Ethnic Cultures in Golestan Province and, as one of the festival’s side events, was warmly welcomed by citizens and tourists.

During the ceremony, Darabi described Yalda Night as a symbol of Iranian thought, compassion, and artistic expression, emphasizing that the global registration of this tradition conveys the message of humanism and cultural richness of the Iranian nation to the international community.

He noted that Yalda Night is a night of kindness, forgiveness, and reconciliation, adding that although it is traditionally regarded as the longest and darkest night of the year, it is a time when hearts grow closer and the inner skies of people become brighter and more joyful.

Stressing that Yalda Night is one of the most beautiful, deeply rooted, and enduring traditions of the Iranian people, Darabi stated that this valuable cultural heritage dates back thousands of years and continues to remain alive and dynamic as an integral part of Iranian cultural identity.

He further stated that the most important function and benefit of Yalda Night lies in fostering social cohesion, reconciling hearts, and strengthening human connections — values that society today needs more than ever.

Referring to the hosting of the Chelleh Event in the historic fabric of Gorgan, Darabi said that the venue provided a highly suitable setting for such a cultural gathering and that the



● golestan.mcthi.ir

culture-loving people of Gorgan showed a warm and commendable reception to the program. He emphasized that the sym-

bolic holding of such traditional rituals, in addition to honoring ancestral customs and transferring them to younger gen-

erations, plays an effective role in creating social vitality and reinforcing solidarity and unity among the people.

## Ilam, Karbala to hold joint handicrafts expo in Iraq

Iranica Desk

A preliminary agreement has been reached between the governors of Ilam Province and Karbala to hold a joint handicrafts and tourism exhibition in Iraq in the near future, according to the director general of

the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Ilam Province.

Farzad Sharifi stated that the agreement was reached during an official visit to Iraq by the Governor of Ilam and an accompanying delegation, aimed at expanding bilateral cooper-

ation between the two regions, according chtn.ir.

He noted that the delegation met with the Governor of Karbala, Nassif Jassim Al-Khattabi, and engaged in detailed discussions on strategies to enhance cooperation in the fields of culture, tourism, and handicrafts.

Sharifi added that it was agreed the exhibition would be organized with a focus on the capabilities and capacities of Ilam Province, an approach that was warmly welcomed by the Iraqi side.

He further stated that Al-Khattabi expressed full readiness

to provide comprehensive support and utilize all available resources to ensure the successful organization of the exhibition. He described the initiative as a significant step toward promoting the cultural, tourism, and handicrafts potentials of Ilam Province at the

international level.

Sharifi emphasized that holding such an exhibition could play a key role in strengthening cultural diplomacy, enhancing bilateral relations, and creating new economic opportunities for artists, craftsmen, and tourism stakeholders in Ilam Province.

## Bandar Kong maintains its role as historic port city



● chtn.ir

Iranica Desk

Bandar Kong, located on the southern coast of Iran near Bandar Lengeh, is one of the oldest maritime cities of Iran — a small yet deeply rooted town whose history stretches back centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf. Archaeological findings from the surrounding hills of Kong indicate that this area once hosted a very ancient settlement, which was destroyed by a natural disaster around three thousand years ago, leaving only remnants behind. This long-standing history has cemented Kong’s role as one of the historically significant ports of the Persian Gulf.

During the Safavid period, particularly after the expulsion of the Portuguese and the liberation of Hormuz, Kong’s name appears more frequently in historical records. The city occupied a strategic position along trade routes connecting Arabs, Iranians, Portuguese, English, and Dutch merchants, and this commercial traffic provided a strong foundation for its development. In the era of Karim Khan Zand, with the expansion of caravan routes between Shiraz and Lengeh, Kong became one of the active centers of maritime trade in southern Iran, further consolidating its economic and cultural significance.

The old fabric of Bandar Kong, which today covers approximately 58 hectares — about one-eighth of the city’s total area — was officially registered on the National Heritage List in 2002. This historic urban area stretches along the coastline in a semi-circular layout, where houses, windcatchers, narrow alleys, and small squares together form a coherent and harmonious pattern of local architecture.

The overall orientation of the district faces the sea, both in the alignment of the houses and the streets. This choice was entirely climatic. In

Kong, the sea breeze has historically been the primary source of natural ventilation, and the city’s traditional architecture was carefully designed to make the most of it. For this reason, most streets run along a northwest-southeast axis, and houses are equipped with windcatchers that open toward the prevailing breeze, ensuring comfort in the region’s warm and humid climate.

Windcatchers are the most prominent visual feature of Kong’s historic fabric — square towers ranging from three to five meters in height that once functioned as natural ventilation systems. These structures were built atop stone houses,



● ISNA

channeling the pleasant coastal air into interior rooms. The combination of windcatchers and the small minarets of local mosques shapes the skyline of the old district, giving the city a unique and distinctive appearance that reflects its maritime and architectural heritage.

Traditional houses in Kong were constructed from hard mountain stones and Sarooj mortar. Sandalwood and palm fibers were used for roofing, while a layer of clay and straw prevented moisture penetration. Bright colors, central courtyards, one-meter-high platforms surrounding the houses, and the absence of basements are all typical features of local architecture, per-



● chtn.ir

fectly suited to the warm and humid conditions of southern Iran.

Traditional water reservoirs were among the most important urban facilities of the past. They were constructed on low-lying land to the west of the city, outside the residential areas, to prevent contamination. Their main function was to collect rainwater and provide drinking water for residents during the hot months of the year, serving as a crucial element of urban infrastructure in a challenging climate.

Historically, Kong was divided into several neighborhoods, each with a distinct function.

With urban growth and expansion inland, the old district of Kong has

gradually lost many of its traditional functions. The absence of sufficient protective regulations, combined with the pressures of modern urban life, has led some longtime residents to leave the historic fabric. These changes have affected the city’s social character and accelerated the deterioration of the area. Despite these challenges, Kong remains one of the best-preserved historic urban fabrics in southern Iran, with a significant portion of its traditional houses, alleyways, and public spaces still intact.

The historic fabric of Bandar Kong is a rare and invaluable treasure of southern maritime architecture, seafaring culture, and climatic adaptation in a warm and humid environment. Its architectural identity, maritime history, traditional neighborhood system, prominent windcatchers, and climate-responsive urban structure give it tremendous cultural and historical value. Today, Kong stands as one of the most important examples of tangible heritage along the Persian Gulf coast, offering a living testimony to the city’s centuries-old connection with the sea, trade, and human ingenuity in harmony with the environment.



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# 17th Int'l Festival of Tribal Culture wraps up Golestan ethnic event bridges Central Asia, sparks tourism growth

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran highlighted deep-rooted cultural affinities with Central Asian neighbors at the 17th International Festival of Tribal Culture in the northern province of Golestan, as senior officials said strong public turnout indicates rising cultural tourism and growing regional engagement.

Ali Darabi, deputy cultural heritage minister, said Iran shares longstanding cultural and artistic common ground with countries including Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, IRNA reported.

Culture and art, he said, often succeed in building bridges where formal politics reach a "dead end", making festivals an effective instrument for dialogue, peace and social cohesion.

The festival, hosted in Gorgan and several other cities across Golestan through December 19, brought together representatives from all 31 Iranian provinces alongside ethnic groups resident in the province and cultural delegations from Central Asia, Afghanistan and other Asian countries.

The program featured ritual ceremonies, traditional music, handicrafts and ethnic products, staged at the

province's permanent exhibition center and in decentralized venues across Golestan.

Darabi said the scale of public participation during the first days of the event reflected months of sustained preparation by provincial authorities and cultural institutions. Visitors arrived from across Golestan as well as neighboring provinces, he said, describing the turnout as a "clear sign" of the province's growing appeal as a cultural tourism destination.

The deputy minister said one of the defining advantages of the 17th edition was the inclusion of dedicated cultural nights hosted by Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The performances, which highlighted shared musical traditions and artistic heritage, were met with strong public interest and reinforced the festival's international character, he said.

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri, also addressing the festival, framed the event within the government's broader rural development and tourism strategy.

Emptying villages, he warned, would amount to distancing the country from its cultural ideals. Sustaining families

in rural areas, supporting local production and ensuring access to financing and raw materials within the same geography were central to national policy, he said.

Salehi-Amiri outlined a strategy summarized as "one village, one ec lodge", aimed at steering tourists towards rural areas and traditional accommodation. The government's target, he said, is to direct at least half of domestic tourists to villages and eco-tourism facilities, integrating women, artists and handicrafts into local value chains while cutting out "unnecessary intermediaries".

The ethnically diverse Caspian province of Golestan hosts more than 1,000 nationally registered heritage sites, from the ancient Gorgan Wall to the UNESCO-listed Gonbad-e Qabus tower. Officials say the province is positioned for a major cultural and tourism expansion, supported by its geography, ethnic mosaic and historical assets.

A rural heritage museum is under construction across 50 hectares within the 650-hectare Qoroq forest park, located in the Hyrcanian woodlands, authorities said, adding to Golestan's cultural infrastructure and tourism



● ISNA

offering. Mohammad Hamidi, Golestan's deputy governor for political, security and social affairs, said strong public engagement reflected the province's long-standing tradition of peaceful coexistence among ethnic groups. Cultural diversity, he said, has

strengthened social cohesion and collective identity, rather than fragmenting it.

The festival featured more than 20 cultural and artistic groups and over 60 musicians and artisans from Iran and abroad, alongside 170 handicrafts booths representing Iranian provinces.

## Minister frames Yalda as regional cultural diplomacy tool ahead of solstice

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri urged countries across the Nowruz civilizational sphere to harness the ancient Yalda night as a platform for dialogue and cohesion, describing the ritual as a "civilizational discourse" that can advance cultural diplomacy and regional convergence.

In a video message to the "Chelleh Mehr" cultural and artistic program hosted by the ECO Cultural Institute on the eve of Yalda, Salehi-Amiri said the winter solstice observance went beyond a calendrical festivity, framing it as a shared language of conversation, solidarity and peace spanning families, societies and regions, ISNA reported.

The intervention underlines Tehran's effort to lean on soft power amid a fragmented regional landscape. By foregrounding common rituals across the Nowruz zone, which spans parts of Iran, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf, officials aim to thicken cultural linkages where political channels are constrained.

The approach mirrors a broader recalibration towards non-coercive tools, with cultural exchange positioned as a low-cost, high-impact vector for engagement.

"Yalda is not merely a night,"

the minister said, calling it a "deep-rooted" practice of togetherness that begins at home and extends into public life. He described the night-long gatherings and conversation as a social rehearsal for cohesion, capable of carrying meaning "beyond political borders" and national demarcations.

Salehi-Amiri linked Yalda to a continuum of Iranian rites, including Nowruz, Chaharshanbe Suri and Sizdah Bedar, portraying them as an integrated civilizational system that channels society away from "fracture" towards unity.

Yalda, he said, acts as a bridge that "moves us from division to consensus".

Emphasizing the regional dimension, the minister said the Nowruz area could activate a durable cultural current centered on dialogue, with Yalda as a "prominent symbol".

He pointed to the existing alignment of 13 countries around Nowruz as a template for elevating Yalda into a shared marker across Iran, ECO members, Central Asia, the Caucasus and neighboring Persian Gulf states. The minister contrasted cultural and political diplomacy, arguing that the former prioritizes shared heritage and peaceful coexistence over power and rivalry. Yalda, he said, inherently carries those values and can draw states and societies "from tension towards dialogue".

## Tehran Symphony stages Mendelssohn, Iranian music in 'Whispers Within'



● IRNA

### Arts & Culture Desk

The Tehran Symphony Orchestra staged a two-night program blending canonical European romanticism with contemporary Iranian composition at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on December 18 and 19, performing German Felix Mendelssohn's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream

Overture' alongside Mohammad Reza Tafazzoli's 'Symphony No.1,' under the baton of its permanent conductor, Nasir Heydari-an, the orchestra said.

The concerts opened with Mendelssohn's 'Op.21 overture,' a staple of the global symphonic repertoire, written when the German composer was

17 and inspired by Shakespeare's play, IRNA reported.

The brisk, gossamer string passages and sharply etched woodwind colors were shaped into a tightly paced reading that leaned into the work's "concert overture" independence rather than programmatic narrative, drawing sustained applause.

Mendelssohn, often cast as a bridge between classical form and romantic imagination, wrote the overture decades before completing the incidental music. Its structural autonomy and lucid orchestration have kept it in heavy rotation at major halls, from Leipzig to

London.

The second half turned decisively inward. The orchestra performed Tafazzoli's 'Symphony No.1,' a four-movement work first recorded in 2016 with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine. In Tehran, the ensemble presented all four movements across the two evenings, foregrounding a score that absorbs Iranian melodic logic into Western symphonic form without quotation.

The opening sonata movement sets two ideas in parallel motion, followed by a taut scherzo. A passacaglia draws on a theme linked to the coda of Gustav Mahler's

'Seventh Symphony,' before a finale that fuses introduction and rondo with Kurdish-inflected rhythmic drive. The writing is dense and technically demanding, with exposed brass and string figurations that test ensemble precision.

Addressing the audience, Heydarian framed the program as part of a broader push to put Iranian composers "first at home", arguing that sustained domestic performance is a prerequisite for international circulation.

Premieres, he noted, rarely arrive fully formed, but repeated exposure builds both technique and audience familiarity.

## Canadian resolution vote ...

It underscores the reduced influence of Western alliances and the weakening willingness of other countries to fall in line with Western lobbying within international bodies.

**What motivates Canada to pursue this resolution annually, and what domestic or foreign objectives does it seek to advance? Can this trend be viewed as part of broader Western pressure on Iran?**

Canada, as a country with its

own record of indigenous genocide, mass graves of indigenous children, systemic racism, and a deafening silence in the face of Israel's crimes in Gaza, lacks the moral standing to pursue such resolutions. Nevertheless, given the shared and specific mission defined by US allies to sustain maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran, while hoping to create internal fractures and weaken Iran's international position, Canada remains active in promoting double standards under the banner of human rights norms.

**Given that the human rights allegations raised by Canada could implicate many countries, why is the primary focus placed on Iran?**

Canada's focus on the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite its own systematic silence, alongside other Western allies, regarding Israel's war crimes and human rights violations, clearly demonstrates the lack of sincerity in Canada's professed commitment to UN human rights norms and its alignment with the United States. Iran, during periods of internal and external tension, has acted

against domestic offenders in accordance with judicial laws and within cultural, human, and ideological frameworks. In such circumstances, Iran's enforcement of its laws is portrayed by US Western allies as non-compliance with human rights standards. By contrast, Israel and numerous other countries, despite supporting terrorism and disregarding humanitarian principles, receive no meaningful warnings from international organizations due to their alignment with Western objectives and lobbying efforts.