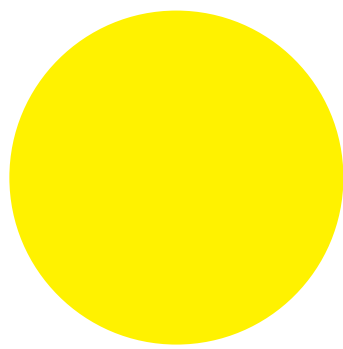


Easing banking access for  
Iranians in China to help  
bolster cooperation

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# Iran Daily

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The photo shows a general view of a United Nations Security Council meeting at United Nations headquarters in New York on December 23, 2025.

• AFP



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## UN Security Council rift signals waning Western consensus on Iran

By Delaram Ahmadi  
Staff writer

INTERVIEW



A United Nations Security Council meeting on Iran's nuclear program and Resolution 2231 was held in New York on December 23, despite opposition from China and Russia. The session took place after Resolution 2231, which enshrined Iran's 2015 nuclear deal, expired on October 18, meaning that Iran's nuclear file has formally fallen off the Security Council's agenda. However, the three European countries (France, the United Kingdom, and Germany) which shortly before the expiration activated the snapback mechanism, argue that the resolution

remains in force. China and Russia questioned not only the activation of snapback but also the very legitimacy of holding the meeting. Kamran Yeganegi, an international affairs expert, told Iran Daily that deep divisions between China and Russia on one side and Western countries on the other have effectively pushed the Council into a form of decision-making paralysis on the Iran file, a political signal of a shifting global balance of power and a decline in the West's ability to build broad-based consensus against Iran.

**IRAN DAILY: How do you assess the recent Security Council meeting on Iran's nuclear program, and what political message was embedded in holding it?**

**YEGANEHI:** The recent UN Security Council meeting must be assessed beyond its legal façade and analyzed with-

in its political and geopolitical context. From the standpoint of international law, the meeting produced no binding achievement or concrete executive outcome. Given the practical end of Resolution 2231's implementation cycle and the explicit opposition of China and Russia, the Council was in no position to adopt a decision based on consensus or even minimal effective agreement. In this sense, the meeting was symbolic rather than decision-oriented. Yet the real significance of the session lies precisely in this "deliberate symbolism". By pushing through the meeting despite knowing that two permanent members opposed it, the United States sought to once again elevate Iran's nuclear issue to the level of international security. This move was less about resolving the file and more about politically securitizing the issue and keeping it on the agenda of global public opinion and diplomacy.

The political message of the meeting can be summarized at three levels. First, a message to Iran: Washington aimed to signal that even without consensus and without new legal instruments, it remains capable of using the Security Council's platform to raise Iran's political and diplomatic costs. This is a strategy of "soft pressure," not a genuine pathway to agreement. Second, a message to Western allies: the United States sought to demonstrate that Iran remains a security priority and should not be reduced to a purely technical matter handled solely by the IAEA. Third, a message to the structure of the global order: the explicit opposition of China and Russia was equally meaningful, underscoring that the Security Council is no longer a venue for great-power consensus but has turned into a stage where geopolitical rifts and East-West rivalry are played out.

**What real consequences do such Security Council meetings have for Iran? Are they merely symbolic and political, or can they pave the way for concrete and binding actions against Tehran?**

This question must be answered realistically, without exaggeration, neither inflating the threat nor dismissing it as mere theater. These meetings on their own lack the capacity to generate new binding decisions against Iran. The absence of consensus in the Security Council and the clear opposition of China and Russia have effectively shut down the path toward adopting new resolutions or activating meaningful punitive mechanisms. In the short term, therefore, such sessions are unlikely to translate directly into new legal or sanctions-based measures against Tehran.

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# Araghchi urges US to try 'real diplomacy' instead of deceiving world

FM spox faults American outreach as 'propaganda ploy'



Abbas Araghchi  
IRNA

## International Desk

The Iranian foreign minister censured on Wednesday latest comments by an American diplomat at the UN Security

Council regarding negotiations with the Islamic Republic, saying her remarks are indicative of coercion rather than genuine diplomacy. Abbas Araghchi was responding to re-

marks made by Morgan Ortagus, the US deputy special envoy for West Asia and adviser to the US mission to the United Nations, during a UN Security Council meeting focusing on Iran and its peaceful nuclear program. Ortagus claimed at the meeting that US President Donald Trump was extending a "hand of diplomacy" toward Iran and that it would be wise for Tehran to accept it. The US diplomat also said the United States is ready for formal negotiations, provided that the Islamic Republic completely abandons uranium enrichment and agrees to direct talks. "A new definition of diplomacy by the US: 'We are ready for a meaningful negotiation, but forget about your internationally recognized rights.' This is dictation and not negotiation, let alone a meaningful one," Araghchi wrote in a post on X. He added that the world had witnessed Iran's approach to negotiations when

the United States "opted to open fire on our people and torpedoed diplomacy."

"We did what we always do: resist and confront those who assault us, and make sure they regret it," Araghchi said.

The Iranian foreign minister also rapped Washington's claims of pursuing diplomacy, saying, "'Extending the hand of diplomacy' does not entail sending bombers and then crow about their failure as a success."

Araghchi concluded by calling on the United States to "try real and honest diplomacy instead of attempting to deceive the world."

In another development on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei dismissed comments by Ortagus as "propaganda ploy aimed at deceiving public opinion."

"The US representative's rhetoric on diplomacy and negotiation is merely a propaganda ploy aimed at deceiving

public opinion," Baqaei said. "Unlike Iran, which has always remained committed to 'meaningful' diplomacy, the United States has demonstrated neither good faith nor seriousness."

The Israeli regime launched an unprovoked war against Iran on June 13, assassinating a number of top military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

More than a week later, the United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories as well as the al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia.

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the illegal assault.

## Eslami: Inspection demands 'unacceptable' until IAEA codifies post-war rules

### National Desk

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) dismissed as "unacceptable" any Western-pushed demands by the United Nations nuclear agency for the inspection of the country's bombed nuclear sites so long as guidelines and procedures were established for visiting the facilities damaged by the US and Israeli strikes in June. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Mohammad Eslami said until the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has not clarified the status of military aggression on a nuclear industry under its supervision, Tehran will not accept or respond to "irrelevant political pressure" to re-inspect bombed facilities, which he described as an attempt to "complete the enemy's operation."

"Iran has formally asked the IAEA to define and codify what procedures should apply if a nuclear industry registered with and monitored by the UN nuclear



Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), speaks to reporters after a cabinet session in Tehran on December 24, 2025.  
president.ir

agency comes under military attack," Eslami said. "Until this issue is determined, political and psychological pressure and irrelevant follow-ups aimed at re-inspecting Iran's bombed facilities and completing the enemy's operations are unacceptable and will not be responded to." Eslami stated that if the IAEA considers war and military attacks acceptable, it should formally adopt a resolution declaring that the Israeli and American attacks on safeguarded nuclear facilities are permitted. However, if such actions are not permitted, the IAEA must condemn them and clarify what the post-war conditions are, he added. Addressing Iran's cooperation with the IAEA, Eslami

said no country in history has cooperated with the UN nuclear agency as extensively as Iran. He noted that the most comprehensive and extensive inspections ever conducted have targeted Iran's nuclear industry, yet there has not been a single report by IAEA inspectors citing any non-compliance or deviation from safeguards standards. Iran's nuclear chief described the current political approach and maximum pressure campaign as an attempt to harm and weaken the Iranian people, stressing that such pressure holds no legitimacy and is ignored by Iran. Eslami reiterated that Iran's nuclear activities are entirely peaceful and pursued in line with the country's

development.

Touching on recent remarks by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, Eslami stated that such comments suggest Grossi is "playing a role in the enemy's roadmap." He also addressed the recent UN Security Council session, describing the reports and statements presented there as "completely unprofessional and illegal."

Eslami noted that the duration of Resolution 2231 has expired, and even if parties intended to invoke it, they failed to follow its established legal procedures. Eslami also underlined that attempts to justify the reimposition of previous UN Security Council sanctions under the pretext that Iran has not fulfilled its nuclear commitments were entirely rejected and unacceptable.

He added that China and Russia, as veto-wielding members of the Security Council, have also categorically dismissed this approach, declaring that the demand put forward by the three European countries and the US is invalid and unenforceable.

## West should 'reverse course' for confidence building: Envoy



### International Desk

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Amir Saïd Iravani vehemently dismissed any form of coercion, intimidation, or political pressure, calling on Western powers to reverse their current approach and adopt concrete, credible measures aimed at rebuilding trust and confidence. Addressing a UN Security Council session on Iran's peaceful nuclear activities on Tuesday, Iravani firmly rejected the legitimacy of the meeting itself and stressed that the Islamic Republic will not relinquish its right to uranium enrichment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). "Security Council resolution 2231 contains a clear, deliberate, and self-executing termination clause. This resolution expired on October 18, 2025. As of that date, it ceased to have any legal effect or operative mandate. Accordingly, the Security Council's role under resolution 2231 came to a definitive end," he said.

He added that therefore, there is "no mandate" for the Secretary-General to submit a report, "no mandate" for the council to discuss it, and "no legal basis whatsoever" to convene the meeting under the "Non-proliferation" agenda. Resolution 2231 endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), terminated previous sanctions, and set a clear timetable for their permanent expiration on October 18, 2025.

Earlier this year, the European troika – namely the UK, France, and Germany – triggered the so-called snapback mechanism that led to restoration of sanctions against Iran.

On the issue of the "snapback" of UN sanctions, Iravani reiterated that Iran

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Amir Saïd Iravani addresses a UN Security Council session on Iran's peaceful nuclear activities on December 23, 2025.  
IRNA

considers all such claims legally invalid, arguing that Resolution 2231 has terminated and that countries in non-compliance lack standing to invoke its mechanisms.

He underscored that Iran "remains fully committed to principled diplomacy and genuine negotiations. It will never submit to coercion, intimidation, or political pressure."

"It is now incumbent upon France, the United Kingdom, and the United States to reverse course and take concrete, credible steps to restore trust and confidence," he underlined.

The ambassador also criticized France and the United Kingdom for choosing escalation over diplomacy, slamming them for undermining Iran's cooperation with the IAEA and contributing to the collapse of diplomatic initiatives, including a memorandum of understanding signed in Cairo earlier this year.

According to Iravani, the unilateral US withdrawal from the JCPOA, sustained non-compliance by France, Germany, and the UK, and subsequent "military aggression" by the US and Israel against Iran's safeguarded nuclear facilities are the origin of the crisis.

The Islamic Republic has repeatedly said that it is not seeking nuclear weapons, stressing that its nuclear technology is solely for civil purposes. Also, there is a Fatwa by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution which bans any possession and use of weapons of mass destruction.

## Iran offers condolences to Libya after army chief killed in plane crash

Iran expressed condolences to Libya following the death of the chief of staff of the Libyan Government of National Unity in the crash of a private aircraft in Turkey. Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said on Wednesday that the crash carrying Field Marshal Mohammed al-Haddad, was "unfortunate incident," IRNA reported.

He expressed sympathy with the Libyan government and people and extended condolences to the families of the victims, according to a statement.

The aircraft went down early on Tuesday while returning from Ankara to Tripoli, killing all those on board.

In an official statement, the Libyan government Haddad and four members of his delegation were killed in the mishap. The statement said the plane was a "Fal-



con 50" and crashed near Ankara. Turkish officials said the plane requested an emergency landing minutes after taking off from Ankara airport because of a technical malfunction and a power system failure, but contact was later lost. The wreckage was found in the Haymana area near Ankara, and the black box and cockpit voice recorder were recovered from the crash site, Turkish authorities said.

The accident came as Libya was preparing to mark its independence anniversary on December 24 and 25, commemorating the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of Italian occupation. The Libyan government said the days would now be observed with three days of national mourning following the crash.

Libya has long been grappling with political and security divisions and is currently split between the United Nations-backed Government of National Unity in Tripoli led by Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah and a rival administration in the east headed by Khalifa Haftar.

The North African country has continued to struggle with instability and internal conflict since the 2011 uprising that led to the overthrow and killing of longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi.



# Minister: Azadegan output exceeds 230,000 bpd as development push continues

## Economy Desk

Iran's oil production at the Azadegan oilfield has risen to more than 230,000 barrels per day with further increases planned once new contracts are finalized, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Wednesday, as Tehran presses ahead with the development of shared hydrocarbon fields.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran, Paknejad gave an update on the southern section of the Azadegan oilfield, which Iran shares with Iraq, IRNA reported.

He stressed that work at Azadegan has continued without interruption, even though the contracts are not yet finalized.

"Our colleagues have never halted activities at the Azadegan field. Even without finalized contracts, they have relied on existing legal provisions, including Article 12 of the Law on Removing Barriers to Competitive Production, to keep development moving forward," he said. He said drilling operations have continued and surface facilities have also been expanded.

"As a result of these measures, production at the Azadegan field has risen above 230,000 barrels per day. Once the new contracts are finalized, this upward trend will accelerate, with higher output pursued in line with the project's timelines," Paknejad said.

He explained that the field is now being developed as an integrated project, effectively setting aside the division between South and North Azadegan.

According to Paknejad, a specific mechanism has been defined for developing the field and the related contract has been signed and is undergoing final reviews.

"The process is underway in collaboration with the National Development Fund (NDF) and the Planning and Budget Organization, and will be finalized in the near future, paving the way for faster field development," he said.

The government has outlined a plan to boost crude oil production by 250,000 barrels per day (bpd), supported by \$3 billion in funding. The initiative — officially named the "emergency plan" for a crude oil production leap — is the NDF's first direct involvement in major energy projects. It comes amid ongoing Western sanctions, which have sharply limited access to foreign investment, making domestic resources and the NDF's financial capacity critical for advancing key infrastructure efforts.

Iran does not publish detailed crude export figures due to US sanctions, which officials say require confidentiality. International Energy Agency (IEA) figures showed that Iranian oil production had reached 3.5 million bpd in November. On Wednesday, the minister said development of other shared fields was also



A view of Azadegan oilfield in Khuzestan, southwest of Iran  
● IRNA

continuing "with seriousness." Commenting on the South Pars gas field, he said in-field drilling and rigging operations are ongoing, while efforts to advance the pressure-boosting project

continue, aimed at establishing a stable mechanism for securing financial resources.

"At the same time, in other shared fields, including the Yadavaran field

and the North and South Yaran fields, development processes are underway without interruption, and plans to increase recovery and enhance production capacity are continuing," he said.

## SATBA says renewable capacity to top 4,000 MW in late Jan., eyes 11,000 MW by summer



● IRNA

## Economy Desk

Iran's renewable power generation capacity will surpass 4,000 megawatts by late January, while construction of 11,000 MW of renewable power plants is planned by the peak of next summer, an official at the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) said on Wednesday. Speaking to Tasnim, Hamid Reza Bahmanabadi, the head of SATBA's investment group, said that renew-

ables development had become the main strategy of the Energy Ministry to address the country's growing electricity deficit.

Bahmanabadi added that due to the worsening electricity supply-demand mismatch over the past two years, the country would face an estimated power shortfall of between 17,000 and 20,000 MW next year.

"Based on these assessments, the construction of renewable power plants has been placed on the agenda

as the Energy Ministry's main solution," he said.

Referring to provincial capacity, Bahmanabadi said Bushehr Province, due to its favorable potential, had so far commissioned around 38 MW of solar farms in different areas.

"Licenses have been issued or contracts are being finalized for about 1,360 MW of solar projects in the province, and some of these power plants are under construction," he said.

"It is expected that around 500 MW of this capacity will come online by the peak of next summer's electricity demand," he added, as he called it encouraging news for the stability of the power grid at both provincial and national levels.

Bahmanabadi said that nationwide, a total of 3,165 MW of renewable power plants had been built so far, noting that on average about 100 MW was added each week.

According to SATBA, 318 renewable power plants are active in Iran's elec-

tricity market.

Within Iran's renewable energy mix, solar power represents 66%, grid-connected distributed generation plants account for 15%, and wind farms make up 14%. Small hydroelectric plants contribute 4%, while biomass and expansion turbine plants each account for 1%. Renewables still account for only 3.2% of Iran's total electricity generation capacity of around 97,909 MW.

## Call for investment

Elsewhere in his remarks, the SATBA official invited investors and interested parties to step into the sector.

"Investment in clean energy is an attractive and economically viable path, and SATBA has provided various capacities to financially support investors," Bahmanabadi said.

He said these supports are offered in two forms, foreign-currency and rial-denominated facilities, noting that foreign-currency loans were provided from the National Development Fund

at an interest rate of 8.5%, while part of the required equipment for power plants was also supplied through this mechanism.

He added that the country's overall target for a five-year horizon was to reach 30,000 MW of green power capacity, with plans to realize 11,000 MW of this capacity by the peak of next year.

Separately, IRNA reported that eastern Iran would be equipped with two new wind parks through private sector investment amounting to more than \$500 million.

IRNA said construction work on two power stations, with a combined capacity of around 700 MW, began on Wednesday in Mil-e Nader, in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

With increased investment, the capacity of the two farms will rise to around 1,000 MW, and the injection of their generated electricity into the national grid will greatly enhance power stability in the southeastern province.

## UN Security Council ...

At the same time, these meetings are not purely symbolic or devoid of impact. Their real consequences manifest primarily at the political and diplomatic level. Each time Iran's file is raised in the Security Council, even without an executive outcome, it sends a signal to the international community that Iran continues to be viewed as an "unresolved security case." This atmosphere can indirectly influence the behavior of some governments, economic relations, and even the calculations of regional actors.

The core function of these meetings is gradual, attritional pressure rather than a decisive strike. The United States and certain Western countries use the Security Council as a platform to pile up political pressure, that may remain rhetorical today but could be converted into harder measures if international power balances shift. More importantly, the continuation of this trend risks pulling Iran's nuclear file out of its technical and legal track and deeper into the arena of great-power geopolitical rivalry, where decisions are shaped less by international law than by political trade-offs.

## How does the rift among permanent members of the Security Council affect its effectiveness in managing Iran's file?

The Security Council no longer enjoys the structural cohesion it once had in past decades. Deep disagreements between China and Russia on one side and Western countries on the other have effectively pushed the Council into a state of decision-making paralysis, unable to generate consensus, pass new resolutions, or exert coordinated and effective pressure on Iran. The Security Council has become less a crisis-resolution mechanism and more a mirror of geopolitical competition among great powers. Iran is no longer merely a "nuclear file," but part of a broader East-West equation, in which every decision on Iran is filtered through the strategic calculations of China and Russia vis-à-vis the West. For this reason, the December 23 meeting should not be viewed as a legal turning point, but rather as a political signal of a shifting global balance of power. The meeting was less a sign of Western strength than of its limitations, demonstrating that the West's capacity to forge broad-based consensus against Iran has significantly declined. Automatic

alignment no longer exists, nor is it possible to convert political pressure into binding decisions without Eastern backing.

This does not mean that Western pressure tools have vanished entirely. The West can still act outside the Security Council through unilateral sanctions or political and media pressure.

## Looking ahead, which pathways for a political resolution of Iran's nuclear crisis appear more plausible?

The future of Iran's nuclear file depends on political will and regional and international developments and can be summarized in four main frameworks.

First, a limited, step-by-step agreement. In the short term, the likely path is a phased deal that tackles urgent issues, such as setting clear limits on nuclear activity, and offering modest economic relief. Its purpose is managing the file, not delivering a final resolution.

Second, diplomacy with a new formula. A full revival of past frameworks seems unlikely; instead, a mix of nuclear commitments, confidence-building

measures, and updated monitoring could provide relative stability and predictability, rather than a comprehensive deal.

Third, managing the case at the technical level. With divisions in the Security Council, Iran's nuclear file may shift toward the IAEA, while the Council's role diminishes. This path relies on sustaining technical channels, minimum transparency, and avoiding renewed securitization.

Fourth, continuation of the gray zone. Without sufficient political will, the likely outcome is a controlled stalemate, neither a lasting deal nor a full crisis. This scenario means sustained pressure and sporadic talks, piling up political and economic costs without resolving the core issue.

In the near term, a limited and phased agreement appears more plausible than the other options, given the high costs of prolonged deadlock for all sides and the still-wide political distance separating them from a comprehensive deal. Ultimately, the fate of Iran's nuclear file hinges above all on one factor: keeping diplomatic channels open and preventing the issue from being reduced to a mere arena of geopolitical rivalry.



# Iran-US differences will not be resolved by renaming negotiations: **Expert**

## Employing 'diplomatic dexterity' imperative



US President Donald Trump (L) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu  
● THE TIMES



The structural and institutional penetration of the Jewish lobby, the personal characteristics and psychological traits of Trump, and the absence of a powerful pro-Iran lobby in the United States collectively raise, in a serious manner, the danger that Israel and Netanyahu personally could once again, by advancing certain claims, by engaging in media groundwork, and by utilizing instruments of influence, persuade Trump to align with them.

### INTERVIEW

The West Asia region has not yet been emancipated from the repercussions of the Gaza war, the border tensions between Lebanon and Israel, and the sporadic hostilities in the Red Sea. However, in the meantime, the dissemination of news concerning the imminent meeting of Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of the Zionist regime, with Donald Trump, the president of the United States, on December 29 has precipitated a renewed wave of conjecture, within the global media and political milieu, regarding novel scenarios of escalation and provocation. The principal axis of this meeting, according to numerous observers, is the endeavor of the Israeli prime minister to secure the favorable disposition of the US president for the purpose of smoothing the trajectory toward a renewed military confrontation with Iran; a confrontation which could subject the entirety of the region's security equations to profound transformation. These maneuvers are undertaken under circumstances in which Netanyahu is confronting intensifying domestic pressures, a crisis of political legitimacy, and operational impasses across multiple fronts. It appears that the strategy of "externalizing the crisis" has once again been placed on Tel Aviv's agenda. The effort to draw Washington into a new war not only could culminate in a redefinition of America's role in the region but could also gravely amplify the risk of an expansion of hostilities and instability in the Middle East; a scenario against whose consequences numerous regional and international actors have issued warnings. For the examination of this issue, an interview has been conducted with Rahman Ghahremanpour, an analyst of international affairs, the translation of which you read below.

Rahman Ghahremanpour



Israel, by raising the issue of Iran's missile capabilities, seeks to once again obtain the green light for a military attack on Iran from Donald Trump, and this effort is undertaken while it appears that the priority of the American president, at present, is the preservation of the fragile cease-fire in Gaza — of which he himself was the initiator. Under such circumstances, Netanyahu, for the purpose of sustaining the crisis, which some consider the locus of his political survival, seeks to rekindle from beneath the ashes the flames of war with Tehran. What is your analysis of the emergent atmosphere and Israel's program regarding Iran? To what extent do you consider the renewed alignment of Trump with Netanyahu on this matter probable?

**GHAHREMANPOUR:** It appears that Netanyahu, after a brief hiatus, is once again trying to return the Iran issue to the priorities of the White House. This occurs while the Trump administration, based on what is articulated in its National Security Strategy document, implicitly subscribes to the belief that Middle Eastern files have been closed and that there is no longer a necessity for the United States to reopen these dossiers, among which one can specifically reference the Gaza issue. Trump has repeatedly emphasized that "we have obliterated Iran's nuclear program" and that nothing remains of it. The aggregate of these positions indicates that Trump does not desire for the United States to become re-entangled in a long-term and expansive manner in the Middle East, and this approach constitutes the definitive policy of the United States.

Nevertheless, given the influence that the pro-Israel lobby wields in the United States, deviation by Washington from this overarching policy cannot be considered entirely impossible. Put more simply, Netanyahu, with the understanding that he possesses of

Trump's personality and with awareness that he is a temperamental individual, who is susceptible to the influence of his entourage and requires affirmation, attempts to utilize all instruments at Israel's disposal, in order to enlist him for another attack on Iran. On the other side, Trump and his administration endeavor to the greatest extent possible to avoid undertaking such an action. By way of illustration, the recently disseminated report, asserting that the United States intercepted a vessel carrying military equipment destined for Iran in the Indian Ocean, can be analyzed within this framework; an action that could convey this message to Israel that the White House is likewise attempting to prevent Iran from reconstructing its missile capabilities and thereby persuade Israel to refrain from advancing toward a renewed large-scale confrontation with Iran.

**Regarding Iran, some analysts believe that despite the significant convergence of the positions of the United States and Israel on the issue of maximum pressure, Trump and Netanyahu are not aligned with respect to the objective of this pressure; more precisely, Washington is not pursuing regime change in Iran. On this basis, to what extent can the recent statements of Marco Rubio concerning the distinction between the Iranian people and the Iranian government be interpreted as stepping toward Israel's idea?**

In my view, Trump's behavioral framework is no longer "maximum pressure" in its classical sense because, within the policy of maximum pressure, there is fundamentally no place for the direct use of force, military power, or recourse to war. This is while Trump, on June 13, resorted to war against Iran. Therefore, the more precise formulation is to ask whether Trump continues to operate within the framework of "coercive diplomacy" or whether, after June 13, he has returned to the policy of maximum pressure and war has become for him a red line. The reality is that I still believe Trump

operates within the framework of coercive diplomacy, meaning that war is not necessarily a red line for him. As he himself has explicitly stated: if Iran were to revive its nuclear program, the United States would attack. Therefore, the principal framework of Trump's behavior is coercive diplomacy. However, given what is stated in the National Security Strategy document, given Trump's own claims regarding the success of the attack on Iran's nuclear program, and given that he has explicitly declared his intention to focus on Latin America and perceives the Venezuela crisis as close ahead, and also by taking into consideration the Ukraine war and the implementation of what can be termed an "inverse Nixon Doctrine," it can be stated that Trump will endeavor to the greatest extent possible to avoid entering a broad confrontation with Iran.

In this context, as you also indicated, there exists a divergence of views between the United States and Israel; a divergence that, of course, is not a novel phenomenon. Let us not forget that during the Biden administration as well, when the Israeli security delegation traveled to Washington, the US government declared in an official statement that there existed differences of opinion between the United States and Israel regarding Iran. This divergence has existed in the Trump administration and also in the Biden administration.

The important point, however, is that Trump's distinctive personality and the mutability of his positions have furnished Israel, and particularly Netanyahu, with the opportunity to be more hopeful of the US president's alignment than during the Biden era. For this reason, Israeli think tanks and inner circles explicitly state that Trump represents a strategic and historical opportunity for Israel to be able to neutralize the Iran threat with his assistance. Accordingly, despite the existing divergences, Israel will not squander this opportunity and will deploy all of its efforts to capitalize upon it.

Meanwhile, one must not forget that Iran, unlike Israel and certain other



countries, lacks a powerful lobby in the United States, and its voice is not properly heard. The voice that is heard from Iran in the United States is predominantly that of regime-change opposition groups, which, in some instances, even share interests with Israel and support war at times. For this reason, this situation constitutes a serious danger for Iran. Mere opposition or episodic non-alignment by Trump with Israel regarding Netanyahu's Middle Eastern objectives cannot lead us to the conclusion that the possibility of Trump's alignment with Israel no longer exists or that Netanyahu will be incapable of aligning him. The structural and institutional penetration of the Jewish lobby, the personal characteristics and psychological traits of Trump, and the absence of a powerful pro-Iran lobby in the United States collectively raise, in a serious manner, the danger that Israel and Netanyahu personally could once again, by advancing certain claims, by engaging in media groundwork, and by utilizing instruments of influence, persuade Trump to align with them.

**Iran-United States nuclear negotiations, since the imposed 12-day war, have entered a state of complete coma. Iran accuses the United States of advancing maximalist demands, and simultaneously, it appears that Washington's view is the inclusion of non-nuclear issues, particularly Iran's missile capabilities, in any new agreement. Where do you think the crux of the problem lies? Recently, proposals have been raised suggesting that Iran and the United States change the title of "negotiations" to "an agreement for Iran's non-acquisition of nuclear weapons" in order to break the existing deadlock. To what extent do you consider such ideas to be practical?**

Regarding the change of the name of "negotiation," in any case, it does not appear that the principal disagreement concerns the name or the form; the issue is the substance. The complexity of politics is precisely embedded in this point that various variables are interlinked in a manner that creates reciprocal relationships among them. Therefore, the issue, as Mr. Salehi and some diplomats propose, is not merely a technical matter for which one could seek solely a technical solution. The issue is fundamentally political — that is, a conflict of interests. In such a situation, one must be capable of discovering a formula for this conflict of interests.

When we say that we should change the name of "negotiations" and, for example, speak of "negotiation for Iran's non-attainment of nuclear weapons," it is as though we intend to alter those divergences or to disregard them. While the reality is that a conflict of interests exists, and it is serious. The issue is not a matter of the past one or two days; for more than four decades, this conflict of interests has existed, and divergences of perspectives and approaches have taken shape. Therefore, from the outset, we have been confronting a complex issue, and if we seek to present a solution, we must accept the essence of this complexity and conflict of interests rather than deny it.

The denial of this conflict of interests means that the policymaker cannot regard our proposed solution as a realistic one. Reductionist solutions that essentially seek to say that "it is nothing" or that "take a deep breath, and it will fade away," at best and in the most optimistic scenario, generate the impression in the policymaker that the analyst or solution-provider lacks a realistic understanding of the existing situation. Therefore, we must find a solution for this conflict of interests, recognize it formally, and, on the other hand, institutionalize within the country the principle that international politics is an arena of conflicting interests and scarcity of power and that global powers are not equal to one another. At times, this perception, or at least this unwritten assumption, exists within our country that Iran's and America's positions in



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (3rd-L) visits an exhibition of the defense ministry's latest defense and space achievements, in Tehran on February 2, 2025.  
● [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)

the hierarchy of power in international politics are identical, and prescriptions are issued on that basis, while the reality is otherwise. On this basis, in negotiations as well, we are not situated in an equal position. Inevitably, we must define and calibrate expectations from negotiations in proportion to this reality. Not only are we not in an equal position, but also after June 13, unfortunately the perception of the opposing side — namely the United States and even Europe and, perhaps, one could say, some of Iran's friends — is that Iran's position in international politics has been weakened. This perception complicates matters because, in negotiation, the party that considers itself stronger is unwilling to grant greater concessions in order to reach an agreement. This is precisely the situation we are confronting now; that is, the United States exhibits no inclination to grant concessions, while the discourse of "coercive diplomacy" and past experiences demonstrate that, usually, the possibility of agreement has increased when the stronger government, which here is the United States, has granted greater concessions. Therefore, the deadlock in the negotiations has formed across multiple layers. At the foundational and essential level, a conflict of interests exists, which has taken shape over the past four decades, and discovering a middle-ground solution for both sides is an exceedingly difficult task, given the aforementioned conflict. The fate of the JCPOA also demonstrated to what extent pro-agreement forces in the two countries are positioned unequally, or, more precisely, that an-

ti-agreement forces possess greater power. As a result, it appears that rather than rendering the issue technical in appearance and rather than reducing this conflict of interests to a merely technical matter, we must start by accepting the complexity and multidimensionality of the issue and then, present a solution that, at least, encompasses part of the concerns of the decision-makers in Iran; they should be able to defend this solution within the arena of domestic politics and should not perceive its implementation as tantamount to the loss of their positions in domestic politics or the loss of legitimacy.

**What is the principal obstacle that you believe to be so complex and multidimensional?**  
In my view, if we wish to simplify the issue, the principal obstacle lies in the enrichment issue. In the enrichment debate, both countries, meaning the leaders on both sides, confront exceedingly serious domestic considerations. On one hand, Trump wishes to demonstrate to his electoral base that he is different from Obama, and if he reaches an agreement with Iran that agreement will be both "better" than Obama's agreement and of a different nature. This difference and "better quality," in Trump's view, is defined in the form of zero enrichment; meaning that, from his perspective, defending an agreement with Iran in American domestic politics is possible only if that agreement includes the suspension of enrichment. In Iran as well, the enrichment issue is equally intertwined with domestic

politics. The governing establishment has reached the conclusion that if it is to consent to an agreement with the United States, it must be able to justify it domestically. This justification is possible only if the United States recognizes, even implicitly and on paper, Iran's right to enrichment. Only in this case can Iran explain why, after the 12-day war, it has moved toward negotiations with the United States. We know that negotiations, both in Iran and in the United States, have serious opponents within decision-making structures and within the arena of domestic politics. Trump's rivals in the United States and the principlists (or whatever we label them) in Iran are poised to question any agreement if the government or the foreign policy apparatus moves toward it. Therefore, both Trump and Iran, by ill fortune, are faced with conflicting interests for the defense of an agreement in domestic politics; Trump seeks the suspension of enrichment, and Iran seeks the preservation of enrichment. This is the current obstacle to the negotiations. It appears that, given the understanding that has emerged in recent years of American behavior, Washington will not fully pressure Iran. Accordingly, regarding Iran, in my view, if this dilemma is resolved and Tehran can correctly employ diplomatic dexterity and if anti-agreement forces cannot take matters into their own hands, then the possibility of negotiation and the attainment of an agreement will exist.

*The interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.*



The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (front-R) pledged its support for US President Donald Trump (C) by posting this AI image of him winning an oversized Nobel medal.  
● [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)

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Regarding the change of the name of "negotiation," in any case, it does not appear that the principal disagreement concerns the name or the form; the issue is the substance. The complexity of politics is precisely embedded in this point that various variables are interlinked in a manner that creates reciprocal relationships among them. Therefore, the issue, as Mr. Salehi and some diplomats propose, is not merely a technical matter for which one could seek solely a technical solution. The issue is fundamentally political — that is, a conflict of interests. In such a situation, one must be capable of discovering a formula for this conflict of interests.



## UWW Awards:

## Amouzad named Most Dominant Freestyle Wrestler of the Year

## Sports Desk

Iran's Rahaman Amouzad has been named the United World Wrestling (UWW) Most Dominant Freestyle Wrestler of the Year, securing the fourth award for the country at the annual UWW Awards.

The 23-year-old standout edged fellow Iranian world champion Amirhossein Zare', Americans Zahid Valencia and Kyle Snyder, and Russian Zaur Uguev to claim the prestigious honor.

The recognition follows a dominant 12-month stretch in which Amouzad returned to the top of the sport with title-winning campaigns at the Senior World Championships, the Islamic Solidarity Games and the Muhamet Malo Ranking Series event. He finished the season ranked world No. 1 in the 65kg category with 58,000 points.

Amouzad compiled a flawless 14-0 record in 2025, with five victories coming against elite opponents who hold world or Olympic medals — including American Real Woods (twice), Uzbekistan's Umidjon Jalalov and Kyrgyzstan's Taiyrbek Zhumashbek Uulu.

The highlight of his season came at September's World Championships in Zagreb, where he avenged his loss to Kotaro Kiyooka in the final of the Paris Olympics by defeating the Japanese wrestler in



Iranian freestyle wrestler Rahman Amouzad celebrates after his final victory over Japan's Kotaro Kiyooka at the World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia, on September 16, 2025.

● IAWF

ceding just one en route to the world title.

After moving up to the 87kg division at the U23 World Championships in October, Farrokhi swept aside all five opponents by technical superiority — including Ukraine's Ivan Chmyr in the final — to clinch gold in Novi Sad, Serbia. He capped off his season with another title at the Islamic Solidarity Games, beating Kazakhstan's Islam Yevloyev 6-0 in the final.

In addition, Iran was named Top Greco-Roman Team of 2025 following a prolific year that saw the nation complete a clean sweep of four world team titles across all age groups. Iranian wrestlers earned medals in 29 of the 40 weight categories on offer, collecting 10 golds, six silvers and 13 bronzes.

The high point of Iran's international campaign came at the Senior World Championships in Zagreb, where a remarkable haul of four golds, two silvers and two bronzes secured only the country's second team title — and its first since 2014 — in the history of the competition.

emphatic fashion. Amouzad secured a technical superiority victory in the first period of the 65kg final to claim his second world title, adding to his 2022 triumph. Remarkably, across his five wins against top-tier opponents, Amouzad outscored them by a combined margin of 42-4. Nicknamed "Ruthless Rahman," Amouzad was equally dominant

at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November, reaching the final in Riyadh without conceding a single point before overpowering Tajikistan's Abdulmazhid Kudiev 12-2 to secure his second major gold medal in less than two months. Amouzad's compatriot Saeid Esmaeili was earlier named Most Dominant Greco-Roman Wrestler of 2025, following a stellar season

in which the reigning Olympic champion also captured world and ISG gold medals, along with a second consecutive Asian title in March. Meanwhile, Gholamreza Farrokhi claimed the Breakout Performer of the Year award after posting a perfect 17-0 record across his international appearances, including 11 victories by technical

superiority.

Farrokhi announced his arrival on the senior stage at February's Ranking Series event in Zagreb, defeating 2024 world silver medalist Erik Szilvassy of Hungary 6-2 in the 82kg final. He built on that momentum at the World Championships in September, amassing 37 points across four bouts while con-

## AFC Futsal Asian Cup:

## Past glory offers no guarantees as Iran eyes 14th continental crown



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour  
Staff writer

Defending champion Iran is set to face a sterner test at the upcoming AFC Futsal Asian Cup, which kicks off on January 27 in Indonesia.

Team Melli will begin its quest for a record-extending 14th continental title against Malaysia in its Group D opener on the second day of the competition in Jakarta. Iran has long been the dominant force at Asia's flagship futsal event, having suffered just four defeats in 105 matches across the previous 17 editions. Two of those losses came in finals against Japan — the only nation other than Iran to have lifted the Asian crown.

Fresh from a gold-medal campaign at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November — capped by a commanding 5-0 victory over Morocco in the final — Iran once again enters the tournament as the outright favorite to lift the trophy at the Indonesia Arena on February 7.

However, with the rapid development of futsal across the continent in recent years, Vahid Shamsaei's side will need to navigate a series of tricky challenges against emerging Asian powers.

Afghanistan will be making only its second appearance at the tournament, but arrives with growing confidence after an impressive debut in 2024. Under Iranian coach Majid Mortezaei, Afghanistan finished fifth to secure a historic first-ever World Cup berth in Uzbekistan later that year.

Mortezaei's men went on to enjoy a respectable World Cup campaign, opening with a comfortable win over Angola before narrow defeats to eventual semifinalists Argentina and Ukraine. They advanced to the round of 16, where they were edged out 3-1 by Paraguay after extra time.

Iran and Afghanistan will meet at a major



● FFIRI

tournament for the third time in less than two years when they clash in Group D on February 1. Iran claimed a 3-1 win when the sides met at last year's Asian Cup, but were held to a 2-2 draw at the Islamic Solidarity Games.

Also in Group D is Saudi Arabia, which exited at the group stage in the previous edition but showed signs of progress at the ISG on home soil. The Saudis pushed eventual champions Morocco in the semifinals before falling 6-3 after extra time.

Tajikistan, meanwhile, will be making its 12th Asian Cup appearance. The Central Asian side has reached the quarterfinals twice and recorded its best-ever finish last year with a fourth-place result. Uzbekistan, which defeated Tajikistan in the third-place playoff, will return as a four-time runner-up. The side was narrowly beaten by Iran on penalties in the 2024 semifinals and again pushed Shamsaei's men hard at the ISG, eventually losing 4-2, before securing the bronze medal with a shootout victory over Saudi Arabia.

Three-time finalist Thailand will also be among the teams to watch in Jakarta. Although beaten 4-1 by Iran in the most recent final, Thailand remains the only team other than Japan to have defeated Iran in Asian Cup history, thanks to a dramatic 5-4 semifinal victory at the 2012 edition in Dubai.

"From past experience, we know that every Asian team raises its game to the maximum when facing Iran, bringing far greater energy onto the court. That's why we can't afford to be fooled by previous results," Shamsaei told the official website of the Iranian Football Federation.

"It's not a case of simply boarding a plane, picking up the trophy, and coming back. It will take a great deal of effort and hard work.

"We are aiming for the ultimate prize, but for now our focus is firmly on the group stage, and then we will turn our attention to the later rounds in due course," the Iranian futsal great added.

## Olfati's historic Asian gold among 'gymnastics biggest stories of 2025': FIG

## Sports Desk

Mahdi Olfati's historic gold medal at the Men's Artistic Gymnastics Asian Championships in June was recognized as "one of the sport's 10 biggest stories" of 2025 by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG).

Olfati made history for Iranian gymnastics by scoring 14.500 points in the men's vault final in Jecheon, South Korea, claiming the country's first gold in 12 editions of the competition.

China's Huang Mingqi took silver, while reigning Olympic champion Carlos Yulo of the Philippines settled for bronze.

"2024 Olympian Mahdi Olfati raised the standard on men's vault when he landed a Yurchenko full-twisting double back at the Asian Championships in Jecheon," the FIG report said.

"The 5.6 difficulty vault made Olfati the first Iranian gymnast to win an Asian title in gymnastics and etched his name into the Men's Code of Points as the creator of one of gymnastics' most challenging new skills," the report added.

The 24-year-old Iranian also made history at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, two years ago, when he claimed vault silver — Iran's first-ever artistic gymnastics medal in 19 editions of the Games.



● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA



# Women designers blend tradition, sustainability, empowerment



● IRNA

## Iranica Desk

In the heart of Tehran, fashion designers are breathing new life into Iran's traditional crafts by repurposing fine fabrics and ornate embroidery from old tablecloths and transforming them into contemporary, wearable garments. Drawing inspiration from Iran's majestic historical architecture and the diverse artistic traditions of its regions, they have created vests and coats that are more than items of clothing — they function as cultural messengers of the Iranian plateau.

According to IRNA, designers and tailors of traditional clothing in Tehran have embarked on a distinctive path — one that remains faithful to the deep-rooted history of needlework while simultaneously addressing environmental concerns through the use of recycled and reclaimed textiles.

Through conversations with fashion designers and artisans, this report explores efforts to revive Baluchi embroidery, the pricing mechanisms of handmade gar-

ments, targeted job creation for talented women — particularly those living in marginalized areas — and hopeful initiatives aimed at exporting these cultural symbols beyond Iran's borders.

Nasrin Farrokhi, a Tehran-based designer of traditional clothing, said she represents a style she refers to as "recycled fashion." "Our main approach is to reuse fabrics and materials that are no longer considered usable. For instance, old tablecloths featuring valuable and intricate embroidery are restored and then sewn onto traditional garments," she explained.

Farrokhi added that by recycling textiles, she seeks not only to revive precious handicrafts such as needlework, but also to transfer these arts into new, practical forms while contributing to the preservation of the environment. Commenting on public reception and pricing, she noted that sales are largely conducted through social media platforms, supported by her daughter's active fashion atelier in Shiraz. "These innovative traditional garments — cre-

ated using recycled luxury fabrics and inspired by themes such as nature — have been very well received. Prices vary depending on the amount of handwork involved and the materials used," she said. Farrokhi stated that she has not yet succeeded in exporting her products. However, by participating in handicraft and fashion exhibitions, she hopes to establish professional connections and receive support from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, particularly in the field of exports.

She emphasized that Iranian arts — especially regional needlework traditions — are exceptionally rich. "Exporting culture does not simply mean physically showcasing clothing. Conveying Iranian concepts and artistry through a simple item such as a vest is itself a form of cultural promotion. Given their beauty and high artistic value, these products have strong potential to attract international audiences," she said.

Farrokhi also stressed the importance of institutional support,

noting that many female heads of household and women in vulnerable circumstances possess valuable skills that deserve recognition and backing. Drawing on her eight years of experience managing a top-level tailoring and design institute outside Tehran, she said she is now working to establish training spaces in the capital and to outsource production to women who, due to mobility or social constraints, are unable to work outside their homes.

Another Tehran-based designer, Kimia Faramarzi, said her work began with the idea of portraying Iran through art and design. "Our primary sources of inspiration are Iran's ancient monuments and cultural treasures. We traditionally embroider motifs and landmarks such as the Jameh Mosque of Yazd, the Nasir al-Molk Mosque, the Blue Mosque, Si-o-se Pol Bridge, and Azadi Tower onto garments," she told IRNA.

Faramarzi explained that while the main focus of her work is on vests, coats and other garments are also designed and produced.

She added that participation in the Iranian Vest Exhibition significantly increased public attention toward this product.

"Our designs often incorporate Baluchi needlework and hand-stitching techniques. In order to support the embroiderers, prices are set slightly higher," she said.

According to Faramarzi, the design and production process is highly collaborative. Needlework is carried out by women artisans in Baluchistan, and once the embroidered pieces are sent, the final designs are developed based on the fabrics and needlework received. "As a result, each piece is entirely unique," she added.

She stressed that exporting these products could not only introduce Iran's historical landmarks and cultural symbols to international audiences, but also generate greater income for women in marginalized communities, enabling them to achieve a more stable and dignified livelihood.

Nazli Avesta, another traditional clothing designer based in Teh-

ran, said her main interest lies in blending Baluchi embroidery with modern fashion aesthetics. "By combining needlework with denim fabric, I design and produce women's vests. The vest is a practical and elegant garment that had long fallen out of everyday use," she said.

Avesta noted that demand for distinctive, traditional Iranian designs is strong; however, the cost of handmade traditional garments remains higher than that of industrially produced clothing. To attract customers seeking more affordable options, she explained, machine-made fabrics featuring traditional patterns are combined with denim.

She added that her team also produces items such as mini-scarves and neck wraps incorporating Baluchi embroidery, which are both decorative and functional as head coverings. Regarding institutional support, Avesta said that discussions have recently taken place with relevant authorities to secure financial facilities and assistance for artisans.

## Gilan's Gisum village advances toward global tourism recognition

## Iranica Desk

Gisum village, located in Talesh, Gilan Province, has been selected as one of 14 villages nationwide nominated for global registration, due to its unique natural and cultural capacities and the active participation of local residents in environmental protection. The village's narrative is deeply rooted in the sustainable coexistence of humans and nature in the heart of the Hyrcanian forests.

Seyyed Mostafa Fatemi stated that the central story and narrative of the village must focus on environmental conservation. Emphasizing the role of public participation in protecting the surrounding environment, he said that educational workshops should be organized for local communities in cooperation with the Department of Environment, ISNA wrote.

He stressed that a key priority is the development of a village management plan based on environmental standards. Fatemi added that global registration should serve as a catalyst for preserving the village's environment, noting that forest tourism has become a prominent global trend in which tourist presence not only avoids environmental degradation but can also contribute positively to the expansion of green spaces, carbon reduction, and the decrease of pollution.

Emphasizing the need to pilot this model in Gisum, he stated that the implementation of a "zero-waste"



plan should also be considered, alongside efforts to increase public participation in such initiatives. Fatemi further underlined the crucial role of natural resources agencies, environmental authorities, and other stakeholders, calling for their active involvement in provincial and county committees to provide consultation on viable village-based initiatives.

Referring to the strong performance of the provincial tourism committee chaired by the Governor of Gilan Province, he said environmental institutions and non-governmental organizations must adopt an education-oriented approach to properly convey the village's story — one centered on environmental conservation and ecological restoration.

He added that the continued planting of native trees by environmental and natural resources authorities, the establishment of a handicrafts market, support for villagers' creative handicraft produc-

tion, and the launch of a dedicated village website are among the necessary measures to be pursued. Yousef Salmankhah, Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Gilan Province, described Gisum as a pristine natural landscape nestled within the Hyrcanian forests. He said the village's scenery captivates every observer, referring to its natural features as a divinely bestowed spectacle capable of hosting festivals such as coastal and foothill autumn foliage events.

Noting that Gisum is a four-season village, Salmankhah highlighted its majestic autumns, beautiful winters, and pleasant springs, adding that sand sculpture festivals could also be organized in line with the region's climate. He stated that the village has a history of around 500 years and has long been one of the main settlements of the Talesh people, with a population structure that has seen no significant in-migration to date.



● kojaro.com

He described Gisum as a living heritage of human-nature interaction within the Hyrcanian forests, emphasizing that its residents have historically served as guardians of the natural environment. He added that the village's narrative reflects attachment, solidarity, convergence, and alignment between local people and authorities, showcasing a distinctive model of local governance.

According to him, the criteria outlined by the World Tourism Organization are present in Gisum, qualifying the village for inclusion on the organization's list of tourism villages.

Regarding tourism infrastructure, Salmankhah said Gisum includes three well-known forest sites hosting tourism complexes, 20 guesthouses, and two eco-lodges. He also pointed to the village's distinctive architecture and layout, its historical values, settlement heritage, deep-rooted human-nature connections, historic routes and

forest roads, as well as local culture and rituals, as key advantages.

He added that seasonal handicrafts and souvenir markets are among Gisum's prominent cultural tourism assets. Supporting the local economy, he said, can further promote rural tourism, marine tourism, ecotourism, and handicrafts, including traditional crafts such as kilim weaving, woodcraft, and basket weaving. He also noted that traditional Taleshi clothing is another element that uniquely connects color, nature, and people in Gisum. Reza Jamshidi, Governor of Talesh, noted Gisum village possesses exceptional cultural, economic, and tourism capacities. Covering more than 80 hectares, the village is located adjacent to the sea and alongside the young, lush Hyrcanian forests.

He highlighted the famous five-kilometer Gisum forest road as one of the area's main attractions, describing it as a stunning natural corridor linking forest and sea,

and one of the most beautiful landscapes in northern Iran and Gilan Province, attracting millions of tourists annually.

Jamshidi emphasized the importance of the village's traditional fabric and wooden structures, which are harmonized with the local ecosystem and create a picturesque setting. He noted that both domestic and international tourists not only visit Gisum for sightseeing but often choose to stay in the village for several days.

He underscored the spontaneous and active involvement of Gisum residents in forest protection, natural resource conservation, water resource preservation, and waste management, noting that local authorities and other stakeholders are also actively engaged in these efforts.

Jamshidi added that organizing local festivals, traditional ceremonies, and rural tourism activities in the coastal-forest village of Gisum — long home to indigenous communities — can further enhance tourist attraction. He also pointed to the village's high international ecological value due to its location within the globally registered Hyrcanian forests, its rich biodiversity, and the rare adjacency of forest and sea, making it one of western Gilan's most distinctive destinations.

According to ISNA, 14 villages across the country have been selected for global registration, with Gisum village in Gilan Province among them.





# Easing banking access for Iranians in China to help bolster cooperation



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

## INTERVIEW

*In recent years, as economic and political cooperation between Iran and China has expanded, banking challenges linked to international and unilateral sanctions have emerged for Iranians living in China, particularly students. These problems stem less from bilateral relations than from the requirements of the international banking system and sanctions pressure on Iran. At times, such restrictions have made it difficult for segments of the Iranian community in China to access basic banking services.*

*China, one of Iran's closest economic partners and a major destination for Iranian exports, has consistently opposed unilateral US sanctions. Bilateral ties are currently developing within the framework of strategic cooperation, notably under the 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement. Analysts say that as the agreement gradually moves into its implementation phase, it could help ease some banking barriers and facilitate financial interaction between the two countries.*

*In this context, expectations are growing that, through stronger executive mechanisms, use of existing capacities and new financial tools, banking issues faced by Iranians in China — especially students — may gradually be addressed. Iran Daily spoke with Mohammadreza Elhami, vice president of the Iran-China Friendship Association (ICFA), about these issues, measures taken so far and prospects for resolving the challenges as bilateral cooperation deepens.*

**IRAN DAILY: What is behind the closure of Iranian bank accounts in China, and what problems has this created, particularly for students?**

**ELHAMI:** After sanctions were ramped up, Chinese banks and companies — due to their extensive ties with international financial institutions, especially US banks — imposed restrictions on Iranian nationals to avoid exposure to sanctions. These measures affected both companies and banks. At times, Iranian travelers holding Iranian passports were unable to exchange the US dollar even at airports, which was one of the first visible signs of these restrictions. For Iranians residing in China — including merchants, businesspeople and students — the situation was more serious, as their bank

accounts were closed. This has been the case for almost seven years and is directly linked to banking sanctions. Some businesspeople were forced to register property or open accounts in the names of Chinese nationals to conceal Iranian involvement, which created additional problems. Students faced similar difficulties. Even students on Chinese government scholarships, who were meant to receive stipends through bank transfers, were unable to open accounts. In practice, opening US dollar accounts for Iranians was impossible, forcing many students, both scholarship recipients and others, to rely on informal markets or Chinese intermediaries to manage their finances.

**How have students without scholarships or those needing financial support from Iran managed under these conditions?**

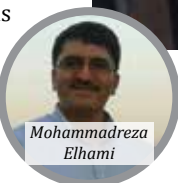
This has been one of the main challenges for students. Some attempted to manage through embassy channels or indirect methods, but overall the situation has been extremely difficult. Over the past several years, the issue has repeatedly been raised through Iran's Foreign Ministry and in discussions with Chinese officials, both at embassy level and within the ICFA. The Chinese side has said these decisions are made by banks. Given their extensive international links, Chinese banks seek to preserve those relationships and avoid sanctions by complying with restrictions on Iran. China's banking transactions with Iran are relatively small compared with its dealings with other international banks, leading Chinese financial institutions to avoid taking on sanctions risk.

**What immediate solutions have been considered, particularly for students?**

According to available information, between 5,000 to 6,000 Iranians live in China, most of them students, along with around 500 Iranian businesspeople and merchants. Given the large number of students, solutions have been sought specifically for this group. Recent information suggests that some facilitation has been introduced, including access to the widely used Alipay payment system. In China, many transactions are conducted digitally via QR codes, with funds deducted directly from accounts. Iranian students appear to have gained limited access to this system using their identification documents, allowing them to handle daily expenses. This has addressed part of the students' problem, but merchants and business operators continue to face unresolved



Iranian students at Xiamen University, China  
● cri.cn



Mohammadreza Elhami

issues related to opening accounts and conducting banking transactions.

**But even these payment systems require funds to be deposited. Is it not possible to distinguish between students, ordinary citizens and businesspeople?**

For students, such differentiation has been applied to some extent. Chinese government scholarship students receive payments in yuan, which are deposited into yuan-denominated accounts. If they have personal funds, they typically convert dollars into yuan through the informal market or via Chinese contacts and deposit the funds accordingly.

However, the problem of officially transferring money from Iran in US dollars has not been fully resolved and, in many cases, remains possible only through exchange houses.

**Given the 25-year cooperation agreement, should China not be expected to take stronger action, especially for Iranian students?**

In trade, part of the problem has been addressed through mechanisms such as barter, including oil-for-goods arrangements that avoid monetary transfers. Since China produces most of the goods Iran needs, this has helped mitigate some difficulties.

Another key objective of the 25-year agreement is the internationalization of the yuan and its use as an alternative to the US dollar in transactions, which could help resolve existing issues. Financial mechanisms such as China's

CIFT system have also been discussed, with indications that Iranian businesspeople may be able to use it, though the extent of its implementation remains unclear.

Following President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to China and developments after the 12-day war, both sides appear to have concluded that closer cooperation is needed. Mutual trust has increased, which could help resolve financial obstacles and strengthen cooperation in other areas.

**Can Chinese banks persuade foreign counterparts to make exceptions at least for limited student accounts?**

Yes, this is possible. If there is genuine determination to resolve the problems faced by traders and students, solutions can be found. Efforts by China in this area would signal the level of commitment to implementing the 25-year agreement in practice.

Previously, intermediary banks such as Bank of Kunlun were designated to handle such transactions and were accepted by the international banking system for a time, but their operations later faced difficulties as sanctions intensified.

**As an ICFA member, do you expect the Chinese government to propose a clear solution?**

Yes. The 25-year agreement has taken on symbolic importance. On one side, foreign opponents promoted negative narratives around it. On the other, China's caution due to sanctions concerns meant Iran ultimately bore the costs. However, recent developments and

growing mutual needs have created conditions for more practical cooperation, raising hopes that these issues can gradually be settled.

**Under the 25-year agreement, what should be the main areas of focus, and what does Iran expect?**

The expectation is not an excessive tilt toward China, but rather meaningful Chinese investment in Iran alongside trade, particularly in renewable energy, infrastructure, transport, and oil and gas.

Investment, rather than imports alone, is what generates employment and economic growth for Iran. Such cooperation also benefits China economically and helps counter perceptions that China seeks only to sell products abroad. Achieving this requires simplifying bureaucracy and speeding up administrative processes in Iran so cooperation can proceed on a mutually beneficial basis.

**How beneficial could Chinese participation in production inside Iran be for China itself?**

It would be highly beneficial. Iran offers significant investment opportunities that can be profitable for China. Chinese products, contrary to some perceptions, are of high quality in many sectors and meet global standards.

At the same time, Iranian traders and regulatory bodies must ensure quality control so that high-quality Chinese goods enter the Iranian market. This benefits Iranian consumers while also protecting the reputation of Chinese products in Iran.

## Iranian films selected for India's International Folklore Film Festival

Two Iranian feature films have been selected to screen at the ninth International Folklore Film Festival in India, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday. 'The Sound of Silence,' written, directed and produced by Mehrad

Mehrkish, and 'The Last Romance,' directed by Asal Javanmardi and produced by Mehdi Karamad Tabrizi, will be shown at the festival, which runs from January 15 to 20, in the city of Thrissur in India's southern state of

Kerala.

The Last Romance stars Nasser Jalali, Hourieh Khosravi, Niloufar Pourmehdi, Raha Alvandi and Atash Taghipour. The cast of The Sound of Silence includes Maedeh Rezvani, Shadi Niknam, Amirhossein

Niknam, Mahsa Pourhadi, Negar Sanjarifar, Hediye Hashemi, Satiar Rajabi and Mehrad Mehrkish, among others.

The International Folklore Film Festival held annually is a specialized Indian cinema event focusing on culture, ritu-

als, folklore and indigenous narratives, and screens independent and ethnographic films from around the world.

International distribution of both Iranian films is being handled by Solmaz Etemad, an Iranian writer and poet.

