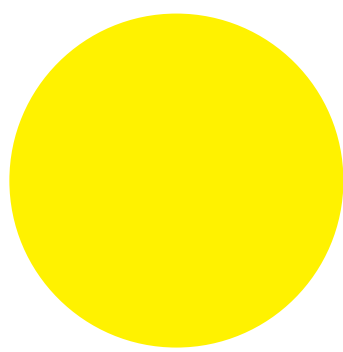


Iran, Indonesia seek closer environmental cooperation at BRICS meeting

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Qalibaf: Regional security order changing following aggression on Iran

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Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (c) speaks during a press conference upon his arrival in Baghdad on August 19, 2026 at the site where Iran and Iraq's anti-terror commanders, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, were assassinated by the US in 2020.

● AFP

Caspian Convention in Iran's favor

Ratification delay preserves leverage but postpones access to its benefits

INTERVIEW

The submission of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea to the Iranian Parliament has once again sparked a wave of concerns in the country's media and political circles. International affairs analyst Kourosh Ahmadi spoke to IRNA, addressing some of the criticism. He believes the convention is fundamentally in Iran's interest and that delaying its ratification until after the baseline is determined could give the country some bargaining leverage, but it would also delay access to nearly 90 percent of the convention's other provisions that are beneficial to the country.



Kourosh Ahmadi

IRAN DAILY: A common criticism is that ratifying the convention would pave the way for the construction of the Trans-Caspian pipeline between the eastern and western parts of the Caspian Sea. Would it actually grant such permission? And, fundamentally, is there any legal way to prevent littoral states from pursuing economic and transit ties with one another?

conditions and requirements for the construction of subsea pipelines and cables, particularly under Article 14: First, the agreement of the countries concerned whose territory, seabed and subsoil the pipeline directly crosses; Second, compliance with strict environmental requirements and standards under international conventions, the Tehran Convention and its protocols. One of the most important of these instruments is the Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Trans-boundary Context, which is attached to the Caspian Environmental Convention. Under this protocol, all five Caspian littoral states are considered concerned parties, and environmental assessments for any project must be conducted with the participation, review and approval of all the littoral states. Therefore, Iran has not lost

anything. On the contrary, within the framework of international law, it has gained very strong legal and regulatory leverage through environmental requirements and the prerequisite of consent from the countries concerned. In fact, the convention leaves more room for manoeuvre for Iran and even gives the Islamic Republic, alongside other four states, a veto over pipelines on environmental grounds.

Some critics claim that this convention is why a Turkmen gas pipeline has not been built through Iran and Iran has been unable to export gas to Europe. How do you assess this claim?
This issue has absolutely nothing to do with the convention or the legal issues surrounding the Caspian Sea. Iran had a gas swap arrangement with Turkmenistan under which Turkmen gas would enter Iran's

gas network and an equivalent volume would be delivered to Turkey. However, this arrangement lasted only a few months and was ultimately halted by US sanctions. Moreover, the potential volume of gas that could be transported to Turkey through the proposed Trans-Caspian pipeline is more than 15 times the volume that could be transported through Iran to Turkey. Therefore, the main reason energy pipelines or transit corridors do not run through Iran is the comprehensive international sanctions regime and the country's acute foreign policy challenges.

It has also been argued that the designated territories allow foreign vessels to operate beyond 25 nautical miles from Iran's coast.
If the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is the

overarching instrument and general international rule, is taken into consideration, the breadth of the territorial sea is set at 12 nautical miles worldwide. Even within those 12 miles, foreign vessels have the right of "innocent passage." Beyond 12 miles, the area is considered a zone of control and international waters, where navigation is open to everyone. Under the Caspian Convention, the territorial sea has been set at 15 miles, which is even beyond the international standard, while another 10 miles has been added as an exclusive fishing zone, bringing the total to 25 miles. Therefore, objecting to vessels from the other four littoral states being allowed to move through the area beyond those 25 miles is entirely impractical, illogical and outside the rules of international law.

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