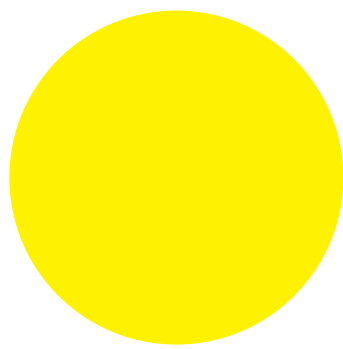


US has no place  
in future of  
region:  
*Iran's top  
security official*



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Portraits of schoolchildren killed in US missile strike on an elementary school in southern Iran are shown at a ceremony to launch Iranian animated film The Legend of Sepehr in Moscow, Russia on August 24, 2026.

● IRNA

## China's strategic pragmatism, Iran's historic opportunity



By Hamed Vafaei  
China Affairs Analyst

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The statements by Chinese officials expressing Beijing's firm opposition to US "unilateral illegal sanctions" and its commitment to defending the rights and interests of Chinese companies should be described as a reiteration of Beijing's longstanding principled position on the issue, rather than emotional or confrontational declarations. China's position is rooted in the doctrine of national sovereignty, opposition to "long-arm jurisdiction," and regulations such as the "Rules on Counteracting Unjustified Extraterritorial Application of Foreign Legislation and Other Measures" (adopted in 2021), which China has recently activated on a significant scale for the first time. From Beijing's perspective, US sanctions lack a basis in international law and authorization from the UN Security Council and constitute interference in legitimate

bilateral cooperation between countries. However, it should be noted that translating China's political position into operational support would require a set of measures guided by Beijing's strategic logic, including managing risks vis-à-vis the United States, maintaining access to cheap energy, and gradually advancing financial and trade independence without sacrificing China's broader economic interests. In this context, Chinese companies have moved to absorb around 80-90% of Iran's oil exports and have continued to do so despite US unilateral sanctions.

### Multilayered policy against sanctions

Beijing's support for these key players in the bilateral relationship can be defined and analyzed at several levels. The first is the legal level, which includes issuing a "Blocking Order" that prohibits the enforcement of US sanctions on Chinese soil and exposes companies that comply with them to domestic liability. This instrument has been activated in recent years for refineries linked to Iranian oil

and has sent a clear signal to Chinese banks and companies.

The next layer of support involves financial and settlement mechanisms, including the development of the yuan-based Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), currency swap lines, state-backed export insurance, and quasi-barter or intermediary mechanisms that keep payments outside the dollar-based system and SWIFT.

The third layer consists of political and economic support, including repeated public diplomacy, facilitating approvals and, where necessary, indirect compensation or insurance coverage.

At the same time, it should be noted that although Beijing has adopted a multilayered policy to counter US sanctions, this support is not absolute. If companies become excessively exposed to external risks or threaten China's broader interests, such as its relations with Europe or access to technology, they may face restrictions. Nevertheless, while secondary sanctions can raise financing, insurance and logistics costs for both sides and temporarily reduce

some of the support flows at the aforementioned levels, experience has shown that China's network is flexible and can quickly adapt to new circumstances.

### Protective shield

It should also be noted that Beijing's opposition to unilateral US sanctions does not fully shield Iran-China relations from a decline in the level of engagement. However, given Iran's high level of resilience in the face of the hard and soft pressure exerted by hostile powers, this position can help mitigate the impact of illegal pressure and sustain bilateral ties at a certain acceptable level. Accordingly, although the volume of official, non-oil trade between the two countries has declined at certain periods, energy flows remain the main pillar of the relationship, while strategic cooperation under the 25-year agreement in areas such as energy, infrastructure and technology remains on the agenda. The key point is that under current circumstances, China's position helps prevent cooperation from collapsing and partly neutralizes

the effects of US sanctions, which Iran considers inhumane, but it cannot prevent Chinese companies from exercising caution or stop some fluctuations in the volume of bilateral trade. In practice, Beijing's current position can be described more as a "protective shield" than an "impenetrable shield." On this basis, although bilateral cooperation will not fall to zero in the period ahead, the impact on the quality and transparency of that cooperation will be undeniable.

### Parallel tracks

At the same time, amid illegal Western pressure, various parties that regard the current situation as unacceptable have been working to lay the groundwork for new mechanisms independent of the US financial system. In this context, China's opposition to US unilateral sanctions, particularly through activating blocking mechanisms and expanding yuan-based settlements, as well as practical efforts to establish parallel mechanisms, can be highlighted. CIPS, currency swaps, yuan-based trade, goods-

for-goods barter and informal or insured payment networks are the most prominent examples in this regard. However, a notable point in the context of the China-US rivalry is that US pressure is currently accelerating this process at an unprecedented pace, as it has clearly increased Beijing's strategic vulnerability stemming from its dependence on the dollar. Nevertheless, these mechanisms remain limited in scale globally and cannot quickly become a complete substitute for the dollar-based system or neutralize its influence across the visible and less visible layers of the global economy.

Under current circumstances, such frameworks should be viewed more as "parallel tracks" for specific partners, including Iran, Russia and some countries of the Global South, rather than as an alternative international system. China's progress in these areas appears to be a gradual and pragmatic process, dependent on greater success in internationalizing the yuan and reducing the dependence of third parties.

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# 'Significant progress' made during Iran-Pakistan talks on Islamabad MoU

## International Desk

Pakistan said that "significant progress was made" during the Monday's talks between Iranian and Pakistani officials to restore a previously signed memorandum of understanding between Tehran and Washington. Writing on X, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that he and the country's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, had a "very positive and productive meeting with the President of Iran" in Tehran on Monday. He added that their discussion "focused on the Iran US conflict, tensions in the Middle East and the way forward, as well as the steps needed by both sides for

restoration of the Islamabad MoU thereby leading to comprehensive settlement of the conflict". Naqvi said that "the Iranian president candidly shared his government's perspective and concerns, and we had a very constructive exchange on the issues involved". He added that "significant progress was made", that "the meeting concluded on a highly positive note" and expressed hope that "this momentum will help pave the way for further progress and lasting peace in the region". Mehdi Tabatabaei, deputy for communications and information at the Iranian President's

Office, described the visit by the Pakistani delegation as "very fruitful," and said "the results of this visit will be revealed soon." He said the talks with Pakistani officials had "produced very valuable diplomatic achievements." The Pakistani delegation headed by Asim Munir arrived in Tehran on Monday to help restore the June Pakistan-mediated agreement which quickly faltered after the United States violated its terms. According to a statement from the Pakistani military, the delegation held comprehensive discussions with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir in Tehran, Iran, on August 24, 2026.  
● president.ir

Secretary Mohsen Rezaei, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, and Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni. During the meetings, President Pezeshkian issued a warning to Washington, emphasizing that the United States must abandon its reliance on force and coercion. "The United States must correct its tone and approach in

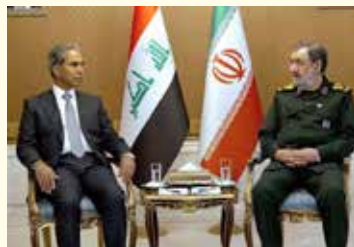


interacting with Iran," Pezeshkian stated, according to Iranian state media. "Relying on

coercion and bullying will only make the implementation process more complicated."

## US has no place in future of region: Iran's top security official

Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Major General Mohsen Rezaei, said on Tuesday that the United States will have no role in the future of West Asia, emphasizing that regional nations are now taking charge of their own destinies. Speaking during a high-level meeting in Tehran with Faeq Zaidan, the Head of Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council, Rezaei underscored the deep historical and cultural ties between the two nations, Press TV reported. He reiterated Tehran's steadfast support for a sovereign, strong, and independent Iraq, while asserting a definitive shift in the region's geopolitical landscape. "The United States will have no place in the future of the region,



Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Major General Mohsen Rezaei (R) holds talks with Faeq Zaidan, the Head of Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council, in Tehran on August 25, 2026.  
● IRNA

and the countries of the region will make decisions about their own future," Rezaei stated. Addressing mutual security concerns, the Iranian security chief stressed the urgent need to clarify the status of and dismantle anti-Iranian militant groups operating along the shared borders of the two countries. He noted that neutralizing these elements is essential for main-

taining long-term stability and safeguarding the interests of both nations. In response, Zaidan expressed deep appreciation for the Islamic Republic's continuous political and strategic support for Iraq. Zaidan also emphasized the mutual commitment to enhancing regional cooperation and ensuring robust, coordinated security measures along the shared borders to prevent any cross-border threats.

## Iranian, Omani FM's discuss 'regional, bilateral' issues

### International Desk

Iranian foreign minister and his Omani counterpart held a meeting in Tehran as both Persian Gulf countries seek a way to regulate the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz. According to IRNA, Oman's Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, who arrived in Tehran on Tuesday, discussed the most important regional and bilateral issues. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement on Monday, "The visit is aimed at strengthening Iran-Oman bilateral cooperation and Al-Busaidi will meet with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to discuss bilateral and regional issues". Baqaei said the upcoming discussions



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) greets his Omani counterpart Badr al-Busaidi upon his arrival in Tehran on August 25, 2026.  
● IRNA

are expected to focus on efforts to help promote peace and security in the region. Iran and Oman, as the two coastal states, have been engaged in intensive negotiations for nearly three months to establish a safe shipping route through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has restricted transit through the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of global oil demand

passes, following the start of the US-Israeli aggression in late February. Earlier this month, Araghchi said Iran and Oman are "very close" to reaching an agreement on a new mechanism for managing shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, but the full reopening of the strategic waterway depends on US compliance with its obligations under the Islamabad Memorandum of understanding. Tehran and Muscat have so far held several meetings on the management of the Strait of Hormuz.

## Defense min.: Iran considers US sanctions part of ongoing war

### International Desk

Iran's acting defense minister warned that efforts to put pressure on the country's economy and the security of its people should be regarded as part of the ongoing war. Brigadier General Seyyed Majid Ibn al-Reza made the remarks in a message published online on Tuesday, saying Iran considers economic stability, public welfare and security part of its "defense field." "Any pressure that targets the livelihoods and security of the people is part of the war," Ibn al-Reza said. He also warned that those seeking to

widen the pressure campaign against Iran should expect Tehran to broaden its response as well, within the framework of national interests. On Monday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced new sanctions against Iran, claiming the measures target Iran's financial networks worldwide and warned that no partner is beyond Washington's reach. The new measures expand secondary sanctions risks in areas such as digital assets, technology, gold, aviation and shipping, while sanctioning around 60 entities, individuals and vessels helping facilitate Iranian trade. China, which is Iran's largest trade part-

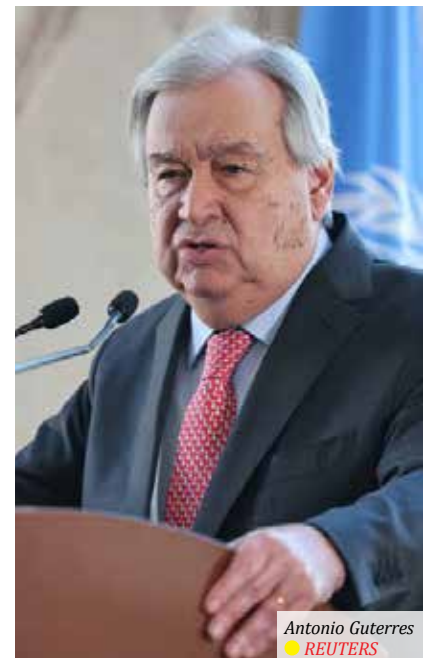
ner, on Tuesday reacted to the sanctions, saying that it would safeguard its interests after Washington laid out plans for the "economic asphyxiation" of Iran. "Cooperation between China and Iran has always been conducted within the framework of international law and should not be interfered with or disrupted," foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a regular news briefing on Tuesday. "China has already stated many times that it firmly opposes illegal unilateral sanctions... China will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests," he added.

## UN chief: Superpowers need to recognize their influence has narrowed

'Iran, Ukraine wars prove global power relations have changed'

### International Desk

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world's most powerful states need to recognize that their influence has narrowed, citing Russia's war in Ukraine and the US war with Iran. "I think it's time for superpowers to understand the limits of their power," he said. "The weight of different countries has changed, and that inevitably will be having an impact in the way power relations are established," Guterres told the Financial Times. "If you look at what happened in recent times, the capacity of superpowers to impose their will or their strength or their force in several situations has been severely limited." "Look at what happened with Russia and Ukraine," he said, referring to the full-scale invasion in 2022, which Moscow expected to last for a matter of days. "Look at what's happened with the US and Iran," Guterres added, referring to the US and Israeli war on Iran. The US hoped Tehran would capitulate when it attacked in February, but six months later Iran's establishment is holding out and has closed the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important energy waterway. In Guterres's decade in charge, the UN's profile as a mediator in global crises has waned. Some former and current officials argue he and the UN made a mistake in his second term by being less visible in the world's war zones, as his focus has appeared to shift from mediating conflicts to broader societal challenges, such as combating climate



Antonio Guterres  
● REUTERS

change. Guterres concedes it has been hard to mediate in the wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Iran. The UN's decision-making body, the Security Council, had been "practically paralyzed," he said, as the US and Russia, two of its five veto-wielding powers, have blocked it while pursuing their goals. "A sense of impunity is now prevailing," he said. "Our leverage is dramatically diminished" by the fact that there is not a Security Council able to tell countries that "they must behave [or] they'll be punished".



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

## CARTOON



# President pledges support for domestic solar panel production

## Solar plant inaugurated to serve Iran's largest industrial park

### Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian pledged on Tuesday to fully support investors in domestic solar panel manufacturing as the government pushes to expand renewable power generation and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. "There will be no restrictions on supporting investors in the domestic production of solar panels," Pezeshkian said at a ceremony marking the inauguration and operation of 95 megawatts of solar power capacity in Tehran Province.

The projects, comprising 63 MW and 32 MW units, were inaugurated near Shamsabad Industrial Town, the country's largest industrial zone, according to president.ir.

Pezeshkian stressed the need to improve the use of available space and facilities alongside the use of clean and renewable energy. He called on officials to work with academics and agricultural experts to cultivate medicinal plants alongside solar power plants and make use of water used to wash the panels.

The government expects to generate 30,000 MW from clean and renewable energy sources over the next two years, Pezeshkian said.

He also said the government would provide land and the necessary facilities to investors seeking to manufacture solar panels domestically.

Pezeshkian also called for reducing the use of fossil fuels and improving energy efficiency through better management and planning, while supporting domestic producers and industry. "I believe industry electricity should never be cut," he said.

Iran's installed renewable power capacity has recently reached 6,000 MW, with more than 80% coming from solar power plants. The government has set a target of installing 30,000 MW of renewable energy capacity within the next two years to help reduce daily power shortages and improve the long-term stability of electricity supplies. Separately, Iran's Power Generation, Distribution and Transmission Company (Tavanir) said on Tuesday that the Energy Ministry had completed 1,440



President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at a ceremony to inaugurate 95 megawatts of solar power capacity in Tehran province on Aug. 25, 2026.

● president.ir

major projects over the past six months.

### 600 MW solar power come online nationwide

Pezeshkian also simultaneously ordered the launch of 600 MW of electricity generated by solar power plants across the country, Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said at the ceremony.

Aliabadi said programs to expand the use of clean and renewable energy would be pursued more intensively than before, with technologies advancing alongside the latest developments. The 95-MW solar power plant inaugurated by Pezeshkian will supply part of the electricity needed by Shamsabad Industrial Town.

The plant was built in less than nine months on an area of 147 hectares and can supply part of the industrial town's electricity needs during peak daytime



consumption.

At the inauguration ceremony, Tehran Governor Mohammad-Sadeq Motamedian said reducing the electricity imbalance was one of Pezeshkian's concerns and that the president's emphasis on expanding solar and other new energy

sources had encouraged public participation and investment.

Motamedian said that before Pezeshkian's government began in August 2024, Tehran had 23 MW of solar panel capacity. The figure has now reached 400 MW, representing a 20-fold increase.

## Minister opens industrial projects in Isfahan, says petrochemical capacity recovering after strikes



Iranian Industry, Mines and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak inaugurates an industrial project in Isfahan province on Aug. 25, 2026.

● IRNA

### Economy Desk

Iran inaugurated two industrial projects in Isfahan Province on Tuesday to develop the packaging and polymer industries, as Industry Minister Mohammad Atabak said more than 60% of petrochemical capacity lost during the recent war had returned to production.

One of the facilities, a 50-million-euro plant producing 13-layer films and hybrid packaging products, is expected to create 500 jobs, the minister said during a visit to the central province, according to ISNA.

The plant is Iran's first producer of 13-layer films and aims to boost domestic output and reduce reliance on imports of certain packaging materials, according to state media.

Speaking on the sidelines of the inauguration, Atabak said the Isfahan Moqadam industrial group had modern engineering and manufacturing infrastructure and could produce polymer products for agriculture, industry and the oil sector.

"The products of this factory can be applied across multiple sectors, including agriculture, industry and oil," he said. "Expanding the complex's opera-

tions could help complete production chains and optimize the use of raw materials."

Atabak said the plant's technology and infrastructure gave it the potential to support regional industrial development and generate higher added value.

"Backing the expansion of such facilities, especially in industrial zones, can help lift output, complete industrial value chains, and strengthen the region's economic capacity," he added.

The company is a major domestic producer of packaging, industrial bags and pouches, and has increased its capacity for disposable big-bag containers with the new unit, located at the Mobarakeh Industrial Town.

As part of his visit, Atabak inspected an industrial company damaged during the recent war, to review its condition and the obstacles to returning it to production.

The visit focused on assessing the damage, identifying the company's needs and examining ways to speed up reconstruction and restore its production capacity.

During his visit, Atabak also inspected an industrial company damaged in the recent conflict

to assess its condition and obstacles to resuming production. At a meeting with local economic officials later on Tuesday, Atabak said 75% of petrochemical capacity had been lost in the early days of the 40-day American-Israeli war that began in late February, but more than 60% had since been restored.

He said there was currently no shortage of petrochemical feedstock.

Air strikes in April hit facilities in Mahshahr, Khuzestan province, and Asaluyeh, Bushehr province, as well as the Tabriz and Marvdasht (Shiraz) petrochemical plants, according to official reports.

The National Iranian Petrochemical Company (NIPC) has not published a damage estimate, but an export ban points to significant disruption.

"Part of the damage during the war was related to gas refineries, which affected part of the petrochemical industry's feedstock, including natural gas and gas condensates," NIPC chief Hassan Abbaszadeh said in June.

"Some petrochemical ancillary facilities were directly hit, and power plants responsible for supplying electricity and steam to petrochemical complexes were targeted," he added. "Unfortunately, part of the power and steam generation capacity was affected."

"Also, some petrochemical production units were directly struck and taken out of production," Abbaszadeh said.

## Unilateral sanctions main barrier to global drought cooperation, Iran minister tells UN summit

### Economy Desk

Iran's agriculture minister said on Tuesday that unilateral sanctions were the biggest obstacle to international cooperation on combating drought, and that Tehran was ready to share its technical expertise in fighting desertification with the global community.

Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljah, speaking at the 17th session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP17) in Ulan Bator, outlined the effects of drought and land degradation on Iran's food security and natural resources, and called for stronger international financial support and the removal of political and economic barriers to joint efforts against the global challenge, IRNA reported.

Iran has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear activities. Beyond affecting the oil and energy sectors, the embargoes have imposed costs even in humanitarian areas, including access to medicines. "Combating desertification and drought will only succeed when international cooperation moves beyond slogans and political commitments toward practical action, providing financial re-



Iran's Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljah (R) attends the 17th session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP17) in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, August 25, 2026.

● IRNA

sources, transferring technology, and implementing real projects in vulnerable countries," he said. The minister emphasized that while countries simultaneously face challenges from drought, climate change, land degradation and funding shortages, the international community must take a more responsible approach, free from political posturing, to smooth the path for cooperation and support for vulnerable nations.

Nouri-Qezeljah said Iran, with 32 million hectares of desert areas, was on the front line of the fight against desertification and

drought. He reiterated Tehran's readiness to share its scientific capacity and technical knowledge in areas including water and soil management, watershed and aquifer management, forest and rangeland restoration, and agricultural resilience.

The COP17 conference, which runs from Aug. 17 to 28 in the Mongolian capital, is one of the most significant international gatherings of 2026 focused on land restoration, drought response and sustainable natural resource management, bringing together representatives from 197 parties to the convention.

## Iran's auto parts trade with Russia rises eightfold, envoy says at Moscow exhibition

### Economy Desk

Iran's auto parts trade with Russia has increased eightfold over the past five years, the Islamic Republic's ambassador to Moscow said on Tuesday, adding that sanctions had failed to halt the country's industrial progress. Kazem Jalali, speaking at the opening of the Automobility 2026 international automotive parts and after-sales services exhibition in Moscow, said Iran's participation for the fifth consecutive year reflected a "serious determination" on both sides to expand industrial ties.

"In these five years, the volume

of transactions by Iranian companies in the auto parts sector with Russia has increased eightfold, indicating mutual capacities and market attractiveness for economic actors of both countries," Jalali said, IRNA reported. Iran has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear program, with restrictions tightening in recent years and targeting sectors including automotive manufacturing and parts supply.

The ambassador noted that Iran's automotive supply chain currently comprises 1,850 parts manufacturing companies, some of which were showcasing their

capabilities at the Moscow exhibition.

He expressed satisfaction with the broad participation of representatives from various countries at this edition of the exhibition, describing it as an important opportunity to expand cooperation networks between Iranian companies and their Russian and other counterparts. The Automobility 2026 exhibition, which opened with officials from Russia, China, South Korea and other countries in attendance, is being held in Moscow. More than 1,500 companies from across the world are taking part, according to organizers.

A wildfire burns near Omiš, Croatia, in August 2026.  
● JAKOV PRKIC/CROPIX

## Wildfires, extreme heat change equations

# Climate change now Europe's biggest security threat



By Patrick Schröder  
International sustainability expert

### OPINION

Climate change is now Europe's biggest systemic security risk. As the continent faces its worst ever summer of extreme heat, drought and wildfires, no other threat is simultaneously affecting so many countries, people and critical systems.

The extreme heat contributed to an estimated 10,000 excess deaths during the June heatwave, which also destroyed roughly 9 million tonnes of crops from the European harvest. Drought and wildfires have affected almost the entire continent; so far this year, over 600,000 hectares of land and forests have burned, with hundreds of thousands of people forced to evacuate. The disruption extends far beyond the immediate disaster zones and across national borders. Extreme heat and water shortages are threatening water and food security, restricting river and rail transport and putting strain on health and emergency services.

Homes, businesses and essential infrastructure have been damaged. Falling river levels have forced nuclear reactors to shut down due to a lack of suitable cooling water, threatening to disrupt energy supply chains.

#### Climate terrorism

Climate change is also making Europe more vulnerable to non-conventional attacks. Prolonged heat and drought can turn countries into a "tinderbox," as UK prime minister Andy Burnham warned last week, before his government sent a national emergency alert over wildfires.

In these conditions, a single act of arson can cause mass evacuations, destroy infrastructure and

overwhelm emergency services. These arson attacks are easy to carry out and difficult for authorities to prevent. This makes wildfire a potentially devastating instrument of terrorism or asymmetric warfare.

This year, France has arrested almost 500 people on suspicion of starting fires; as of 30 July, the interior ministry said around 70 per cent of those detained were accused of deliberate arson. Meanwhile, Russian strikes have repeatedly set forests ablaze in Ukraine. In May 2026, drone attacks caused multiple forest fires in the Chernobyl exclusion zone and Zhytomyr.

#### Demands on militaries

Climate change also affects European military readiness by damaging bases, airfields and transport networks. For example, prolonged dry conditions contributed to wildfires that began at military training grounds in the Netherlands in April.

Any disruption to wider infrastructure such as electricity or transport networks can also di-

rectly undermine military operations.

Europe's armed forces must now prepare to be called upon more frequently to fight fires, reinforce flood defences, support evacuations, deliver emergency supplies and restore critical infrastructure. This will divert personnel and logistical capacity away from other security threats.

This is already happening. According to the Council on Strategic Risks, militaries were deployed over 30 times in response to wildfires across Europe in June and July alone. In July, Spain deployed more than 1,200 military personnel and 400 vehicles for a single major fire. In the UK, around 200 military personnel were recently fighting wildfires in south Wales.

#### How to respond

The scale and scope of these risks require action.

The NATO Science and Technology Organization's January 2026 climate security assessment already acknowledges climate change as a "systemic problem" that impacts all other

security risks.

It concludes that NATO's existing Climate Change and Security Action Plan (published in 2021) should be thoroughly updated and translate climate knowledge into practical action. This should be supported by better, more institutionalized coordination between scientists, defence professionals and policymakers.

Beyond NATO's plan, a broader European security-based approach to climate change is needed. It must achieve four goals.

#### Deal with wildfires

First, it must strengthen preparedness for climate disasters that are already happening. In the case of wildfires, this means acting before they break out. This involves managing dry vegetation and landscapes, enforcing fire-safe building and land-use rules, monitoring high-risk areas and reducing preventable sources of fire. It must account for both deliberate and accidental fires.

It also requires adequately staffed and trained emergency services,



Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent. It must strengthen preparedness for climate disasters that are already happening. In the case of wildfires, this means acting before they break out. This involves managing dry vegetation and landscapes, enforcing fire-safe building and land-use rules, monitoring high-risk areas and reducing preventable sources of fire. It must account for both deliberate and accidental fires. The estimated costs for adaptation are small compared to the risks averted and damage avoided.

better specialist equipment such as "water bomb aircraft," stronger early-warning and evacuation systems, and greater capacity to respond to several emergencies at once.

The military has an important supporting role within this system. Armed forces will need to provide aircraft, engineering expertise, communications, logistics and personnel when civilian capacity is overwhelmed, particularly during large-scale evacuations or simultaneous disasters. But they should form part of a planned, multi-agency response rather than become a permanent substitute for underfunded fire and rescue services.

#### Consider climate spending as security

Second, governments need to consider spending on climate as a core security investment.

European NATO members have committed to spend 5 per cent of GDP on defence by 2035, including up to 1.5 per cent on broader investment related to defence and security, such as critical infrastructure and resilience.

Despite NATO recognizing climate change as a security threat, it has not explicitly designated climate adaptation as defence-related spending. But investing in climate change adaptation can make a critical contribution to long-term resilience.

Likewise, investments in infrastructure, civil protection and preparedness should all be climate-resilient and future proof. These could potentially be categorized under the vaguely defined 1.5 per cent of broader security-related spending.

Considering climate measures as important security investments would therefore help to focus scarce resources and improve resilience, while also potentially helping members to meet their spending commitments.

The military is helping in the fire-fighting operation in South Wales in August 2026.  
● UK MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



**Address underlying causes**  
Third, a security approach must accelerate decarbonization to mitigate climate change as the underlying cause of the escalating threat. European climate and energy policies have helped cut EU27 emissions to approximately 35 per cent below their 1990 levels, but the EU27 is still responsible for 3.2 gigatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually, or six per cent of global emissions. Europe's decarbonization matters not only for reducing emissions but also

for its global signalling effect in encouraging other countries to follow suit. Preparedness and adaptation can reduce casualties and damage, but they cannot keep pace indefinitely with worsening heat, drought, floods and fires. Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent. Its existing policies and climate pledges will not be sufficient to adapt fully to the expected 2.4°C to 3.9°C increase in global mean temperature this century. Investment in resilience must therefore be accompanied by rapid emissions reductions and

stronger political commitment to decarbonization. This is the principal way to prevent the threat from becoming progressively more severe and unmanageable.

**Public involvement**  
Fourth, building societal resilience to climate shocks will depend on governments working with the public. This does not mean just issuing one-off instructions during emergencies. People need trustworthy information, practical guidance and opportunities to participate in local preparedness activities.

Examples include "heat-health" plans to protect people from heat-related risks, water conservation to cope with drought, and evacuation exercises and support for vulnerable neighbours. Such measures are all part of the basic infrastructure that allows society to continue functioning during a crisis.

**Benefits outweigh the costs**  
What will all this cost? Assessments suggest the EU needs to invest approximately €70 billion a year in climate adaptation until 2050 to prevent the worst

impacts. The UK needs to invest around £11 billion annually, according to a May report by the UK Climate Change Committee. Although these sums may appear substantial, they are modest compared with the escalating cost of inaction. Climate-related disasters caused a yearly average of €45 billion in direct EU losses during 2020–2024, while inadequate adaptation could cost the UK £60–260 billion annually by 2050. Many measures will pay for themselves several times over. For example, according to the European Commission's Joint Research Cen-

tre, every euro invested in protection against coastal flooding can avoid around €6.35 in damages while also saving lives and protecting other resources. The estimated costs for adaptation are small compared to the risks averted and damage avoided. Climate adaptation should therefore be understood not as an environmental expense, but as a cost-effective and necessary investment in European national security and strategic autonomy.

*The article was first published by Chatham House.*

# Melting ice, power shifts

**By Sharon Hudson-Dean**  
US' former European security policy director

## OPINION

The Trump administration has once again churned up the frozen waters of the Arctic. This time by ending federal support for an annual Arctic climate report. On August 10, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced it will no longer produce the well-respected Arctic Report Card, which for two decades has collated, analyzed and published key data on the health and changes of the greater Arctic environment. More than 100 international scientists and organizations have fed NOAA information ranging from ice coverage measurements to sea depth and weather patterns, expanding US situational awareness and scientific leadership of the Arctic. Trump's team now says that someone else must take the lead. While detrimental to both the US and the greater Arctic research community in the short term, this is an opportunity for an allied Arctic nation or organization to take the lead — with the potential to gain both a strategic and data edge. The Arctic is in the crosshairs of almost all top geopolitical interests — including energy, defence, tech, transportation, minerals and fishing — and is changing quickly as ice melts and previously unnavigable areas open. Controlling data collection, priority-setting and analysis at a time when data is one of the most valuable assets to have should be high on the list of many nations. It certainly is for China. Although it is a non-Arctic nation, China has seven polar research stations — compared to America's four — a fleet of dual-purpose ice breakers, and prioritizes polar research within its annual \$1 trillion research budget. It is ironic that the Trump administration is diminishing the US position in the Arctic research community while at the same time raising the alarm about Chinese and Russian ambitions in Greenland and the North Atlantic. US military leaders know well that their ability to defend against submarine and other incursions in the north will depend on a continuous research and development process using every scientific input available. Even the US's own Arctic Research Commission has stressed the link between national security and research. In 2025, it identified research topics within four key sectors — military, community, energy and economy — which "inform both domestic and for-

The Norwegian icebreaker research vessel Kronprins Haakon sails through the sea ice, in eastern Spitzbergen, in the Svalbard archipelago, on April 6, 2025.  
● OLIVIER MORIN/AFP



foreign policy, ideally, in a mutually reinforcing manner, and are often interlinked". The key to securing the vast North American Arctic area is cutting edge research and knowledge, from reinforcing US national scientists to linking arms with partners, allies and indigenous communities. This is not the first time the Trump administration has made counterintuitive policy moves in the Arctic. Key to Trump's foreign policy doctrine is the concept of geographical spheres of influence. US control of Greenland — an autonomous territory of US ally Denmark — as a geographical security imperative has become a regular talking point for Trump. It has also inspired significant new European and Canadian activity in the region. European governments are stepping up under the rubric of increasing Arctic security against Russian and Chinese expansion.

This is a good outcome from an unnecessarily tense standoff with their American ally. Indeed, underneath it all, Trump's concern about Chinese and Russian activity in the Arctic is well founded. And it requires concrete European Arctic leadership and action. Such recent action includes a growing strategic presence in Greenland. Norway, France, Canada and the European Union all have (or soon will have) diplomatic offices in Nuuk. Meanwhile, European leaders and their defence teams have met regularly this year to discuss Arctic security and Greenland, while the seven Arctic NATO members (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the US) gather as a NATO subgroup. In May, following a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Sweden, they called out the shift in American policy in a joint statement, noting the increased role played by Europe and Canada.

More recently, Denmark announced that it has begun to rotate groups of new conscripts through Greenland for training, while the UK sent a carrier strike group to the North Atlantic/High North as part of NATO's new Arctic Sentry mission, completing its first phase in July. This increased activity is well timed. Russia and China are taking historic steps this summer that signal future intentions. In an unprecedented operation, Russia is sending a convoy of tankers carrying up to one million tonnes of oil along a rarely used route north of 81.5°N, accompanied by nuclear-powered icebreakers. Meanwhile, six Chinese carriers have signed up to use Russia's northern sea route (NSR) this month to avoid the treacherous Red Sea. For the first time, the ships will go from Ningbo-Zhoushan to Felixstowe, saving an estimated 22 days. Crucial-

Although it is a non-Arctic nation, China has seven polar research stations — compared to America's four. It is ironic that the Trump administration is diminishing the US position in the Arctic research community while at the same time raising the alarm about Chinese and Russian ambitions in Greenland and the North Atlantic. US military leaders know well that their ability to defend against submarine and other incursions in the north will depend on a continuous research and development process using every scientific input available.



Danish conscripts in the Royal Life Guards during the REX tour  
● LEONORA FRYDENBERG SEPSTRUP/BLADET SOLDATEN

ly, it is also the first time Chinese ships will have access to predictive rather than observational ice data from the Chinese Ministry of Transportation — made possible thanks to China's years of investment in Arctic research. This should be a wake-up call for the US and its allies. Domain awareness is and will continue to be the linchpin for success for all nations with interests in the Arctic. To take the lead, European allies and Canada should focus on three key areas. One, they should extend and resource initiatives that enhance shared domain-awareness assets: satellite coverage; underwater sensor arrays in the GIUK gap (the open waters between Greenland, Iceland and the UK) and the Barents Sea; and maritime patrol aircraft rotations. A priority satellite project could be the Hybrid Alliance Layered Operations in Space (HALO), launched at this year's NATO summit, through which seven European allies and Canada have agreed to connect and integrate their military satellites into a shared "mega constellation" architecture. For underwater awareness, both the UK's new Atlantic Bastion and NATO's Arctic Sentry programmes are building underwater sensing technology networks. In the air, Germany and Denmark have new or planned Boeing P-8 capabilities to add to substantial operations already run by the UK, Norway and Canada. Two, Arctic research and development should be prioritized in national planning and budgeting processes. This should include establishing a joint Europe-Canada Arctic data consortium — within or tightly connected to the existing research architecture to avoid duplication of efforts — to take on the Arctic Report Card work and build a top-in-class digital research infrastructure. European and Canadian leaders should also reorient the Arctic Council to overcome the stagnation stemming from Russia's suspended engagement following the full-scale Ukraine war, compounded by a consensus system that makes formal workarounds difficult. They must also work to resolve a key Arctic research dilemma: the current lack of Russian data. As Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen famously said: "adventure is just bad planning." While there was arguably never a time for adventure in the Arctic — it's too brutal, too vast and too changeable — now is the moment to take the lead in both Arctic research and security. One without the other would be a foolish adventure.

*The article was first published by Chatham House.*

# AVC Women's Volleyball Continental Championship: Iran makes quick work of Iraq to progress to knockouts

## Sports Desk

Iran returned to winning ways at the AVC Women's Volleyball Continental Championship in Tianjin, China, crushing Iraq in straight sets on Tuesday to advance to the quarterfinals.

Less than 18 hours after suffering an expected 3-0 defeat against the formidable hosts – a record 13-time champion at the competition and No. 7 in the FIVB World Rankings – the Iranian girls bounced back to outclass Iraq 25-4, 25-7, 25-5 in a match that lasted just over an hour at Tianjin Olympic Center Gymnasium.

Outside hitter Fatemeh Khalili topped the scoring for Iran with 14 points, while middle blocker Reihaneh Karimi contributed 13. Opposite spiker Elaheh Poursaleh also reached double figures, chipping in 12 points, while middle blocker Zahra Karimi delivered yet another impressive performance with eight points, including two blocks and an ace. The result lifted Iran to two wins in three outings, securing second

place in the Pool A standings. The Iranian girls got their campaign off to a flying start, fighting back for a 3-1 victory over Chinese Taipei – the runner-up at June's AVC Women's Volleyball Cup, where Iran had settled for seventh place.

Iran head coach Alireza Toloukian praised his players' "full concentration" throughout the victory, adding: "We did not want to make even one mistake, and that is what happened."

"Matches against weaker teams can sometimes prove even trickier, as the players need to have the right mindset rather than simply focusing on the tactical aspects of the game," Toloukian said.

"I really wanted to give the younger players an opportunity, but as every single point counts toward our position in the knockout draw, I had to use the key players," he said.

Iran is yet to learn which team it will face in the next round, as the quarterfinal lineup will be determined through a combined ranking system after the conclusion of

the group stage on Wednesday. South Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Australia were all scheduled to play after Iran, with the results determining Iran's next opponent on Thursday or Friday. Toloukian, however, predicted that his team would finish fifth in the overall standings and potentially face Indonesia in the next round.

"We are waiting for the results and will begin the necessary planning as soon as our opponent is determined," he said.

This year's championship marks Iran's ninth appearance at the continental showpiece, with its best result coming in the 2019 edition, when it finished seventh.

Toloukian said the team, which finished 10th in the previous edition in 2023, is aiming to achieve its best-ever result in Tianjin.

"Our goal this year is to set a new milestone," he said. "If we can reach the final four or achieve a good position in the classification matches, that would be a significant achievement."



Iranian players celebrate a point during their straight-set victory over Iraq at the AVC Women's Volleyball Continental Championship in Tianjin, China, on Aug. 25, 2026.

● VOLLEYBALL WORLD

## Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games:

# Iranian athletics faces race against the clock to deliver on 10-medal goal

## Sports Desk

When former Olympic silver medalist Ehsan Haddadi embarked on his term at the helm of the Iranian Athletics Federation two years ago, he vowed that Iran would win a 10-medal haul at the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

However, with less than a month until the athletics competition kicks off at the multi-sport event, recent performances suggest that Iran faces a difficult challenge to turn that ambitious goal into reality.

Iran has still produced encouraging signs, particularly in the women's events, while several of its leading men remain within striking distance of the Asian Games podium. At the same time, comparisons with the continent's latest rankings and results show that substantial improvements will be required in a number of disciplines.

The latest indication came from a training camp and preparatory competition in Belarus, where 14 Iranian athletes competed in different events. The meeting was not on the World Athletics calendar, meaning its performances do not count as official marks, but it provided a useful assessment of the athletes' form.

Among the most notable performances was that of Zahra Zarei, who twice broke Iranian records. She clocked 51.05 seconds in the 400 meters, improving on the national record she had set earlier this year, before running 23.00 in the 200m to erase Maryam Tousi's seven-year-old mark.

Zarei's progress has made her one of the more credible medal hopes in the women's team.

Her official 400m best before the Belarus race was 52.71, placing her 19th on the Asian list, although her latest 51.05 indicates considerable improvement.



Long jumper Reyhaneh Mobini, pictured at the 2025 Asian Athletics Championships, will be among Iran's medal hopefuls at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

● ASIAN ATHLETICS

Reyhaneh Mobini is another prominent prospect in the women's team. The long jumper, who won a historic gold at the 2025 Asian Athletics Championships with a 6.40m effort, has a national best of 6.47m and has continued to show progress in domestic and international competitions. In Belarus, she jumped 6.43m-6.44m. Yet with the leading Asian performers reaching between 6.75m and 6.88m, Mobini will need another significant improvement to challenge for the podium.

A gold medalist at last year's Islamic Solidarity Games, Fatemeh Mohitizadeh, meanwhile, remains Iran's principal hope in the heptathlon. She improved her 100m hurdles mark in Belarus and cleared 1.70m in the high jump, although Iranian

officials stressed that her performance still needs further assessment.

The men's team has perhaps its clearest medal candidate in Mohammadreza Tayyebi in the



shot put. His official 20.75m national record places him third on the Asian list, behind India's Tajinderpal Singh Toor (21.03m) and China's Xing Jialiang (20.95m). Tayyebi also won gold at the 2025 Asian Athletics Championships with 20.32m, beating Xing to the top spot, strengthening the case that he can contend for another major continental medal.

Elsewhere, Iran's sprinters and middle-distance runners face a steeper climb. Hassan Taftian's 10.26-second 100m best places him well outside the leading Asian contenders, while Islamic Solidarity Games champion Ali Amirian's 1:47.23 in the 800m puts him 23rd on the continental list. Arsalan Hamidi is 33rd with 1:47.66.

Those rankings underline the gap Iran must close. At the 2022 Asian

Games, Taftian finished fourth in the 100m with 10.14, demonstrating how even a performance close to his best can leave him just outside the medals.

Iran's broader Asian Games history, however, shows that athletics remains one of the country's established medal-producing sports, with 39 medals – 13 gold, 16 silver and 10 bronze – across different editions. Haddadi accounts for five of those medals, having won four golds and one silver in the discus throw throughout his illustrious career. At the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games, Iranian athletics produced four medals, including two golds.

The federation's leadership therefore faces a delicate balancing act. Vice president Parisa Behzadi said a second Asian Games medal for Iranian women, following Leila Rajabi's shot put silver in 2018, is within reach but stressed that the athletes must raise their marks further.

The remaining weeks will offer few opportunities for experimentation. Iran's athletes are scheduled to travel to Japan on Sept. 20, with the Asian Games athletics competition approaching rapidly. The national championships in Shiraz will provide another important opportunity to assess their form before departure.

The 10-medal target may ultimately prove optimistic, particularly given the strength of Asian athletics. But the recent progress of Zarei, Mobini and Mohitizadeh, combined with Tayyebi's established continental credentials, gives Iran a foundation on which to build. In Nagoya, however, personal-best performances rather than expectations will determine whether the ambitious target becomes reality.

## Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship:

# Iran beats Kuwait, secures last-eight spot

## Sports Desk

Iran celebrated its second victory in three outings at the Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship in Amman, Jordan, defeating Kuwait 21-18 in Group B on Monday.

Having suffered a narrow 24-22 loss to two-time champion Qatar the previous day, the Iranian boys bounced back in style to beat another traditional powerhouse in Asian handball, securing a runner-up finish in the group and a place in the quarterfinals.

Mohammad-Taha Ebrahim Khanlari led the scoring for Iran with five goals, as the team took a commanding 13-9 lead at halftime. Captain Mahdi Ahmadifar contributed four goals and was named Man of the Match.

Mohsen Hadizadeh, Mohammad Keshavarz, and Farshad Norouzpour also played key roles in the vital victory, each netting three goals.

Iran, which opened its campaign with an impressive 28-20 win over Saudi Arabia—a semifinalist in the previous two editions—will conclude the group phase in a dead rubber against Syria today. Syria sits at the bottom of the five-team group with three losses in as many matches, including a 42-29 rout at the hands of Qatar earlier on Monday.

Iran will next face either host Jordan or Uzbekistan in the knockout phase on Friday.

The battle for third place in Group A will be decided when Jordan and Uzbekistan meet today at Princess Sumaya Hall. Both sides are level on two points, with the hosts holding a slight advantage on goal difference.

Bahrain and South Korea – the most decorated team in the competition with three titles – have already secured a top-two finish in Group A, thanks to a clean sweep of three victories each, ahead of their crucial clash for the top spot today.



● IRIHF

## Iranica Desk

Iranshahr, one of the main cultural and historical centers of southern Sistan and Baluchestan Province, is more than a mere transit route. The city is home to a valuable repository of the history and civilization of southeastern Iran, from sturdy Qajar-era fortresses to lush palm groves and traditional handicrafts created by Baluchi women. Together, these assets provide a rich foundation for economic and cultural development, yet they have not been adequately introduced to domestic and international tourists. Moving beyond the traditional approach to tourism in Iranshahr requires a determined effort to transform the city from a "passageway" into a lasting destination. By consciously linking its historical heritage, indigenous arts and natural environment, the city can create a promising outlook for job creation and the growth of local businesses. In such a model, tourists would no longer be merely passing travelers, but guests who leave the "land of palm trees and sunshine" with a deeper experience of Baluchi identity and culture. The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Iranshahr said the city has the potential to become one of the major tourism destinations in southeastern Iran, thanks to its historical monuments, natural attractions, cultural assets and handicrafts. Morad Qaderi said strengthening tourism infrastructure and systematically promoting the city's attractions would help encourage tourists to stay longer and boost the

# Iranshahr seeks to become lasting tourism destination



Naseri Castle  
visitiran.ir

local economy. "Iranshahr is one of the areas of Sistan and Baluchestan with an exceptional diversity of tourism attractions," he said. "Alongside important historical monuments, it has diverse natural, cultural and handicraft assets that can serve as a foundation for tourism development." Qaderi said Naseri Castle, Bampur Castle, historical and archaeological sites, palm groves, natural attractions, and indigenous arts and handicrafts are among Iranshahr's tourism assets. With proper promotion and the development of the necessary infrastructure, he added, these attractions could draw more tourists to the area. Referring to the historical significance of Naseri Castle, Qaderi said the monument is one of the most important symbols of Iranshahr's identity and should be used to intro-

duce the history and culture of the region and establish a tourism corridor in the city center. Naseri Castle was built during the Qajar period on the orders of Naser al-Dowleh and later became the seat of the ruler of Baluchestan. Construction took seven years, and the complex originally included more than 150 rooms, a pool house, storage facilities, stables, a bathhouse, barracks and a governor's residence. Much of the castle's interior, however, was destroyed in recent decades, and today its entrance and surrounding walls are among the most important surviving elements of the historical complex. Qaderi said preserving and restoring historical monuments is not merely a conservation responsibility, but can also create jobs, stimulate tourism and increase local communities' income. Historical sites, he



Bampur Castle  
IRNA

added, should therefore be viewed as both economic and cultural assets. He also pointed to Bampur Castle as another important attraction, saying that, together with Naseri Castle, it could form part of a historical tourism route in the region. Proper planning for the promotion and organization of attractions around the castle could encourage tourists to extend their stay. Bampur Castle is located about 24 kilometers west of Iranshahr, near the city of Bampur, and was built atop a high hill. It is

regarded as one of the region's most important historical fortresses. Qaderi described Iranshahr's cultural diversity as another major tourism advantage, noting that tourism today is no longer limited to visiting historical monuments. Tourists increasingly seek experiences involving local culture, arts, food, clothing and ways of life. "Baluchi needlework, traditional Baluchi clothing,

handicrafts, music, local cuisine and cultural traditions can complement the historical and natural attractions and create a comprehensive tourism package for Iranshahr," he said. "This can also increase the local community's share of tourism revenues." He added that linking historical attractions with handicrafts and indigenous culture would give tourists greater incentive to stay rather than make a brief stop. This, in turn, could stimulate the development of ecotourism accommodations, restau-

rants, handicraft sales and other tourism-related businesses. Iranshahr also enjoys a strategic transportation position in southern Sistan and Baluchestan and lies along routes connecting different parts of the province. According to Qaderi, this creates an opportunity to attract passing tourists, but turning that potential into sustainable income requires transforming Iranshahr from a "transit city" into a "tourism destination." One of the key issues in developing tourism in Iranshahr is creating conditions that encourage visitors not simply to pass through the city, but to stop and stay explore its attractions, use tourism services and become acquainted with the region's culture. Qaderi emphasized that strengthening tourism infrastructure, professionally promoting attractions, expanding accommodation facilities, training and organizing tour guides, and supporting handicraft producers should all be pursued simultaneously so that existing assets can be turned into tourism products. Qaderi said Iranshahr has historically been one of the important centers of Baluchestan and that the remains of different historical periods demonstrate the considerable heritage potential of the area. "Iranshahr's tourism cannot be defined by just one

or two historical monuments," he said. "There is an opportunity to create a chain of historical, cultural, natural and rural tourism in the city." He added that the restoration and improvement of Naseri Castle have also been pursued in recent years with the participation of the provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department and Iranshahr Municipality. If completed and accompanied by a cultural and tourism use plan, the project could help revive one of the city's most important historical symbols. Qaderi stressed that Iranshahr does not necessarily need to discover new attractions to develop tourism; rather, it needs to organize, promote and connect the assets it already possesses. According to him, Naseri Castle could serve as the starting point for historical tourism in the city center; Bampur Castle could complete part of the region's historical route, palm groves and natural attractions could support nature tourism, while handicrafts and Baluchi culture could provide the cultural dimension of the journey. "The goal should be to introduce Iranshahr's diverse assets through a coherent plan so that tourists can experience part of the history, nature and culture of Baluchestan during a single trip," Qaderi said. He added that local communities and the private sector have a particularly important role to play in this process. Tourism development will be sustainable, he said, only when its benefits reach local communities and local businesses and residents see themselves as an integral part of the tourism cycle.

## Azarbaijan Museum demonstrates Tabriz's rich historical heritage

## Iranica Desk

Museums are among the most important historical sites in any city, offering a glimpse into its history and antiquity. Tabriz, known for its rich and ancient historical fabric, has the second-largest number of museums in Iran after Tehran. Among them is the Azarbaijan Museum, which houses a unique collection of historical artifacts. The Azarbaijan Museum is one of Iran's oldest and most important museums and a prominent historical site in Tabriz. Located in the heart of the city, it attracts large numbers of domestic and international tourists each year. Tabriz can aptly be described as a city of museums, with its wealth of historical monuments, buildings and museums, each showcasing a part of Iran's history. Azarbaijan Museum is regarded as one of Iran's most important museums and the country's second-largest archaeological museum after the National Museum of Iran. Covering a built-up area of 2,400



square meters, the museum has three floors, with an exhibition hall on each floor measuring 37 by 12 meters, as well as several administrative rooms and a library. The museum was designed based on plans prepared by French archaeologist André Godard, drawing inspiration from the local architectural style of Iranian Azarbaijan, and was constructed under the supervision of Ismail Dibaj. The Azarbaijan Museum, one of Tabriz's major tourist attractions, is located on Imam Street next to the Blue Mosque. The history of establishing a museum in Tabriz dates back to 1927-1928, when

an exhibition of coins discovered in the city was held at the Tarbiat Library. Following the exhibition, a group of cultural enthusiasts made extensive efforts to establish a comprehensive museum in Tabriz. Their efforts eventually led to the foundation of the Azarbaijan Museum in May 1958. Construction of the museum building, consisting of three exhibition halls, was completed in 1962, and the museum officially opened in October of that year. Although the establishment of the Azarbaijan Museum took considerable time, exhibitions of historical and artistic works



continued to be held in the ancient city of Tabriz during the intervening years. These included an exhibition of 202 historical artifacts from the Iran Bastan Museum, now known as the National Museum of Iran, in 1957, as well as an exhibition of historical artifacts and objects from Tabriz at Nejat High School. Today, the Azarbaijan Museum houses an important collection of approximately 12,000 archaeological and artistic objects. Around 2,300 of these objects have been registered, while limited exhibition space means that only a portion of the collection is currently displayed in different sections of the

museum. The museum consists of three halls covering a total exhibition area of 800 square meters, as well as a dedicated hall for displaying historical coins and seals of Iran on the first floor. The ground floor houses historical artifacts and objects from prehistoric and pre-Islamic periods. Pottery from the Ismailabad archaeological site, dating back around 7,000 years, is among the oldest objects displayed in this section. The collection also includes serpentine stones discovered in Jiroft, dating to prehistoric times and bearing images of various plants and animals. A fe-



male deity figurine discovered in Rostamabad, Gilan Province, is approximately 3,000 years old and depicts the status and significance of women in ancient Iran. Rhytons dating back 2,000 to 3,000 years are also preserved in the museum. The remains of a man and a woman dating back around 3,000 years were discovered in 1999 in the vicinity of the Blue Mosque. The remains are believed to have belonged to a 3,000-year-old cemetery and were transferred to the Azarbaijan Museum for public display. A stone inscription bearing the phrase Bismillah, created by Mohammad-Ali

Quchani, is displayed at the end of the ground-floor hall. Four of the five sections form the frame, while the remaining section contains the inscription. The oldest objects on the first floor date to the fourth century AH and originate from the city of Nishapur. Notable features of these artifacts include the use of Kufic script, Islamic floral motifs and white glaze. The collection also includes pottery dating from the Ilkhanid period and a combination lock dating to the sixth century AH. A hall dedicated to historical coins and seals displays some of the oldest coins minted in Iran, ranging from the Achaemenid period to the Qajar era. Examples of historical Iranian seals are also exhibited in this section. The Azarbaijan Museum is one of dozens of museums in Tabriz showcasing artifacts from different periods of Iranian history, making it an important destination for visitors interested in the country's history, culture and art.



# Iranian animation Legend of Sepehr hits Russian silver screen in memory of Minab kids

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian animated film *The Legend of Sepehr* has opened in 89 Russian cinemas, with a ceremony in Moscow honouring 168 people mostly schoolchildren killed in a US missile strike on the Shajareh Tayyebah School in Iran's southern city of Minab. The young children lost their lives on the first day of the US-Israeli military aggression against Iran on February 28. "This act of aggression was a great and painful crime, and we must not allow this crime to disappear from the memory of humanity," Iran's Ambassador To Russia Kazem Jalali told the opening ceremony, IRNA reported on Tuesday. He said Iran's cultural days in Russia, due to be held in October in Saint Petersburg, Moscow and Kazan, would feature a 168-member Iranian artistic group in memory of the victims. Iran's cultural counsellor in Russia, Abdolreza Rashed, also at-

tended the event.

Konstantin Yulkin, chief executive of Russian film distributor Russian World Vision (RWV), welcomed the screening and described the movie as a "good film for children".

"We express our sympathy to everyone who lost their children in this tragic tragedy and hope that this will not happen anywhere else in the world," Yulkin said. Vyacheslav Sengayevsky, chief executive of Russian company Kianosh Impex, which handled the animation's dubbing, promotion and theatrical release, said the company had moved ahead with the project after welcoming the filmmakers.

He said the film had opened in 89 cinemas and would gradually roll out across Russia.

"It is very important for Iranian artists to come to Russia and for Russian artists to come to Iran. Through these exchanges, we will be able to build a bridge of friendship between our countries," Sen-



*Iran's Ambassador To Russia Kazem Jalali (1st R) speaks at a ceremony to launch Iranian animated film The Legend of Sepehr in Moscow, Russia on August 24, 2026.*

● IRNA

gayevsky said, stressing the importance of stronger cultural ties in the current circumstances and in the "fight against enemies for independence and freedom".

*The Legend of Sepehr*, also registered in Russia as *Легенда о Сене*, is a family adventure produced by Mehdi Jafari Jozani and directed by Emad Rahmani and Mehrdad Mehrabi.

It follows *Sepehr*, a brave Iranian teenager who sets out on a heroic journey to save his family and homeland.

The release marks another step for Iranian children's animation in the Russian market after *Dolphin Boy*. A Russian trailer for the film has also been released on Kinopoisk.



## Royan Congress to feature hundreds of research papers, focus on scientific resilience

### Social Desk

Iran's 27th Royan International Congress will go ahead next week despite the country's ongoing war, with more than 1,200 participants registered, 447 research projects and paper abstracts admitted, and six specialist workshops scheduled.

"Over the past 27 years, despite various ups and downs, we have tried to hold the Royan Congress and there has been no disruption in its organisation," executive secretary Rouhollah Fathi told a press conference in Tehran on Tuesday. Fathi said 589 research projects had been submitted this year, of which 447 were accepted after detailed review. The accepted work will be presented alongside talks by leading Iranian and international researchers. The event, hosted by the Royan Institute and the University of Science and Culture, comprises the 27th Congress on Reproductive Biomedicine, the 22nd Congress on Stem Cells and the 21st Nursing and Midwifery Seminar. Six workshops will



also be held, four covering clinical and therapeutic subjects and two focused on basic sciences.

The stem-cell program will cover cell and developmental biology, stem-cell biology, tissue engineering, regenerative medicine, new cancer treatments and gene therapy. Panels will also address entrepreneurship, commercialization and scientific resilience in difficult conditions. A new reproductive-medicine section will focus on monitoring the health of mothers and children born through assisted reproductive methods.

"The goal is not only to enable infertile couples to have children, but also to ensure the health of mothers and children," said Azam Dalman, scientific secretary of the reproductive-medicine section.

Reza Moghadasali, scientific secretary of the stem-cell section, said a panel on "scientific resilience in academic environments in difficult conditions" would be held for academics, students and young researchers. Speakers from 13 countries will attend, including Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Russia, the United States and Australia. The main language will be Persian, while foreign guests will speak in English.

Six prominent Iranian scientific figures will be honored at the opening ceremony, including Professor Kazem Parivar, Professor Mojtaba Rezazadeh Balochi, Professor Hamid Mirzadeh, Dr. Sagha Salehpour, Dr. Mohammad Kazemini and Dr. Marzieh Ebrahimi. An exhibition featuring 30 knowledge-based

companies and manufacturers of medical and pharmaceutical equipment will run alongside the congress.

The opening ceremony will be held on Tuesday, September 1, at the University of Science and Culture in Tehran, with scientific panels running from 8 am to 6 pm on Wednesday and Thursday.

Royan Institute was established in 1991 by Dr. Saeid Kazemi Ashtiani and a group of researchers at the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACE-CR) in Iran. Starting as a small surgical center for treating infertile couples, it has grown into a leading scientific hub in the Middle East, specializing in reproductive medicine, stem cell biology, and biotechnology. The institute is internationally recognized for producing Royana, the first cloned sheep in the region in 2006, treating over 10,000 infertile couples annually, and publishing numerous papers in top-tier journals, making it a prominent reference center in the region.

## Iran unveils 50 water tourism projects, 300 investment opportunities

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran on Tuesday unveiled a package of 50 water tourism projects and 300 investment opportunities under a joint initiative by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and the Ministry of Energy to develop tourism around the country's water resources and facilities.

The two ministries also signed a "guideline for the implementation of tourism activities in water resources and facilities", aimed at moving the projects from policy-making to implementation and attracting investors, ILNA reported.

Tourism Minister Reza Salehi Amiri said Iran's share of water tourism was "very small" compared with European countries that have invested heavily in

the sector.

"Iran has substantial water-related tourism potential in its northern, southern and western provinces," Salehi Amiri said, adding that tourism development should be a responsibility shared across government institutions. He described the Ministry of Energy's involvement as an important infrastructure step and said investment in tourism infrastructure could create jobs not only directly but also in hotels, restaurants, transport and handicrafts. Salehi Amiri also promoted tourism as a form of public diplomacy.

"Enemies of the nation are trying to present an unreal image of Iran, but when tourists see Iran up close, their perceptions change," the minister said. He proposed presenting Iran's experience in developing water and heri-

tage sites to UNESCO and UN Tourism through bilingual written material, films and media reports.

The investment guidebook for water tourism projects, unveiled alongside the package, is intended to support investment in the sector.

Under the signed guideline, cooperation will be strengthened at provincial level between cultural heritage officials and regional water and electricity companies so projects can move forward from promotion to implementation and investment.

Salehi Amiri also praised the Ministry of Energy for maintaining essential services and rebuilding damaged infrastructure amid what he described as difficult conditions and losses caused by the wars waged by the US and Israel against Iran this year and a year earlier.

## China's strategic pragmatism ...

It is also clear that China's position can serve as political backing and a limited model within the current unjust global system, particularly for countries that have deeper economic ties with Beijing or engage more closely with China through frameworks such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Belt and Road Initiative. China is showing in this regard that international trade can continue without fully complying with unilateral sanctions and that reliable domestic legal and financial tools can be put in place to resist unfettered unilateralism. In addition to creating a degree of confidence among third countries, this approach will significantly raise the political cost of illegal US pressure.

### Balance-oriented approach

Under such circumstances, intensified US pressure on Chinese companies could deepen Tehran-Beijing operational and tactical cooperation in areas such as energy, logistics and sanctions evasion. However, it should not be forgotten that such engagement does not amount to a full strategic alliance or mean that Beijing will abandon its principle of maintaining

a balance. As a major country and global power, China has consistently sought to balance its interests with Iran — including direct access to competitively priced energy, influence in the Middle East and opposition to unilateralism — with the management of its relations with the United States, including massive bilateral trade, technology and global financial stability. Beijing regards Iran as an important strategic partner, but there is no doubt that it defines its top priorities as domestic development, energy security through diversified sources and avoiding direct confrontation with Washington. Although the US irrational escalation of pressure under the Trump administration could push Beijing toward more overt support and the development of more resilient mechanisms against US unilateralism, Beijing's balance-oriented approach will continue within this framework. Overall, China's position toward this new chapter of US unilateralism can be described as a real but conditional shield.

The Islamic Republic of Iran can use this environment to strengthen bilateral mechanisms, diversify its partners and reduce its vulnerability

to US military aggression and economic pressure. The Chinese logic in such cases is "strategic pragmatism," not anti-Western ideology, and the long-term success of Tehran-Beijing relations depends on Tehran's ability to offer Beijing sustainable and predictable benefits. Today, Iran, drawing on its considerable capacity for national resilience in the face of aggression by two nuclear powers and half a century of relentless economic pressure, as well as its unique geopolitical and territorial assets — including the Strait of Hormuz, the Makran coast, the Caspian Sea, maritime and land borders with 15 countries, and a rich and resilient civilization that has infused the "Iranian spirit" into the body of 90 million civilized, powerful and self-confident people — finds itself at a critical and historic juncture. By developing a precise and strategic understanding of this unique position, Iran can help reshape future equations in West Asia in cooperation with powers such as China and other regional actors, while playing a key role in scenarios such as "Persian Gulf collective security" and a "new West Asian order," both of which have been endorsed and emphasized by Beijing.