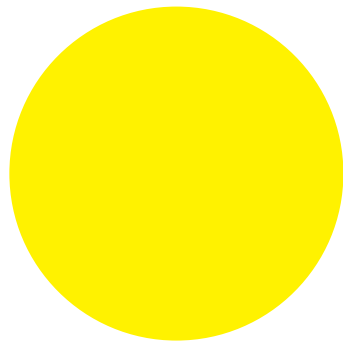


Pezeshkian
calls on gov't
to lead toward
car-free
culture



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National resilience in skies

Sanctions will not ground Iran's flights

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India & Iran: BRICS cooperation in energy, trade & rupee-rial

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

India's new Ambassador
to Tehran Vishwesh Negi,
in an interview with Iran
Daily, outlined India's BRICS 2026 chair-
ship priorities: resilience, innovation,
cooperation, and sustainability. He
emphasized integrating new mem-
bers, promoting local-currency trade
(including Rupee-Rial with Iran), and deliv-
ering practical outcomes in energy,
agriculture, technology, and supply



Vishwesh Negi

chains.

IRAN DAILY: India has assumed the rotating chair-
manship of BRICS at a time when the group, follow-
ing its membership expansion, has entered a new
phase of development. What are India's main prior-
ities and agenda for its chairmanship, and how does
New Delhi view the future of BRICS? Does it see the
group primarily as an economic mechanism, or as a
platform for shaping new political and geopolitical
arrangements during the transition in the interna-
tional system?

NEGI: As part of India's chairship of BRICS 2026, India
has listed its priorities around four thematic pillars which
are Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainabil-
ity, drawing inspiration from the Hon'ble Prime Minister's
vision of "Humanity First" and reflects a people-centric
approach, essentially covering areas ranging from health,
agriculture, food and energy security to technology, AI,
trade, multilateralism, climate action and sustainable de-
velopment.

Under India's chairship, the two principal objectives are
to consolidate the achievements of previous chairships
while facilitating the seamless integration of the expand-
ed membership, and to translate our priorities into prac-
tical, outcome oriented and enduring cooperation.

BRICS is an important platform for emerging and devel-
oping economies, and India sees its future as an inclusive,
action-oriented and future-ready platform responsive to
the priorities of the Global South.

One of the key questions in recent years regarding
the role of BRICS has been how to manage the diverse
interests and perspectives of its new and longstand-
ing members. With the group's expansion, concerns
have arisen that the growing number of members
could make decision-making and consensus-building
more difficult. What approach does India propose to
maintain BRICS' cohesion and effectiveness in this
new phase, and what reforms does it consider nec-
essary to the group's structure and decision-making
mechanisms?

India believes that, its chairship of the BRICS, presents an
excellent opportunity and key responsibility in taking for-
ward the BRICS agenda and diversifying areas of coopera-
tion. India's approach has been to facilitate the seamless
integration of new members and Partner Countries, while
maintaining the effectiveness of existing mechanisms and
building consensus.

As you are aware, India strongly supported Iran's mem-
bership in BRICS as we believe that Iran can play a vital
role in this grouping.

Our experience so far demonstrates that this approach
is working. During our present chairship, more than 300
of over 400 planned meetings across 35 Ministerial and
Heads-of-Agencies tracks have already been held, with ac-
tive participation from Members and Partner Countries.
I am happy to inform that as a consequence of the sev-
eral Ministerial, plus Agency level meetings held under
our chairship till now, we have witnessed the successful
launch of the following initiatives, namely AgriN (Agro In-
puts, Genetic Resources and Information Network) and a Network of
Centres of Excellence on Agroecology and Regenerative
Agriculture, BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart
Grids and Energy Storage, launch of BRICS CONNECT,
BRICS Mission for Healthy Lifestyle, establishment of the
BRICS Expert Working Group on Traditional, Comple-
mentary and Integrative Medicine (TCIM), BRICS Volun-
tary Principles for Climate-Resilient Urban Infrastructure,
signing of MoU by BRICS countries on Cooperation in the
Field of Standardization and the adop-
tion of the BRICS Logistics Supply-Chain
Cooperation Framework. India's chairship has also wit-
nessed the adoption of the first-ever Ministerial Declara-
tion under the Urbanisation Track.

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Iran launches retaliatory attacks on US military bases, vessels US submarine drone captured by IRGC

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The photos show an unmanned US submersible that Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps captured at the entrance of the Strait of Hormuz, at an undisclosed location in Iran, on September 8, 2026.

SNN



China's weight,
Pakistan's chair
India's real test
to come
after SCO
summit at
Bishkek

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From UCL
nights to
fading fortunes
in Asia:
How Iranian
football lost
its European
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Sirik blends
pristine nature
with maritime
heritage

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Iran launches retaliatory attacks on US military bases, vessels

US submarine drone captured by IRGC

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces on Wednesday launched new retaliatory operations in response to the United States' attacks on Iran's oil tankers in the Persian Gulf with an Iranian military official warning that the enemies should be prepared for "pride-inspiring and unique" surprises.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in a statement said that two US vessels, eight oil tankers, and 10 other ships attempting to pass through the prohibited zone of the Strait of Hormuz have been targeted in the latest wave of Iran's operations.

The IRGC said the attacks were carried out in response to the US military's attack on five Iranian oil tankers in the Persian Gulf region.

The IRGC also said its Aerospace Force had struck the US's al-Azraq Airbase in Jordan with a missile barrage, inflicting "heavy damage on the hostile forces."

The attacks come as the US has intensified its aggression against Iran in recent

days, carrying out strikes on several locations across the country. The US strikes have claimed the lives of at least 15 Iranians.

The IRGC Navy also successfully intercepted and captured a highly advanced, unmanned American underwater vehicle at the entrance of the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

The unmanned submersible incorporates some of the world's most advanced underwater technology and was delivered to the US terrorist military in 2025, the statement said.

The capture of the unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) marks the latest in a long history of Iran intercepting and seizing advanced Western military technology.

Over the past decade, Iranian forces have successfully downed or captured numerous high-value US assets, including the RQ-170 Sentinel stealth drone, MQ-9 Reaper drones, and various underwater gliders and surface vessels in the Persian Gulf.

The IRGC's spokesman Hossein Mo-

hebi said on Wednesday that the war with the US could end if Washington stopped threatening the Islamic republic and met Tehran's conditions, including regarding its nuclear program.

"If the enemy wants an end to this situation, it must, while completely stopping the war, refrain from renewed threats, withdraw the Israeli regime's army from Lebanon, end the blockade of Yemen, release \$24 billion in Iran's frozen assets and refrain from any interference in the country's nuclear and missile capabilities," Mohebi said.

A senior IRGC official also warned that if Iran's adversaries persist in their miscalculations and continued aggression, they should be prepared for further "pride-inspiring and unique" Iranian surprises.

Speaking at a meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif, the IRGC's former spokesman and current adviser to its commander-in-chief, emphasized that "the entire region is under the precise, comprehensive and moment-to-mo-



TASNIM

ment intelligence surveillance of the powerful armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

He called Iran's sovereign control of the Hormuz Strait a "strategic and deterrent weapon" in the hands of the country, saying it had not only changed the balance on the ground but had also

become an inspiring model for the Resistance Front and a powerful warning to Iran's enemies.

The Strait of Hormuz has increasingly become a key arena in the US war on Iran, prompting Tehran to assert greater control over maritime activity in and around the strait.

Tehran urges UNSC 'immediate action' on US 'violations of int'l peace, security'



Iran's Foreign Ministry
IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday strongly condemned an aggressive US military attack on several Iranian oil tankers, stressing that the UN Security Council and the UN secretary-general have a responsibility to take immediate action over "grave violations of international peace and security" by the US.

The ministry said in a statement that the US military attack on

several Iranian oil tankers on Tuesday night, and the assault on Iranian commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman are a continuation of Washington's military aggression, maritime blockade and economic war against Iran, and constituted an outright violation of the UN Charter and international law.

The ministry said the US actions against Iranian commercial vessels not only represented a dan-

gerous escalation of tensions in the region but also posed a clear threat to regional and international peace and security.

In response to the attacks on Iranian oil tankers, Iran's Armed Forces, exercising their inherent right to self-defense, struck US military bases and facilities in Jordan, which it said continued to support US military attacks against Iran, as well as several US vessels.

The statement said Iran reaffirms its firm determination to defend its sovereignty and national interests against US aggression, stressing that Iran's Armed Forces would not hesitate to exercise their inherent right to self-defense.

The ministry said Iran would respond decisively and appropriately to any military aggression by the enemy.

Iran's Armed Forces on Wednesday launched an attack on a US military base in Jordan and targeted two US vessels, eight oil tankers, and 10 other ships attempting to pass through the prohibited zone of the Strait of Hormuz in response to the US attacks on Iran's oil tankers in the Persian Gulf.

Iran warns new UK sanctions will deepen mistrust

International Desk

Iran's Embassy in London on Tuesday expressed deep regret over the British government's decision to impose new sanctions on Iran, calling the measures illegal and contrary to the shared interests of the two countries.

The embassy in a statement warned that London's alignment with US economic pressure would deepen a wall of mistrust between Tehran and London, IRNA reported.

"Aligning with the unfair US policy of imposing economic terrorism against Iran will have no result other than raising the wall of mistrust between the two countries and weakening the foundations of bilateral cooperation," it said.

The Iranian Embassy stressed that Tehran has always adhered to international law and said Iran's nuclear program remains under the full supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The embassy also urged Britain to condemn as aggressive actions by the United States and Israel against Iran, rather than pursuing policies that were misguided and counterproductive.

It said the aggression constituted a clear violation of international law and the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The embassy's statement came after the



AFP

British government announced an expansion of unilateral sanctions against Tehran, while repeating political allegations concerning Iran's nuclear program and regional activities.

The UK government said the measures would restrict Iran's access to the British financial system, broaden trade bans to include more goods, technology and services, and prohibit Iranian aircraft from landing in Britain unless exemptions apply.

British Deputy Foreign Secretary Stephen Doughty said in a statement that the measures had been drawn up as part of London's efforts to increase pressure on Iran. Iran has repeatedly said unilateral sanctions have no legal standing and that the use of economic pressure against the Iranian people violates principles of international law and stands in the way of engagement and cooperation between countries.

Saudi Arabia launches new attacks on Yemen

Yemen's Ansarullah resistance movement reported dozens of Saudi airstrikes on Wednesday as daily attacks continued in a conflict that has reignited during the Middle East war, with hundreds of people killed in fighting near the Red Sea.

More than 40 attacks targeted several regions including the flashpoint areas of Taiz and Hodeida, the scene of fierce clashes between the Ansarullah and Saudi-backed government, the movement said.

"It's a catastrophe, and the attacks are ongoing," said Mohammed Khudairi, one of nearly 20,000 who fled the fighting, according to the International Organization for Migration,



AFP

AFP reported.

"We managed to leave, but others remain trapped there," he said at a displacement camp of wood-and-straw huts near Khokha, on the Red Sea coast.

The latest salvos in Yemen's previously dormant conflict come a day after Yemen's Armed Forces set oil sites ablaze and wounded 73 in their

heaviest missile and drone attacks against Saudi Arabia in years.

The fighting in Yemen is taking place against the backdrop of the Middle East war, which erupted in late February with US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Saudi airstrikes targeted "various areas across the governorates of Marib, Al-jawf, Taiz and Hodeida", the Almasirah TV said on Wednesday.

The Saudi civil defense later issued a warning for the southern governorate of Khamis Mushait, near Yemen, but quickly lifted it.

On Tuesday, Saudi authorities vowed to respond to the Yemen's attacks, saying they caused fires and temporary shutdowns at oil sites.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



National resilience in skies

Sanctions will not ground Iran’s flights

Economy Desk

Iran's aviation industry will continue operating despite new US sanctions targeting Iranian airlines, although the measures could increase operating and procurement costs, the head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization said on Wednesday.

Speaking in response to the US decision to sanction 27 Iranian airlines, Captain Abuzar Shiroudi said the latest move was neither a new initiative nor evidence of the effectiveness of Washington's policy, IRNA reported.

It is "a repetition of a failed policy against the Iranian nation, a policy that the country's aviation industry has faced for decades and one that has been met time and again with the capabilities and resilience of Iranian specialists," he said.

The US Treasury Department on Tuesday imposed new sanctions on 27 Iranian airlines, including Iran Aseman, Iran Airtour, Kish Air, Qeshm Air, Zagros, ATA, Vares, Sepehran and Chabahar, as well as other airlines operating in Iran.

Shiroudi said Iran's aviation industry had for years faced



restrictions on the purchase of aircraft and spare parts, as well as technical, banking, insurance, repair and maintenance services. Despite these restrictions, he said, the country's aviation sector had continued to operate.

"Sanctions may increase the cost of operations and the procurement of some needs, but they have so far failed to halt the country's flight operations, and they will not be able to do so today either," he said.

The civil aviation chief also

cautioned against exaggerating the impact of the new measures, saying the imposition of sanctions did not mean aircraft would be grounded or airlines forced to shut down.

"Targeting Iranian airlines in practice means restricting people's access to air transportation services, and ordinary people, patients, families and economic actors will bear the greatest share of the cost," he said.

Shiroudi noted that Iranian airlines had continued to pro-

vide services despite years of sanctions, describing the continuation of flights under difficult conditions as evidence of the aviation industry's capabilities and resilience.

"The US can put the names of companies on its sanctions list, but it cannot sanction the knowledge of specialists, the industry's accumulated experience or the determination of Iran's aviation personnel," he said.

Shiroudi acknowledged that sanctions could make the procurement of some re-

quirements more difficult but said they would not prevent Iran's aviation sector from continuing to operate.

No flight cancellations

Meanwhile, Ramin Kashef-Azar, chief executive of Imam Khomeini International Airport City, said none of the country's international flights had been restricted or canceled.

Speaking to the Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA) about the impact of the new sanctions on the international flights of the affected airlines, Kashef-Azar said all flights at the international airport were currently operating and that flight activities were proceeding normally, with no cancellations so far.

"So far, we have received no letter or correspondence regarding a reduction in international flights or a lowering of flight levels, and no country has contacted us on the matter," he said.

He stressed that planning to expand the airport's flight network was continuing, adding that plans for new routes were still under way, with Tunisia and Vietnam among the destinations being considered.

From Bishkek to New Delhi

Iran's growing role in East

Economy Desk

ANALYSIS

The economic and geopolitical developments of the past week have highlighted Iran's growing links with the East and its position in the emerging economic order.

As India prepares to host the BRICS summit in New Delhi on Sept. 12-13, following the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Bishkek attended by senior Iranian officials, Iran's position in the emerging economic order in the East has become increasingly difficult to overlook.

These two events were not merely diplomatic showcases, but pointed to a practical roadmap for Iran to overcome economic isolation and enter the emerging global economic order.

BRICS: new economic opportunities for Iran

India, which holds the rotating BRICS presidency, has announced that more than 350 specialized meetings have been held in 25 cities across the country ahead of the leaders' summit in New Delhi.

The scale of the preparatory work reflects the members' efforts to further develop BRICS as an economic partnership with practical rules and mechanisms.

According to official figures, the 11 BRICS members account for more than 40% of the world's population and about 40.7% of global GDP on a purchasing-power-parity basis in 2025.

The group also accounts for about a quarter of global trade flows.

For Iran, active participation in the bloc means access to large markets without relying on the dollar or the Western financial system.

The expansion of trade in national currencies, the establishment of the New Development Bank and the creation of credit lines among members have created a framework through which Tehran can expand its non-oil exports, particularly petrochemicals, steel, agricultural products and knowledge-based goods, to newer members such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Indonesia.

Practical steps to harmonize customs standards and facilitate the transit of goods among members are expected to be finalized at the New Delhi summit.

Given Iran's position along major transit corridors, its share of this transit could reach double digits.

Iran's economy and finance minister, before beginning his trip to Russia and then India to attend the summit, said the purpose of the visits was to use foreign relations to strengthen the domestic economy, expand trade and production, attract financing and investment, and create new opportunities for Iran's economy.

"Iran can play a very important role along this route by connecting the Russian economy and the countries to the north of the region with markets in the south, particularly India," he said.

"BRICS is now one of the most important economic groupings of emerging countries, and Iran's presence in this group provides new opportunities to expand the country's economic and fi-

nancial cooperation," he said.

No to "law of the jungle"

A significant development, meanwhile, took place in Bishkek.

At the SCO summit, the positions expressed by senior leaders of the member states on regional developments were closely watched.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, speaking at both the main SCO meeting and the "SCO Plus" meeting, called for an "equal and orderly" multipolar world and said the international community should reject "double standards, exceptionalism, foreign interference, bullying and the law of the jungle" and advance the rule of law in international relations.

On the sidelines of the summit, the Indian prime minister and Iran's president held a meeting and stressed the expansion of trade ties.

India's ambassador to Kyrgyzstan also said that using the North-South corridor through Iran would create a "major leap in regional trade."

The comments came as the US seeks to create insecurity in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

An analysis by Japan's Nikkei, however, said the White House's threatening approach had made a lasting end to the conflicts more difficult and would not alter the geopolitical reality.

Iran's role as a Eurasian gateway

The Central Asia Times analytical outlet has described the ports of Bandar Abbas and Chabahar as the only safe and cost-effective route for landlocked Central Asian countries to reach open waters.

At a time when war and sanctions have increased the risks or costs associated with many alternative routes, including the Black Sea and the Suez Canal, the Iranian route has emerged as the most logical option because of its relative security and lower cost.

The completion of the Rasht-Astara railway and the expansion of Chabahar port in cooperation with India could significantly strengthen Iran's role in regional transit.

The expansion of transit could provide an additional source of foreign exchange for Iran and help reduce its reliance on oil revenues over the coming decade.

Looking ahead

The convergence of the East presents the best opportunity for Iran's economy. BRICS provides an institutional and financial platform, while the SCO provides security and transit support.

Developments in recent weeks have shown that the US cannot neutralize Iran's position in the emerging economic order through pressure and threats.

The next step is for Iran's economic team to turn these diplomatic opportunities into signed contracts, active credit lines and transit projects under way.

The future the West had envisioned for Iran was one of isolation. What has taken shape through BRICS and the SCO, however, is a future of integration, connectivity and prosperity.

IRNA contributed to this article.

Iranian oil prices rise more than 3% as tensions escalate

Economy Desk

Prices for Iranian crude oil cargoes rose by more than 3% as tensions escalated in the Middle East, with prices for most grades reaching above \$95 a barrel, Tasnim reported.

All Iranian crude grades, including Light, Heavy, Forouzan and Soroush, rose by \$3.18 a barrel across four key markets: Northwest Europe, the Mediterranean, Egypt's Sidi Kerir and South Africa.

In Northwest Europe, Iranian Light crude was priced at \$95.97 a barrel, while Heavy and Forouzan crude stood at \$94.07 and \$94.32, respectively.

In the Mediterranean market, Iranian Light

crude was priced at \$95.32 a barrel, while Heavy crude stood at \$93.17, Forouzan at \$93.42 and the heavier Soroush grade at \$90.17, the lowest price recorded among the destinations.

The highest price was recorded for Iranian Light crude at Sidi Kerir on Egypt's coast, where it was priced at \$97.22 a barrel.

Iranian Heavy and Forouzan crude in the same market were priced at \$95.07 and \$95.32, respectively.

In South Africa, prices were identical to those in Northwest Europe, at \$95.97, \$94.07 and \$94.32 a barrel for Light, Heavy and Forouzan crude, respectively.

The \$3.18 increase came as tensions in the Middle East escalated, with further volatility in oil prices expected if tensions persist.

Oil prices topped \$100 a barrel on Wednesday for the first time in six weeks as an escalation in fighting by US and Iranian forces deepened concerns over supplies from the region and raised fears of inflationary pressures and higher energy costs for consumers and businesses, Reuters reported.

Brent, the global oil benchmark, has risen by a quarter since early last month as hopes faded for a permanent resolution to the six-month-old US-Iran conflict.

Tehran sees \$20b trade target with Iraq as achievable

Economy Desk

Iran and Iraq can increase their annual trade to \$20 billion from unofficial estimates of \$14-15 billion, the head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce said on Wednesday, calling the target "practical and achievable," as reported by ISNA.

Yahya Al-Es'Haq, speaking at a meeting with business figures in the western province of Kermanshah, described trade with Iraq as more than an economic matter, linking it directly to regional security and development.

"If we seek development and security in the region, we must focus on developing trade," he was quoted as saying.

Hassan Danaeifar, head of Iran's economic development headquarters for Iraq and a former ambassador to Baghdad, noted that non-oil exports to Iraq have averaged 22% of Iran's total over the past two decades.

He described the Iraqi market as "vital" for Iranian production and said the emergence of new competitors such as the United Arab Emirates and China should be seen as an opportunity to improve the quality and diversity of Iranian exports.

He stressed the need for serious planning to regain lost ground.

Abdul Amir Rabiha, director general of the West Asia office at Iran's Trade Development Orga-

India & Iran: BRICS ...

Following Iran's formal accession to BRICS, what new capacities does India believe Iran's participation brings to the group? Which areas does New Delhi consider priorities for practical cooperation between Iran and other BRICS members, particularly in fields such as energy, transit corridors, trade and the use of national currencies? What have been India's plans to turn BRICS into a results-oriented mechanism and close the gap between the group's political declarations and its practical projects?

Iran is an important member of the expanded BRICS family, and its participation further strengthens the representation of emerging and developing economies within the grouping. India looks forward to continued positive contribution from Iran.

India continues to see significant potential for practical cooperation among BRICS members in

areas such as energy, agriculture, transport and logistics, trade, entrepreneurship, science and technology, and resilient supply chains. These areas correspond closely with the priorities of India's chairship.

As I have already mentioned, a lot of tangible outcomes in terms of initiatives and specific activities have been formulated during our current BRICS chairship.

Reforming the international financial and economic architecture and reducing dependence on the US dollar have been among the central issues on the BRICS agenda. However, BRICS members hold differing views on the pace and means of moving towards alternative financial mechanisms. Should we expect tangible progress in expanding national-currency payments, strengthening the role of the New Development Bank and creating financial mechanisms independent of Western-led

structures under India's chairmanship?

India's approach to BRICS financial and economic cooperation is centred on strengthening practical cooperation and facilitating greater economic engagement among Member States.

India is also in favour of promoting the use of local currencies for trade among BRICS members. For instance, for trade with Iran, we have a Rupee-Rial mechanism to boost bilateral trade and commerce.

India's chairship has placed continued emphasis on strengthening economic cooperation within BRICS, including through engagement among Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors.

India believes that BRICS should remain focused on concrete, mutually beneficial and sustainable outcomes. The objective is to strengthen cooperation in ways that respond to the economic and developmental priorities of Member States, while respecting their respective national circumstances and priorities.

China's weight, Pakistan's chair

India's real test to come after SCO summit at Bishkek



By Imran Khurshid
Associate research
fellow at the
International Center
for Peace Studies

OPINION

The SCO remains a critical theater where geopolitical rivalry, regional cooperation, and competing ambitions intersect. For India, the Bishkek summit offered important diplomatic gains while highlighting the growing challenge of China's influence and the need to prepare for Pakistan's upcoming presidency.

This year, the SCO summit took place in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, under the theme "25 Years of the SCO: Together for Sustainable Peace, Development and Prosperity."

The theme reflected the summit's focus and priorities and was also significant because 2026 marked the SCO's 25th anniversary, formed in 2001.

The summit was also the 26th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO and was chaired by Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov. It also marked the end of Kyrgyzstan's 2025–26 chairmanship, with Pakistan taking over for the next year.

Amid global turbulence and geopolitical uncertainty

This summit came at an important time, amid considerable turbulence in the global geopolitical landscape.

The world is engulfed in different wars, from the Middle East to Europe, while tensions in many other regions remain high, with the possibility that new theatres of conflict could open up at any time. Countries have been exposed to dependencies and vulnerabilities, with supply chains facing increasing challenges. Energy and food security have become increasingly important, and countries are now seeking greater resilience. They are focusing on reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening security.

Central Asia itself is at an important geopolitical crossroads. The Middle East crisis and the war in Ukraine are relatively close to the region, and Central Asian countries need to protect themselves from possible spillover and engulfment by these conflicts.

This was an important summit because it was attended by major global leaders such as Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, among others.

It was also different because of the visible bonhomie and cordial atmosphere among the three leaders and the way they interacted with each other. Modi and Xi also interacted, shaking hands and speaking briefly during the summit. This was particularly significant given the recent reduction in tensions between India and China and the agreements recently reached between the two countries.

The Bishkek Declaration was



GETTY IMAGES

adopted, which focused on the peaceful settlement of disputes. It also condemned the US attacks on Iran and, importantly, called for avoiding double standards on terrorism. India strongly put forward its position that there should be the complete elimination of the terrorism ecosystem, from recruitment to financing and everything in between. Besides, India did not endorse China's BRI as it considers it unsustainable, non-transparent, and believes that it compromises sovereignty and territorial integrity.

India also adopted strong language on terrorism. This is a big win for India. Before this summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Uzbekistan, an important Central Asian country, where several agreements were reached. One key development was Uzbekistan's endorsement of India's strong language on cross-border terrorism. Similarly, at the SCO summit, India once again pushed for strong language on terrorism.

China's strategic ambitions in Central Asia

In the SCO, China has greater influence, reflected even in the organization's name, which is based in Shanghai, a Chinese city. China's predominance in this organization is substantial, allowing it to influence the agenda and other

important aspects of the organization.

China is now also aggressively expanding its influence in the Central Asian countries. These countries were traditionally part of the Soviet Union and remained under Moscow's sphere of influence for decades. However, China's influence in the region has been expanding, especially after the war in Ukraine, which has left Russia facing increasing problems and retreating from many strategic areas because of a lack of resources and the pressure of the war.

This also relates to Xi Jinping and his ambition to make China a great power and achieve the objectives associated with the Chinese Dream. After Xi became the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012 and later became China's president in 2013, China increasingly expanded its influence in Central Asian countries through various global initiatives, dual-use infrastructure projects, and, especially, the BRI. The BRI is not simply an economic or infrastructure initiative. It is also a geostrategic project through which China seeks to shape the global strategic environment around its interests. It was also launched in Kazakhstan, a Central Asian country, in 2013, highlighting the importance China attaches to the region.

Beijing sees this region through the prism of great-power rivalry and understands Central Asia's strategic significance. The region provides China with avenues for expanding its influence into other regions because of its geostrategic location. Central Asia has often been described as a geopolitical heartland, and controlling or influencing it can have implications for adjoining areas.

This shows China's interests in the region and how it sees itself and its role there. Russia's entrenchment in Ukraine has made it easier for China to expand into areas that were traditionally part of Russia's strategic space. If the Russia-Ukraine war continues, China could eventually become the sole dominant power in the region.

India, Russia and the SCO

In this context, in 2017, and largely because of Russia's support, India became a member of the SCO. Russia wanted to dilute China's expanding influence in the SCO and in the Central Asian region, and India's entry provided Moscow with an important strategic counterbalance. Similarly, China pushed for Pakistan's entry into the organization to dilute India's influence.

Importantly, India and Russia have common interests in Central



In 2017, and largely because of Russia's support, India became a member of the SCO. Russia wanted to dilute China's expanding influence in the SCO and in the Central Asian region, and India's entry provided Moscow with an important strategic counterbalance. Similarly, China pushed for Pakistan's entry into the organization to dilute India's influence. Right now, the Russia-China relationship may appear to be a "no-limits partnership," but this is largely because of Western pressure and sanctions, which have made Russia increasingly dependent on China.



The summit was also different because Modi, Xi, and Putin appeared much more comfortable with each other. Modi and Xi, in particular, appeared more at ease than in previous years, especially after the 2020 Galwan crisis, which had engulfed India-China relations. This improved atmosphere is also linked to recent agreements between India and China aimed at reducing tensions and stabilizing the relationship. China has also recently removed or changed some of its senior military leadership.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (R) shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping (2nd-R) and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on September 1, 2026.

ANI

Asian countries, including Afghanistan. Right now, the Russia-China relationship may appear to be a "no-limits partnership," but this is largely because of Western pressure and sanctions, which have made Russia increasingly dependent on China. Deep inside, Russia and its intelligence agencies remain suspicious of China and are concerned about China's expanding influence around Russia's periphery, from the Arctic to Central Asia and along Russia's borders.

In this context, India also becomes important for Russia as a counterweight to China. India can help dilute China's overwhelming role around Russia's old strategic periphery, which has become increasingly difficult for Moscow to manage because of the Ukraine war. If the existing war continues, Russia will gradually lose strategic space and could eventually reach a point of no return.

Sharif's summit optics and the search for visibility

This summit also drew attention for the moments and optics surrounding the leaders. There were many interesting moments. Shehbaz Sharif appeared to make considerable efforts to get the attention of Russian President Vladimir Putin. After the official group photograph, when Putin began walking away from the podium, Sharif was seen quickly following him and appearing to stop him by holding his hand before starting a brief conversation, which became an awkward moment and was widely noticed.

Importantly, while most of the leaders wore black or dark suits, Shehbaz Sharif wore a white suit. He appeared to be trying to draw attention and project the image that Pakistan is a different and global peacemaker, particularly because Pakistan had recently tried to portray itself as having played a role in facilitating a cease-fire between Iran and the United States.

However, the joint statement and the major leaders showed little appreciation for this role. On the contrary, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who met Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the summit, was seen interacting with Modi with smiles and warmth, which also generated considerable discussion in Pakistan.

Shehbaz Sharif also tried to attract attention through photographs. His office shared a cropped version of the SCO leaders' group photograph in which several leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, were removed, making Sharif appear prominently at the center alongside Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The original photograph, however, showed Sharif standing fourth from the right. After the cropped photograph attracted criticism and controversy, Sharif subsequently shared the full, original photograph on his X account.



Pakistan's official social-media account was also reported to have cropped Modi out of a video showing the SCO leaders at the roundtable.

These moments, together with his attempts to engage Putin and his distinctive choice of attire, added to the perception that Sharif was consciously seeking visibility and attention at the summit.

These optics may seem minor, but they matter for understanding how Pakistan uses major international gatherings for diplomatic grandstanding and image-building. In many ways, this episode also explains an important feature of Pakistan's foreign policy: a strong emphasis on optics, visibility, and diplomatic grandstanding rather than sustained and substantive diplomatic engagement.

India's diplomatic gains and the changing SCO dynamics

The SCO summit was good for India for several reasons. India put strong language on terrorism and pushed for language addressing the entire terrorism ecosystem, from financing to recruitment and radicalization. This is an im-

portant diplomatic success for India because New Delhi has consistently argued that terrorism must be eliminated in its entirety rather than being selectively condemned.

The summit was also important for India because Prime Minister Modi met Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. This sent a message that India-Iran ties remain steadfast despite the ongoing tensions between Iran and the United States.

Importantly, Pezeshkian also asked Modi to play a greater role in resolving the existing crisis between Iran and the United States. This shows Iran's confidence in India's diplomatic role and its ability to engage with different sides.

The summit was also different because Modi, Xi, and Putin appeared much more comfortable with each other. Modi and Xi, in particular, appeared more at ease than in previous years, especially after the 2020 Galwan crisis, which had engulfed India-China relations.

This improved atmosphere is also linked to recent agreements between India and China aimed at

reducing tensions and stabilizing the relationship.

China has also recently removed or changed some of its senior military leadership. Importantly, General Zhao Zongqi, who headed the PLA's Western Theatre Command during the Doklam standoff and the period of the 2020 Galwan crisis, was recently removed from China's top political advisory body. While the exact reasons for these changes remain unclear and could be related to China's internal politics or other factors, they have nevertheless sent a message to India about possible changes within China's military establishment. Another important feature of this summit was its focus on development and the problems faced by member countries, rather than simply serving as a platform for anti-Western rhetoric. This matters because the SCO needs to remain relevant by addressing the practical challenges its members face, including terrorism, economic vulnerabilities, energy security, food security, connectivity, and regional instability.

Next challenge for India

Now, the next SCO summit will

take place in Pakistan. Pakistan will do its best to promote and use the summit for its own grandstanding as it tends to use such international platforms for optics and image-building. It may also try to use the forum against India and push its own narrative.

However, the SCO's mechanisms, which are not supposed to let bilateral issues dominate the organization's agenda, provide some limitations. Moreover, with Russia, China, and other countries present, Pakistan will not have complete freedom to use the organization for its own objectives. For India, the SCO remains both a challenge and an opportunity. China's growing influence and Russia's declining strategic space create challenges, but India's growing engagement with Central Asia, its relationship with Russia, its ties with Iran, and its improving engagement with China also provide opportunities.

The Bishkek summit showed that the SCO remains an important platform at a time when the global geopolitical landscape is becoming increasingly uncertain. For India, the key will be to use this platform to strengthen its



India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar (front-left) meets Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on the sidelines of the SCO Summit 2026 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on September 1, 2026. Jaishankar described the meeting as a "quick catch-up" with his counterpart.

● X

strategic interests while ensuring that terrorism, regional stability, connectivity, energy security, and resilience remain at the center of the agenda.

The full article first appeared on *The Eurasian Times*.

Rebalancing global order India's BRICS strategy



By Harsh V. Pant
Vice president at
Observer Research
Foundation

OPINION

India will host the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi late this month as part of its presidency of a grouping that has become increasingly central to the contest over the future of the international order. This will be India's fourth BRICS presidency, after 2012, 2016, and 2021, and comes two decades after the idea of BRICS first emerged as a platform for the major emerging economies.

India's approach has been shaped by a familiar balancing act: strengthening the voice of the Global South without allowing BRICS to become an explicitly anti-Western coalition. The theme of the presidency — "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability" — captures this ambition. The emphasis on a "humanity-first" and people-centric agenda is intended to make BRICS an instrument of practical economic cooperation rather than another arena for geopolitical polarization.

Resilience will be central to this effort. The disruptions of recent years, from the pandemic and supply-chain shocks to sanctions and geopolitical conflicts, have underscored the vulnerabilities of emerging economies. India is therefore likely to push for more diversified and shock-resistant supply chains, particularly in critical minerals, agriculture, energy, and manufacturing.

Innovation and digital integration provide another area where India has considerable diplomatic capital to deploy. Its experience with Digital Public Infrastructure offers a model for cooperation among developing economies. Cross-border digital payments, greater interoperability of central bank



Preparations are underway ahead of the BRICS Summit 2026 at the Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Centre, in Bhopal, India, on August 4, 2026.

● ANI

digital currencies, and common approaches to responsible artificial intelligence could help translate India's technological experience into a broader BRICS agenda.

The third pillar, cooperation, is inseparable from India's longstanding advocacy of reformed multilateralism. New Delhi has consistently argued that institutions such as the United Nations, IMF, and World Bank no longer adequately reflect the distribution of global economic and political power. BRICS provides India with a platform to press for greater representation and agency for the Global South. Yet India's conception of reform is not about creating a parallel institutional order. Rather, BRICS can be used to rebalance the existing order from within. India seeks a more representative and responsive system while retaining an open, rules-based international framework.

This distinguishes New Delhi's approach from those members that may view BRICS primarily as an instrument for challenging Western dominance. The challenge for India will be to maintain this reformist orientation amid the divergent political preferences of an increasingly heterogeneous membership. Sustainability will similarly have to be approached through the lens of development. India's emphasis on "Energy for All" reflects the continuing tension between climate ambitions and the developmental needs of emerging economies. Expanding clean-energy deployment, climate resilience, and access to green technologies will therefore be as important as setting ambitious targets.

Several practical outcomes could give this agenda greater credibility. BRICS members could seek to expand local-currency trade and payment mechanisms, reducing transaction costs and excessive dependence on third-country financial infrastructure. The New Development Bank could play a larger role through increased local-currency lending for infrastructure and sustainable



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development projects across the Global South. A broader framework for digital public infrastructure, encompassing AI governance, data sovereignty, and cross-border interoperability, could also provide BRICS with a more concrete institutional legacy.

Supply-chain cooperation may prove particularly consequential. Coordination on critical minerals, food production, energy security, and manufacturing could move BRICS beyond declaratory diplomacy towards economic statecraft. Yet translating these ambitions into common policy will be difficult. The principal challenge is that BRICS is not a strategically coherent bloc. Its members differ sharply in their perceptions of the West, their economic interests, and their preferred conception of the international order. Russia and Iran, for instance, have a far more adversarial relationship with the West than India does. New Delhi will therefore have to resist pressures to turn BRICS into an explicitly anti-Western platform while preserving its credibility within the grouping.

The China question will be even more complicated. India and China can cooperate on questions of Global South representation and economic reform while simultaneously remaining strategic competitors. The durability of India's BRICS diplomacy will depend, in part, on its ability to compartmentalize these competing interests. The expansion of BRICS adds another layer of complexity. A larger membership enhances the grouping's representational weight but makes consensus harder. The recent tensions between Iran and the UAE, illustrating the problem. Their opposing positions during the escalating regional confrontation contributed to divisions at the May 2026 BRICS foreign

ministers' meeting in New Delhi, which ended without a joint communiqué. India instead issued a chair's statement acknowledging differences. For New Delhi, the episode underlines the difficulty of maintaining BRICS cohesion when members are themselves divided by acute regional conflicts.

This presents a particular challenge for India because it has important strategic and economic interests in maintaining productive relations with both Tehran and Abu Dhabi. More broadly, it reinforces the reality that greater representational diversity does not automatically produce greater strategic cohesion. India will have to ensure that intra-member conflicts do not turn BRICS into an arena for the projection of regional rivalries.

India's fourth BRICS presidency, therefore, should not be viewed simply through the prism of summit declarations. Its larger significance lies in whether New Delhi can demonstrate that strategic autonomy remains compatible with effective multilateralism. India's objective is neither to reproduce the Western-led order unchanged nor to construct a competing geopolitical bloc. It is to reshape the rules and institutions of global governance while retaining room for manoeuvre across competing power centres.

That is a difficult proposition, but it is also precisely where India's growing diplomatic influence gives it an opportunity. The success of the 2026 presidency will ultimately depend on whether New Delhi can convert BRICS from a forum of divergent geopolitical interests into a platform for concrete cooperation — and, in doing so, give substance to its claim to speak for a more representative Global South.

The article first appeared on *The Telegraph*.

From UCL nights to fading fortunes in Asia: How Iranian football lost its European pedigree

Sports Desk

As the new UEFA Champions League season kicked off across Europe on Tuesday, football fans in Iran were confronted with a harsh reality: for the first time since the 2017/18 campaign, no Iranian player is involved in the continent's most prestigious club competition.

Mehdi Taremi spearheaded the list of Iranians in the tournament in recent years, which also featured Sardar Azmoun, Sadeq Moharrami, Kaveh Rezaei and Alireza Jahanbakhsh.

Taremi bagged 13 goals in 48 appearances for different clubs in six successive seasons, including a spectacular bicycle kick for Porto against Chelsea in the 2020/21 quarterfinals that earned him a FIFA Puskás Award nomination, though he eventually lost out to Argentine winger Erik Lamela.

The former Inter and Porto striker, however, left Greek heavyweight Olympiacos – for whom he scored against Real Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen in the UCL league phase last season – in the summer, after falling down the pecking order under Spanish head coach José Luis Mendilibar, to sign for Al Wasl in the UAE Pro League, returning to Asian club football after seven prolific seasons in different European leagues. His move, which saw him join international teammate Azmoun – a former striker of Zenit St Petersburg,

AS Roma and Bayer Leverkusen who now plays for Shabab Al Ahli – in the Emirati top flight is another indication of how Iranian football has lost its pedigree when it comes to recruitment by European clubs.

The situation is particularly striking in the aftermath of the 2026 World Cup, where Iran enjoyed an unbeaten group-stage campaign for the first time in seven appearances, despite ultimately missing out on an elusive place in the knockout stage.

The World Cup has traditionally been the biggest shop window for Iranian players seeking a move to Europe.

That was particularly evident with Iran's so-called 'Golden Generation' of the late 1990s. Players who impressed at the 1998 World Cup subsequently moved to Germany, Austria and other European destinations, helping establish a generation of Iranian footballers in the European game.

The contrast after the 2026 tournament could hardly be greater. Rather than Germany, Italy, Spain or England, the only Iranian player to make a move to Europe after the World Cup was veteran defender Milad Mohammadi, who joined Belarusian side ML Vitebsk at the age of 33. While the transfer technically maintains an Iranian presence in European football, its destination underlines the dramatic decline in the level of opportunities available to Iranian players.



Iranian striker Mehdi Taremi is welcomed by Al Wasl teammates ahead of his first training session with the UAE Pro League club.
● AL WASL SC

In a review of the top 45 national teams in the FIFA rankings, including those that were not present at the World Cup, Iran is currently the only country without a representative in Europe's five major leagues – England's Premier League, Spain's La Liga, Italy's Serie A, Germany's Bundesliga and France's Ligue 1.

Even Iran's leading performers in the World Cup struggled to attract major European interest. Goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand received an offer from Turkish heavyweight Besiktas but ultimately remained in the Persian Gulf Pro League. Ramin Rezaei, regarded as Iran's best player at the World

Cup, continued with Foolad Khuzestan at the age of 37 rather than securing a move abroad, while Mohammad Mohebi, who scored against New Zealand in Iran's opening match, moved to Croatian club HNK Rijeka from Russian side FC Rostov.

More concerning is that some of the Iranian players enjoying the strongest starts to the season are those who failed to establish themselves in Amir Qalenei's national team plans, most notably versatile winger Allahyar Sayyadmanesh, who has emerged as the country's most informed European-based player after joining Polish club Lech Poznan.

Age appears to be an increasingly important factor in European recruitment. Leading clubs now rely heavily on statistical data, scouting networks and analytical tools to identify players with long-term potential rather than signing established stars approaching the latter stages of their careers.

That trend has worked against Iran, whose World Cup squad broke the record for the oldest average starting lineup in the tournament's history. Players in their 30s may still provide significant value to the national team, but they are less attractive to European clubs looking to develop assets for the future.

The pattern has also been visible among younger Iranians. Several promising players, including Kasra Taheri, Mohammadmahdi Zare and Mohammadmahdi Mohebi – none of whom were part of the World Cup squad – have moved back to the Iranian league after relatively short spells abroad.

Two decades ago, it was commonplace to see Iranian internationals attached to clubs such as Bayern Munich, Hertha Berlin, Bochum, Hamburg, Bolton, Osasuna and Arminia Bielefeld. Today, the most prominent destinations for Iranian talent are increasingly Russia and the UAE.

The decline is not simply a matter of individual transfers. It reflects the diminishing presence of Iranian football in the global marketplace.

The absence of an Iranian player from the Champions League is therefore more than a statistical curiosity. Taremi's departure from European football has removed one of the last prominent Iranian links to the competition and completed a trend that had already become increasingly difficult to ignore.

For a country that once used the World Cup as a springboard to Europe's biggest leagues, the road ahead now appears considerably narrower.

Asian Cadet, Junior & U21 Karate Championship: Iranians dominate Day 1 with 14 medals



Sports Desk

Iranian karatekas stole the show on the opening day of the AKF Asian Cadet, Junior & U21 Championship in Amman, Jordan, collecting 14 medals – including six golds – across different age and gender groups on Tuesday.

In the girls' cadet kumite contests, Nirvana Razaqi won gold in the -47kg class after defeating Palestine's Mahbooba Darsbahi in the final, with Baran Shadfar overcoming Hessah Al-Rasheed 3-1 to claim the top prize in -54kg. Dina Karimi also finished on

a high in the age group, beating Saudi opponent Alanoud Al-Asiri 3-0 in the -61kg showdown, while Saba Khodaparast settled for silver in +61kg after a 4-0 setback against Thailand's Chonlada Nisangkat. The Iranian-Saudi rivalry continued in the boys' cadet kumite event, as Abolfazl Arab-Yaqoubi outmuscled Mohammed Harbi for the -63kg gold, while fellow Iranian Hamidreza Rezayati defeated Abdulrahman Al-Amri 3-0 in the -70kg final.

Amirali Mahmoudi, meanwhile, collected a second kumite silver for the country, losing 3-0

to the host's Tariq Ahmad in the boys' cadet +70kg final. Iran's sixth gold medal was secured in the girls' cadet individual kata, where Dina Safari outscored Iraq's Lanya Ahmed 5-0 in the final.

Iranians also bagged silver medals across different kata events.

Mohammad Ankouti fell to a 4-1 loss to Hung-yi Hsiao of Chinese Taipei in the boys' cadet individual category, with the female trio of Vanousheh Rostamnejad, Nazanin Haqdoust and Melodi Azizi suffering a 3-2 setback against Chinese Taipei in the cadet and junior team event.

Yazdan Qavam was beaten 3-2 by Saudi opponent Yaqoub Bu Khawwah in the junior male final, while Armin Javani, Amirreza Mosalman and Erfan Beigi teamed up for a silver medal in the cadet and junior male division, falling 5-0 to Kuwait in the final.

Iranian boys Mohammad-Mahan Qassemian (cadet kumite -52kg) and Alireza Nadimi (U21 kata) added two bronzes to the country's medal haul. Following Iran in the team table at the end of Day 1 was Saudi Arabia, which collected two golds, four silvers and five bronzes, with Chinese Taipei in third, bagging two golds and two silvers, as well as five bronzes.

With 338 karatekas from 21 countries participating, the 24th edition of the showcase will run until Friday.

Rahimi wins gold at World Archery Para Series

Sports Desk

Iranian para-archer Somayeh Rahimi clinched the gold medal in the women's individual recurve event at the 2026 World Archery Para Series in Ahmedabad, India, delivering a dominant performance in Wednesday's final.

Competing on the final day of the tournament, Rahimi faced a Chinese opponent in the recurve women's individual final and secured a convincing 6-2 victory to claim the championship title and top spot on the podium.

Her gold-medal run capped an impressive campaign that saw her advance through several challenging rounds. In the semifinals, Rahimi was pushed to the limit by a home favorite from India, with the match ending in a 5-5 draw. She held her nerve in the decisive shoot-off, prevailing against the Indian representative to book her place in the final. Earlier in the competition, Rahimi had also defeated an American opponent 6-4 to reach the semifinal stage.

However, Iran's success in the recurve category was not limited to the individual event. The women's recurve team, comprised of Rahimi and Mohadeseh Babahabib, secured a bronze medal on Tuesday. The pair defeated their Indonesian rivals 6-2 to finish third in the team competition, adding another medal to Iran's tally.

In the recurve mixed team event, Iran's pairing of Somayeh Rahimi and Gholamreza Rahimi faced a tough challenge against Indonesia, ultimately falling 5-1 and settling for fourth place.

Gholamreza Rahimi had earlier ex-



worldarchery sport

ited the men's individual recurve competition after losing 6-4 to an Indonesian archer. Babahabib also saw her campaign end in the individual event, falling 6-2 to a Bangladeshi opponent.

In the compound category, Iran's Hadi Noori delivered a strong performance, advancing to the round of 16. He achieved a 144-144 draw against his Slovakian rival and emerged victorious in the shoot-off to progress. However, his run ended in the next stage when he lost 142-141 to a representative from Iraq.

Other Iranian compound archers

were less fortunate. Amir-Mohammad Barani narrowly lost 141-140 to a Chinese opponent, while Farzaneh Asgari put up a strong fight against a French rival but ultimately fell 143-137. Both were eliminated before reaching the round of 16. The 2026 World Archery Para Series in Ahmedabad features 150 athletes from 19 countries, providing a crucial platform for international competition ahead of major championships. With one gold and one bronze medal, Iran's delegation delivered a mixed but noteworthy performance, highlighted by Rahimi's individual triumph.

Sirik blends pristine nature with maritime heritage

Iranica Desk

In southeastern Iran, where the waters of the Gulf of Oman meet the Makoran coast, lies a district far removed from the crowds of the south's better-known destinations. Sirik, with its sandy beaches, mangrove forests, valuable wetlands, extensive palm groves, and seafaring and Balochi culture, showcases one of the most distinctive faces of Hormozgan Province. Most travelers associate southern Iran with Qeshm, Kish or Bandar Abbas. Sirik, however, offers a different experience, with its appeal rooted not in shopping centers and large hotels, but in its pristine nature, tranquil coastline and traditional local way of life. Visitors can walk along the clear waters of the Gulf of Oman, watch fishing boats, and explore creeks and mangrove forests that form one of the most valuable ecosystems in southern Iran. Sirik is a district in Hormozgan Province, located in the eastern part of the province along the Makoran coast. It was separated from Minab in 2007 and established as an independent district. The city of Sirik serves as its administrative center, while Kuhestak and Garuk are also among its towns.



Sirik is bordered by Minab to the north, Bashagard to the east, Jask to the south, and the Gulf of Oman to the west. Its approximately 140-kilometer coastline is the area's most prominent geographical feature, much of which has yet to experience extensive tourism development. Its location along the historic Makoran coast has also given Sirik particular significance. The area has long been a route for sailors, merchants and fishermen, and the community's longstanding connection with



the sea remains visible in everyday life.

What sets Sirik apart from many other coastal towns

in Iran is the diversity of its natural landscapes. Within a relatively short distance, visitors can travel from the Gulf of Oman shoreline to lush palm groves, while the Bashagard highlands rise in the distance.

Unlike some of the more heavily visited southern beaches, Sirik's coastline offers a quieter atmosphere, with much of its natural character still intact. Fishing boats, small jetties and coastal creeks are a familiar part of the landscape, making a trip to Sirik feel more like an encounter with everyday life in southern Iran than a visit to a fully developed tourist destination.

This natural diversity has made Sirik an appealing destination for nature lovers, birdwatchers and landscape photographers. If a single attraction could be considered a symbol of Sirik's natural heritage, it would be Azini Wetland, also known as Azini Creek. Covering nearly 500 hectares, the wetland is one of Hormozgan Province's four internationally recognized wetlands and is among the sites listed under the Ramsar Convention. Its most distinctive feature is the simultaneous growth of two mangrove species, *Avicennia marina* and *Aegiceras corniculatum*, known

locally as Hara and Chandl, within the same ecosystem — a phenomenon rarely seen along Iran's southern coast.

At high tide, seawater rises among the trees' roots, creating a landscape considered among the most beautiful natural scenes in southern Iran. The wetland is also a habitat for migratory birds, crabs, mudskippers and various aquatic species, giving it considerable ecological importance.

Sirik's beaches are another major reason to visit the area. Unlike some of the famous southern beaches that have undergone extensive tourism development in recent years, Sirik still offers secluded stretches of shoreline, light-colored sand and expansive views of the Gulf of Oman.

Kuhestak is one of the best-known coastal towns in Sirik. This historic port, with its sandy beach, calm waters, and traditional Lenj boats and fishing vessels, offers an authentic glimpse into maritime life in southern Iran.

The coastal route between Garuk and Sirik is also considered one of the most scenic sections of the district's shoreline. Its open sea views, quiet beaches and natural surroundings make it an ideal place for walking and watching the sunset.

National Museum of Iran offers journey through history

Iranica Desk

If visitors had to choose just one destination in Tehran to explore the history of Iran, the National Museum of Iran would be among the first choices. In just a few hours, visitors can follow a journey spanning thousands of years, from simple stone tools and early pottery to Achaemenid sculptures, Sassanid artifacts and finely illuminated Qur'an manuscripts. Located on Imam Khomeini Street, near the beginning of Si-e Tir Street, the National Museum of Iran houses and displays archaeological and historical collections from Iran in two main museums. The Museum of Ancient Iran presents a history stretching from the Paleolithic period to the end of the Sassanid era, while the Museum of Islamic Archaeology and Art of Iran covers the Islamic period through the Qajar era. In the prehistoric section, there are no grand palaces or colossal statues. Instead, visitors encounter tools that may appear simple at first glance but are highly significant for understanding the lives of early humans. Chipped stone, bone tools, pottery and objects associated with early communities tell part of a story that began before the invention of writing. These objects show how humans gradually learned to make use of the natural materials around them, developed tools and moved from a way of life based on hunting and gathering toward settlement, agriculture and production. That is precisely what makes this section important: the history of Iran did not begin with the Ach-



aemenid kings. Behind what are now recognized as great civilizations lie thousands of years of experience and social change. The National Museum of Iran displays artifacts from the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze and Iron ages alongside objects from Iran's historical periods. Among the artifacts associated with Shahr-e Sukhteh, a pottery vessel attracts the attention of many visitors. The vessel features a sequence of images depicting a goat. When the images are viewed in sequence, they suggest the movement of the animal, as though the ancient artist was attempting to portray motion on a fixed surface. This feature has led to the vessel being popularly described as the "world's oldest animation." Scientifically, however, it is more appropriate to describe it as a very early example of the visual representation of movement rather than definitively assigning it that title.

Its value, in any case, is considerable. A vessel dating to the third millennium BCE shows that people of that period were not only skilled in pottery-making and decorative design but also used images to convey the concept of movement. As visitors enter the historical section, the character of the museum changes. Artifacts from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian and Sassanid periods each offer a glimpse into different chapters of Iran's political and cultural history. Among them, the statue of Darius is one of the most prominent works from the Achaemenid period. Discovered at Susa, the statue has lost its head and upper body, but the inscriptions on its clothing and the surviving details still provide important information about the king's identity and status. One of the most distinctive experiences at the National Museum of Iran is encountering the

remains known as the Salt Men. The remains were discovered at the Chehrabad salt mine in Zanjan Province, a site where mining activities from different historical periods have been identified. The unusual conditions inside the mine, together with the presence of salt, helped preserve parts of the human remains and associated organic materials to a remarkable degree, unlike many other ancient human remains. In the metalwork section, the golden Marlik Cup is one of the objects that often draws visitors' attention. The cup was discovered at the ancient Marlik archaeological site in Rudbar, Gilan Province. The site contains ancient graves set among natural rock formations, where valuable objects were uncovered during archaeological excavations. The Marlik Cup dates to the late second and early first millennia BCE. Its raised designs, including winged bulls and a stylized tree, were not created merely for dec-



oration. They can offer researchers clues about the worldview and beliefs of the people who lived during that period. Visitors who assume that the story of Iran's history ends when they leave the Museum of Ancient Iran would miss an important part of the complex. The Museum of Islamic Archaeology and Art of Iran presents another chapter, allowing visitors to follow the development of Iranian culture and art after the advent of Islam. The building was designed with inspiration from the Sassanid palace at Bishapur and opened in 1996 as the Museum of the Islamic Era. Following renovation and changes to its displays, it reopened in 2015. Its collections are presented in galleries devoted

ed to periods and themes ranging from the early Islamic era to the Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid, Safavid, Afsharid, Zand and Qajar periods. Here, the nature of the story changes. Bookmaking, calligraphy, pottery, metalwork, textiles and other forms of art show that Iranian culture not only continued after the advent of Islam but also developed new forms across different periods.

The Holy Qur'an Gallery has an atmosphere quite different from that of the archaeological galleries. Manuscript Holy Qur'ans and examples of the art of writing introduce visitors to the history of scripts, bookmaking and the artistic traditions associated with books.

The National Museum of Iran is, in essence, a place where visitors can trace changes in Iranian society not as a simple, linear story, but through objects recovered from archaeological sites and historical collections. Some of these artifacts speak of the grandeur of governments and empires, while others tell stories about people whose names were never recorded in history books.

The National Museum of Iran may be one of the few places in Tehran where the distance between the present and thousands of years ago is measured in just a few steps. Moving from one gallery to another takes visitors from the earliest stone tools to ancient cities, from the Achaemenid Empire to the Sassanid era and from there to the art of Islamic Iran — a journey whose ultimate destination is not simply a place, but a deeper understanding of the past of the land in which we live.



Pezeshkian calls on gov't to lead toward car-free culture

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called on government bodies to take the lead in launching a "one day a week without cars" initiative, while stressing the need to protect low-income groups during the implementation of the country's gasoline plan. Speaking at a Cabinet meeting in Tehran, Pezeshkian said public institutions, government offices, organizations, and state-owned companies should set the example and help turn the initiative into a broader social movement through sustained public participation. The president also praised the cooperation of citizens, drivers, fuel-station operators, and executive agencies involved in carrying out the gasoline plan. "All of us have a duty to provide the necessary cooperation for the proper implementation of public plans and policies," Pezeshkian said, stressing that the interests and concerns of all stakeholders must be taken into account. He called for measures to prevent undue pressure or losses on different segments of society, particularly dis-

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian chairs a Cabinet meeting in Tehran on September 9, 2026. [president.ir](#)

advantaged groups, and emphasized safeguarding their livelihoods. Pezeshkian also urged officials to provide "clear" and accurate information to the public and maintain regular communication with citizens. He said authorities should listen responsibly to public criticism, demands, and concerns and work to address them wherever possible. Ministers and Cabinet members presented updates on the latest measures and programs undertaken by their respective institutions during the meeting. The Cabinet also reviewed a detailed report by the government secretariat on the two-year performance of the 14th administration. The assessment examined the implementation of government programs and the performance of executive bodies during different periods, particularly under conditions arising from the war.



Iran welcomes 2m foreign tourists in five months, Iraqis lead arrivals



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran welcomed two million foreign tourists between March 21 and August 21,

with Iraqi visitors accounting for 56% of arrivals, the deputy tourism minister said during a national pilgrimage tourism meeting in

the holy city of Qom. Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, deputy tourism minister at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, pointed to pilgrimage tourism as a major draw, with many foreign visitors including Iran's holy sites among their travel destinations, IRNA reported. Iran received 7.399 million foreign tourists in the year ended March 20, 2025, Mohseni-Bandpey said. Some 52% of those visitors included pilgrimage tourism as part of their trip. He said the National Pilgrimage Task Force had introduced measures to support and expand the sector,

while efforts were under way to remove obstacles to increasing the country's accommodation capacity. The plans aim to encourage greater investment in hotels and other lodging facilities while ensuring compliance with international standards, he said. Mohseni-Bandpey also outlined a new domestic tourism initiative under which Iranians will receive travel cards with credit limits of up to five billion rials. Accommodation providers and other tourism-related businesses will also be able to tap into the scheme under the planned framework, he said.

'Land of Angels' wins three awards at Kazan film festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Babak Khajepasha's 'Land of Angels' won three awards at the 22nd Kazan International Film Festival in Kazan, Russia, including the festival's Grand Prix.

The film also earned the Best Actress award for Solaf Fawakherji and Best Cinematography for Alireza Barazandeh, underscoring its strong showing at the festival, held from Sept. 4 to 8 in the capital of Russia's Republic of Tatarstan, ILNA reported. Written and directed by Khajepasha and produced by Manouchehr Mohammadi, 'Land of Angels' is a joint production of Tasvir Shahr Institute and Soureh Cinema Organization. The film previously emerged as the most decorated entry at the 44th Fajr Film Festival, where it received five



Crystal Simorgh awards and eight Certificates of Merit. Featuring Arab actors, the film presents a human-centered narrative set against war and crisis in Gaza, while drawing on an international cast and production approach. Land of Angels is set to continue its festival run at the sixth edition of the Slemani International Film Festival, where it will compete alongside other international productions. Soureh International is handling the film's international distribution.

China brings together journalists from around world for media exchange

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

FEATURE REPORT

The China International Press Communication Center (CIPCC) opened its second-half 2026 program on Monday at Renmin University of China, bringing together more than 100 journalists from around 100 countries, including Iran, for three and a half months of journalism training, professional exchange and cultural activities. The opening ceremony was hosted by CIPCC Director Yu Lei and featured addresses by senior Chinese officials, including Assistant Foreign Minister Hong Lei, Vice President of the China Public Diplomacy Association Tong

Xiaoling, and Renmin University CPC Committee Secretary Zhang Donggang. Journalists who had previously participated in the CIPCC program also shared their experiences and delivered remarks at the ceremony, including Mark Longyen from Nigeria and Mahendra Subedi from Nepal. Now in its 13th year, the CIPCC program has grown from a small initiative launched in 2014 into an international platform for media professionals from developing countries. The 2026 program, initiated by the China Public Diplomacy Association under the guidance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, brings together journalists from Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America, Eurasia, the Arab world, and Central and Eastern Europe.

Participants are divided into groups based on five working languages: English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic. According to CIPCC Director Yu Lei, a central aim of the program, alongside introducing China's development and achievements, is to strengthen ties with countries of the Global South and promote greater cooperation in pursuit of shared development. The journalists will live on the Renmin University campus, giving them an opportunity to experience university life while studying at one of China's leading institutions for journalism and communication. The program combines professional journalism training with diplomatic briefings, cultural activities and field trips to provinces and regions

across China. Participants will also undertake internships at major Chinese media organizations, including CGTN, Xinhua News Agency and People's Daily, providing them with first-hand exposure to China's media industry and the way Chinese media organizations operate. Running through mid-December, the program is designed to build professional and personal links between journalists from China and developing countries while encouraging greater cross-cultural understanding and media cooperation.

What it means for Iran

For Iranian participants, the program provides an opportunity to gain a more direct and comprehensive understand-

ing of China's economic, technological and social development and to convey those experiences to Iranian audiences through journalism. It can also contribute to closer media ties between Iran and China by creating direct professional connections between Iranian journalists and their Chinese counterparts. Beyond bilateral relations, interaction with journalists from dozens of other countries provides an opportunity to exchange views on international developments, compare media experiences and develop professional networks across the Global South. Such exchanges can be particularly valuable for Iran as it seeks to deepen its engagement with Asian, African and other developing countries.