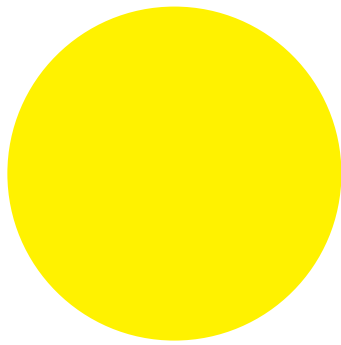


Iranian cinema marks National Cinema Day with record week



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Pezeshkain says Iran, Oman to ink Hormuz shipping route deal on Monday

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Strait of Hormuz to work as leverage to compel US to honor MoU commitments

By Amir Dabiri Mehr
Political science researcher

ANALYSIS
EXCLUSIVE

Following the prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the continuation of sporadic clashes between Iran and the United States, the mutual targeting of oil tankers, and the impact of this crisis on the global economy, many international observers, while expressing concern over the persistence of this trend, are also worried about its further escalation in the future.

Recent reciprocal attacks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis in Yemen, as well as Israel's renewed aggression against Lebanon, are signs that the tension between Tehran and Washington has not only affected the global economy but has also spread the level of military confrontation and insecurity to other parts of the Middle East. If this issue remains unresolved, the tension could take on even wider dimensions.

The formation of the Mecca Pact among Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia is a joint regional measure and alliance aimed at creating deterrence against the potential dangers of this regional insecurity. US President Donald Trump has recently said that the war with Iran will end after the congressional elections in November — that is, around two months from now — also indicate that the likelihood of military escalation in the coming days is high, especially given reports that the United States is studying and preparing to implement a plan to attack the nuclear facilities at Mount Kolang, also known as Pickaxe Mountain.

The referral of Iran's nuclear file from the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the United Nations Security Council is seen as paving the way for a possible US military action. A reliable source close to the military forces of the Islamic Republic says: "In response to a possible attack on the nuclear facilities at Mount Kolang and the further intensification of economic pressure in the coming weeks, Iran intends to adopt aggressive behavior and escalate military tension. Evidence of this can be seen in the attacks on US military bases in Jordan, which have inflicted significant damage." The remarks of Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), regarding Iran's intention to define a new restricted zone for American ships in the Persian Gulf, amount to the declaration of a new battlefield with the United States.

Alongside this concerning outlook in the region, inside Iran many people who are enduring difficult economic conditions and witnessing the continuous depreciation of the national currency, unprecedented rises in commodity prices, and shortages of medicine are asking one another how long this tension will continue and whether keeping the Strait of Hormuz closed — and America's reciprocal insistence on a naval blockade — is worth the increasing economic pressure on Iran.

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Persian Gulf region needs no 'gendarme': Iranian president

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The combo shows Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian meeting with world leaders, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (top L), Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (top R), Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (down L) and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (down R) on the sidelines of a BRICS summit in New Delhi, India on September 11-12, 2026.

president.ir



Aviation chief warns ICAO of US sanctions impact on global air transport

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Pezeshkain says Iran, Oman to ink Hormuz shipping route deal on Monday

Muscat meeting key step toward regional security: *Spox*

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkain said that Tehran and Muscat will sign an agreement on a joint shipping route through the Strait of Hormuz on Monday, during a meeting attended by Persian Gulf Arab foreign ministers.

"This week, on Monday, the foreign ministers of the Arab countries will meet in Muscat to sign an agreement establishing a joint route between Oman and Iran in the Strait of Hormuz and to notify the International Maritime Organization of the agreement," Pezeshkain said in an interview with the Indian broadcaster India Today published on Saturday.

Iran closed the energy chokepoint days after a American-Israeli aggression against the country on February 28.

In June, Tehran and Washington agreed on a 60-day reopening period as part of a Pakistan-mediated memorandum

of understanding, but American violations forced Tehran to shut the waterway again.

Since the closure of the conduit, Iran and Oman, which sit on either side of the strait, have held several rounds of negotiations to regulate transit through the waterway. They have now reached an agreement on arrangements for transit through the strait from which a fifth of the world's oil and gas is exported.

"The countries whose territories were used to launch attacks against us by the US will also attend this meeting," Pezeshkain said.

He underlined that the Islamic Republic will reopen the strait when the US ends its blockade and attacks on Iran.

His remarks came a day after Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said that Oman would host the regional ministerial meeting, with the participation of eight states bordering the Persian Gulf.



Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, on August 3, 2026.

● *REUTERS*

Baqaei said the meeting would discuss regional issues and the outcome of Iranian-Omani talks on designating safe routes for commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

In an interview with Al Mayadeen, Baqaei described the Monday meeting as a key step toward securing stability and security in the Persian Gulf.

Baqaei said the decision to hold the meeting is the result of a process shaped by major events over the past six months.

He said Iran had consistently sought to build trust and cooperation among regional countries to strengthen peace and stability, while keeping the region



free from "harmful and divisive intervention by outside actors".

The spokesman called the initiative to bring together the foreign ministers of the Persian Gulf littoral states an im-

portant development and expressed hope that it would pave the way for greater understanding among regional countries and help bolster shared regional security.

Persian Gulf region needs no 'gendarme': *Iranian president*



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkain (R) meets with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in India, on September 12, 2026.

● *president.ir*

Khaled bin Mohamed Al Nahyan whose country hosts several US military bases from which the American military attacked Iran. The president separately met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali.

"The presence of America in the region has not been a source of salvation but a factor in bloodshed," he said during the meeting.

The president called for greater economic and financial cooperation among BRICS members, saying stronger ties could contribute to the development of member states.

Pezeshkain and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed a range of issues during a meeting on Friday. They stressed their keenness to enhance cooperation between Tehran and New Delhi.

Pezeshkain emphasized that Iran attaches great importance to the expansion of relations among BRICS member states in all fields, particularly in the economic and financial spheres.

the "friendly and brotherly countries" to become enemies.

Iran's Armed Forces launched retaliatory attacks on US military bases in the regional countries after the US and Israel attacked Iran in late February and killed thousands of Iranians.

"They attacked our country without any reason; they martyred our Leader, children, commanders and scientists," Pezeshkain said.

He pointed to the strikes launched from neighboring countries, noting that Iran had "no choice but to defend the country" and strike military bases used in the attacks.

Pezeshkain also held a meeting with UAE Crown Prince Sheikh

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkain on Saturday rejected any foreign interference in regional security, saying that, "We do not need a gendarme in the region" amid the United States' war on Iran.

Speaking during a meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on the sidelines of a BRICS summit in India on Saturday, Pezeshkain underlined that the territorial integrity and security of the region can only be ensured by its own countries.

Pezeshkain said Iran has no problem with its Muslim neighbors, but it is the United States that wants

Army, IRGC chiefs vow to maintain unity after crushing 'terrorist powers'

Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Ahmad Vahidi said the Army and the IRGC, as two major anti-American powers, dealt a crushing blow to "terrorist powers" in the recent wars, stressing that Iran's military realities are being revealed on the battlefield.

Vahidi made the remarks in a joint meeting with Army Commander Major General Amir Hatami on Saturday to review the latest situation on the battlefields, according to the IRGC public relations office, Press TV reported.

He said the unity achieved at the national level was the greatest outcome of the recent war and enemy threats, adding that unprecedented unity, intelligence, and operational synergy among Iran's armed and law enforcement forces have been among the important factors behind the victory. Vahidi praised the performance of the Army in the recent wars, saying the fighting spirit and patriotism of its commanders and forces have recorded "brilliant pages of manhood and self-sacrifice" in Iran's history.

The IRGC commander also said the military capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army were beyond what the enemy had imagined, adding that the enemy witnessed its mistaken assessments of the Army's capabilities on the battlefield. For his part, Hatami said the IRGC has



Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Major General Ahmad Vahidi (C) meets with Army Commander Major General Amir Hatami (R) on September 12, 2026.

● *MEHR*

been one of the main pillars of Iran's national power, security, and deterrence for more than four decades and has remained at the forefront of defending the country's independence and security.

He emphasized that the unity and coordination between the Army and the IRGC constituted a strong pillar of national security and a key to strengthening Iran's national security and power.

"During the recent imposed wars and our resistance to the demands of the enemies, we once again proved that we will not bargain over our national interests," Hatami said.

China's Xi urges BRICS to take on peacemaking role in Middle East war

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged the BRICS bloc to be a peacemaker in the Middle East conflict, in an address to a summit of member countries in New Delhi on Saturday.

China will work with other BRICS members in that role, as the war "does not serve the common interests of the international community", state-run CCTV quoted Xi as saying. BRICS groups Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and



the United Arab Emirates.

It was set up in 2009 to

challenge a world order dominated by the United States and its Western

allies. Together, its members account for more than 40% of the world's population and almost a quarter of the global economy.

The Chinese leader called the bloc a "leading group" in the Global South and a model of self-reliance among emerging and developing countries that should promote innovation-driven development. He said China would assume the BRICS chairmanship next year, and host the 19th BRICS summit, according to CCTV.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Aviation chief warns ICAO of US sanctions impact on global air transport

Economy Desk

The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization warned the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) that continued sanctions on the country's aviation sector could have consequences for regional and international air transport, saying civil aviation should not be used as a tool of political and economic pressure. The statement, reported by ISNA on Saturday, followed US sanctions on 27 Iranian airlines last week. Abouzar Shiroudi called on the ICAO to urgently address the serious and continuing consequences of US restrictive and extraterritorial measures against Iran's civil aviation sector. He said pressure on Iran's aviation industry had intensified, adding that following the failure of the United States and Israel to achieve their objectives during the wars of 2025 and 2026, pressure had expanded to Iran's civil aviation sector. He said all Iranian airlines were targeted by sanctions on Sept.

8, 2026. Shiroudi said such measures ran counter to the objectives and principles set out in the preamble to the 1944 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, which describes the future development of international civil aviation as a means of creating and preserving friendship and understanding among nations and peoples. He also warned that the misuse of civil aviation could become a threat to public safety. Shiroudi said the measures against Iran's aviation sector also posed a serious obstacle to achieving the central objective of the ICAO's 2026-2050 strategic plan, "No Country Left Behind," saying there was a significant gap between that goal and the situation in countries facing such restrictions. He further warned that military attacks on Iran's civil aviation, alongside unilateral sanctions, had consequences extending beyond the country's borders, including restrictions on airspace, disruptions to flight operations, increased diversions and operating costs, and reduced access

to essential aviation equipment and services. Seven Iranian airports were targeted during the 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February, with the attacks focusing more on tourism, passenger and cargo infrastructure than on military facilities. On Tuesday, the US Treasury Department imposed additional sanctions on 27 Iranian airlines as part of a new sanctions package unveiled on Aug. 24, which threatens secondary penalties against countries or entities maintaining trade ties with Tehran. The Treasury said the measures also target 35 companies and one individual, including foreign intermediaries linked to Iranian airlines in Turkey, Malaysia, Kazakhstan and the UAE. The sanctions could affect companies involved in financing, servicing and the international operation of Iran's air transport sector in addition to the airlines themselves. Shiroudi said on Wednesday that the US measures could increase operating and procurement costs but would not bring Iran's flight operations to a halt.



Separately, the head of Imam Khomeini International Airport City Company said on Saturday that all international flights from the airport were operating according to their scheduled timetables without restrictions. Ramin Kashef-Azar told IRNA

that there were so far no restrictions on passenger travel from Imam Khomeini International Airport to airports in neighboring countries or to more than 40 international destinations served from the airport, adding that all flights were operating as

usual. He added that both Iranian and foreign airlines were providing services and operating flights according to their regular daily schedules, with passenger services continuing normally at the airport.

Iraq eyes \$20b in trade with Iran, adviser says



Economy Desk

A senior official from Iraq's Ministry of Trade said on Saturday that expanding trade ties with Iran was a shared goal and that the two countries were planning to raise annual trade to \$20 billion. Mohammed Hannoun, an adviser to Iraq's Ministry

of Trade, told Rudaw Media Network that his country, "welcomes the development of economic and trade relations with all neighboring and regional countries in ways that serve mutual interests and help achieve economic development goals." On efforts to lift bilateral trade to \$20 billion, Han-

noun said, "The expansion of commercial ties between the two countries is a shared goal that will be achieved by removing obstacles, facilitating procedures and creating a suitable environment for the private sector and economic operators." The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce said on Wednesday that the two countries could raise their annual trade to \$20 billion from unofficial estimates of \$14 billion to \$15 billion. Yahya Ale-Es'haq, speaking at a meeting with business figures in the western Iranian province of Kermanshah, described the target as "practical and achievable." Iran is one of Iraq's main trading partners, with most Iranian exports to Iraq concentrated in natural gas, electricity, construction materials and food products.

Iran, Armenia plan green customs corridor at border crossing

Economy Desk

Iran and Armenia plan to convert the Norduz border crossing into a green customs corridor to cut customs clearance times and accelerate the processing of goods, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said. The plan follows an agreement between the heads of the two countries' customs administrations, as reported by ISNA. The officials met in Iran on Saturday to discuss customs and transit issues. Under the proposed arrangement, the two sides are expected to sign a draft protocol establishing a simplified, or green, customs corridor. The protocol would involve the online exchange of commercial information and documents and the elimination of paper documents. The scheme would also require each country to provide the other with a list of select-



ed economic operators with an acceptable level of compliance risk. These companies would be guaranteed by the respective customs administrations, with the customs authorities covering any losses resulting from violations. Located in Iran's East Azerbaijan Province on the border with Armenia, Norduz customs post plays an important role in trade, transit and other exchanges between the sides.

Trade between Iran and Armenia reached \$768 million in 2025, with Iran exporting about \$680 million worth of goods to Armenia and importing about \$88 million from the country, according to official Armenian statistics. In the first half of 2026, Armenia's trade turnover with Iran reached \$371.4 million, up 8.4% from the same period a year earlier, according to Reuters citing official Armenian data.

Strait of Hormuz ...

The Islamic Republic, concerned about the destructive consequences of the continued naval blockade on the national economy and the possibility of internal unrest and protests, is seeking to establish new land and sea routes for importing goods via the Caspian Sea and the Eurasian region with Russia at its center. One of the objectives of the recent visit by Iran's Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh to Moscow was precisely this matter; during the trip, negotiations were also held on finalizing the receipt of a one-billion-dollar loan from Russia. In recent days, following the controversial remarks of former Iranian president Hassan Rouhani emphasizing that the Strait of Hormuz should not become a strait of war, and the widespread reactions of his opponents, a source close to the SNSC, who requested anonymity, exclusively told me "Individuals such as Mr. Rouhani who view the exist-

ing problem solely through the lens of the strait's closure are committing a strategic error in analyzing the present situation. The Islamic Republic does not intend to keep the Strait of Hormuz closed permanently, but the responsibility for its continued closure lies with the United States, which has failed to fulfill its commitments under the Islamabad Understanding. Iran has the right to use its sole instrument of power within its territorial waters." The source, who previously held senior military and security positions in the Islamic Republic for years, added "Iran is engaged in a hybrid and multi-dimensional war with the United States and Israel. Over the past year, they have employed every measure, including surprise attacks, deception operations, attempts to ignite civil war, coups, blockade, and full-scale war. Of course, we believe that in all these plans, the United States has acted as a tool or plaything in the hands of the

Zionists. For this reason, we place no trust in Washington's promises and statements; only practical American actions that serve Iran's interests can lead to a reduction in tensions." In response to the question of what steps the United States must take to reduce tension, the source stated "America's participation in the assassination of the Leader, commanders, children, and innocent people constitutes the primary reasons for the Islamic Republic's distrust. These actions have further intensified the people's hatred and anger toward the enemy. Moreover, the destruction of the country's infrastructure has inflicted heavy damage, while the naval blockade and intensification of sanctions not only fail to push Iran toward surrender but encourage it to take offensive actions against the United States. Therefore, the solution lies in halting America's destructive policies and replacing them with con-

fidence-building measures." According to this official of the Islamic Republic, the United States seeks, through cognitive warfare and media and propaganda campaigns, to conceal realities and portray the closure of the Strait of Hormuz by the Islamic Republic as the obstacle to establishing peace in the region. In this media atmosphere, it aims to close the file of the war without paying the price for its own actions. For this reason, the insistence of officials of the Islamic Republic on maintaining control over the Strait of Hormuz is not merely a military issue; it is a pretext and a field of power-testing for the realization of national rights. Accordingly, the SNSC, while emphasizing the exercise of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, simultaneously pursues the country's other demands in a combined manner. The most important of these are: cessation of the war in Lebanon and Yemen, lifting of the naval blockade,

removal of sanctions, release of Iran's frozen assets in foreign banks, and, above all, a guarantee against any renewed violation of Iran's territorial integrity. In the view of officials of the Islamic Republic, as long as Washington is unwilling to take steps to compensate for the heavy damages of the two recent wars and continues its aggressive approach toward Iran, the Strait of Hormuz will remain an important and effective instrument in the field of confrontation and power-testing between the two countries. The experience of the past six months has also shown that this instrument can be effective in achieving the objectives of the Islamic Republic. In contrast, some politicians and experts inside Iran believe that Tehran should use the Strait of Hormuz bargaining chip as soon as possible, because time will not always be on Iran's side, and this bargaining chip may lose its value and credibility in the not-too-distant future.

Venezuela's oil, US' deal

Price of surrender!



By Saman Sofalgar
Political researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The newly announced oil agreement between the United States and Venezuela has generated enormous controversy because of the extraordinary scale of the privileges reportedly secured by Washington. The Trump administration presents the deal as a historic investment designed to revive Venezuela's oil industry, restore production, and rebuild the country's economy. President Trump has even described it as the "biggest oil deal in world history".

Yet behind the language of reconstruction lies a more troubling question: who will actually control Venezuela's oil wealth, and who will ultimately benefit from it?

Under the framework announced by the Trump administration, North American Blue Energy Partners (NABEP), a private Venezuelan oil company, has received concessions covering 17 major oil fields containing an estimated 65 billion barrels of proven reserves. The US government is also set to receive a 35 percent equity stake in NABEP's parent entity, and Washington has preferential rights to purchase part of the oil produced and first refusal over much of the remaining output.

The governance structure is equally striking. A majority of the company's board members must reportedly be US citizens, while the American government retains veto power over the appointment of directors. The United States therefore does not simply invest in Venezuela's oil industry; it acquires a remarkable degree of influence over how that industry is managed and where its output goes.

These terms are difficult to view as a conventional commercial agreement between equal partners. They instead raise the possibility that Venezuela's political and economic dependence on Washington is being transformed into a long-term system of American influence over one of the world's most valuable energy resources.

From war on drugs to war for oil?

The first question concerns the justification for America's dramatic intervention in Venezuela. For years, the Trump administration portrayed Nicolás Maduro as a major security threat to the United States. Washington accused Maduro and figures associated with his government of links to drug trafficking and narcoterrorism, presenting the alleged flow of narcotics toward the United States as a central reason for confronting Caracas.

But following the US military operation that resulted in Maduro's capture and transfer to the United States, Washington's focus appears to have shifted dramatically toward oil. This shift deserves scrutiny. If drug trafficking was the fundamental reason for confronting the Venezuelan government, why has the post-Maduro agenda become so



heavily concentrated on oil fields, production, investment rights, American companies, and access to Venezuelan crude? Why has the reconstruction of Venezuela's petroleum industry suddenly become one of the central elements of Washington's strategy?

It would be premature to claim, without further evidence, that the accusations against Maduro were merely a pretext for gaining access to Venezuelan oil. But the sequence of events inevitably invites the question. A government is removed by force, its leader is taken out of the country, and Washington subsequently secures extraordinary access to billions of barrels of Venezuelan petroleum reserves. The coincidence is politically difficult to ignore.

An agreement written in Washington's interests

Venezuela possesses the largest proven oil reserves in the world, estimated at more than 300 billion barrels. Most consist of extremely heavy crude, particularly in the Orinoco Belt, whose production requires substantial investment, sophisticated technology, and major infrastructure. There is therefore a legitimate argument that Venezuela needs foreign investment. It needs capital, technology, expertise, and infrastructure if it is to turn its enormous underground reserves into sustainable economic wealth. But a country's need for invest-

ment does not automatically justify any investment agreement offered to it. A country can desperately need capital and still receive a bad bargain.

This is where the current arrangement becomes particularly troubling. The United States is not simply offering loans, technology, or technical assistance. It is obtaining an equity position, preferential access to Venezuelan oil, and extraordinary influence over corporate governance. The distinction is crucial.

Supporters of the agreement will argue that without American capital and expertise, much of Venezuela's oil wealth will remain underground. They will point to the deteriorated state of the country's oil infrastructure and argue that only massive international investment can restore production. That may be true. But there is a fundamental difference between helping a country produce its oil and gaining privileged control over how that oil is produced, managed, and sold.

Language of reconstruction

Washington insists that the agreement is intended to revive Venezuela rather than exploit it. The argument is straightforward: Venezuela has enormous oil reserves but lacks the capital and infrastructure required to develop them, while American companies possess the money,

technology, and expertise needed to restart production.

On paper, this sounds like a mutually beneficial partnership. But investment alone cannot answer the question of sovereignty. Imagine, for a moment, the reaction in Washington if another major power intervened in the United States after a political crisis and subsequently secured long-term control over important American energy assets, preferential access to production, a substantial ownership stake, and influence over corporate governance. American politicians would almost certainly describe such an arrangement as foreign domination. Venezuelans are entitled to ask the same question.

The problem is not that American companies are investing in Venezuela. International investment can be beneficial and can play a vital role in rebuilding damaged economies. The problem is the structure of the relationship. A genuine partnership requires meaningful bargaining power on both sides. When one party possesses overwhelming military, financial, and political leverage and then secures extraordinary privileges over the other's natural wealth, the word "partnership" becomes increasingly difficult to accept.

Who benefits from Venezuela's oil?

Trump and his administration have openly emphasized the val-



Washington calls it a historic investment to rebuild Venezuela. But the extraordinary privileges granted to the United States raise a more fundamental question: is the US helping Venezuela recover its oil industry—or turning the country's greatest natural resource into an instrument of long-term US influence?

ue of Venezuelan oil for American energy security. Washington can use guaranteed access to Venezuelan crude to strengthen its energy position and potentially replenish strategic reserves. From an American perspective, this is understandable.

From a Venezuelan perspective, however, another question arises: why should the oil of a country suffering from economic hardship be used to strengthen the strategic reserves of a far wealthier country before Venezuelans themselves have secured the benefits of their own natural resources?

Washington's answer is that Venezuela will receive investment, tax revenue, employment, and economic recovery in return. That argument deserves to be tested against reality. The decisive question is not how many billions of dollars Washington says the agreement could generate. It is how much of that wealth will remain under meaningful Venezuelan control and how much will ultimately serve American strategic and commercial interests.

If the stated purpose is to help Venezuela rebuild, Venezuelans should be at the center of decisions over their country's oil. Their natural resources should first and foremost become a foundation for national recovery rather than an instrument for strengthening another country's strategic position.

The 100-year question

Perhaps the most astonishing element is the reported duration of the concessions.

The American side has described the arrangement in terms of extraordinarily long-term concessions, while Venezuelan officials have referred to shorter contractual periods. Whatever the precise legal interpretation, the discrepancy highlights how important transparency is when an agreement involves national resources of such enormous value. If Venezuelan oil fields are effectively placed under foreign-controlled arrangements for generations, the implications go far beyond the political careers of today's leaders. One hundred years is longer than the lifespan of virtually every political institution involved. It extends beyond the careers of current politicians and beyond the economic circumstances under which the deal was negotiated.

This raises a basic question of sovereignty: can one generation of political leaders legitimately commit several future generations to an arrangement involving one of their country's most valuable resources?

Oil is not an ordinary commodity in Venezuela. It has shaped the country's political economy for generations. Decisions over its exploitation therefore affect not only government revenues but also Venezuela's long-term economic independence. A century-long commitment, if that is indeed the legal reality, should consequently face extraordinary public scrutiny.

From Iraq to Venezuela?

The history of US foreign policy provides another reason for



US Energy Secretary Chris Wright (L) meets with Venezuelan acting President Delcy Rodríguez at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, on September 2, 2026.
● PEDRO MATTEY/AP

caution whenever military intervention, political transformation, and natural resources become intertwined. Washington will argue that Venezuela is different. It will point to Maduro's style of governance, the collapse of the Venezuelan economy, and the need to attract international capital. But neither should the broader historical pattern be ignored. The United States has repeatedly presented foreign interventions in the language of security, democracy, stability, or humanitarian necessity. Yet

strategic and economic interests have often existed alongside those stated objectives. Iraq remains one of the clearest examples of why the international community should be cautious when military intervention and strategic resources become intertwined. Venezuela is obviously a different case, and simplistic comparisons should be avoided. But the broader lesson remains relevant: when a powerful country intervenes in a weaker state and subsequently obtains extraordinary economic privileges

there, questions about motive are inevitable.

The real test

There is one relatively simple way to determine whether this is genuinely a reconstruction agreement or a modern form of resource domination: follow the money. If Venezuelans receive transparent and substantial benefits; if oil revenues are invested in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and productive capacity; if the country retains meaningful sovereign control over its natural resources; if con-

tracts are subject to public scrutiny; and if future Venezuelan governments retain genuine legal authority over their oil industry, Washington will have a credible argument that the agreement is a reconstruction project rather than a resource grab. But if Venezuela becomes dependent on American companies and institutions for access to its own oil wealth, while Washington retains preferential purchasing rights, corporate influence, and long-term control, history may judge the agreement very differently.

The fundamental issue is therefore not whether Venezuela needs American investment. It does. The fundamental issue is whether that investment must come at the price of sovereignty. A country emerging from political crisis and economic collapse is particularly vulnerable to unequal bargains. That makes transparency, democratic legitimacy, and independent legal review more important, not less. The United States has every right to pursue its national interests. Venezuela has the same right.

That is precisely why this agreement deserves close international scrutiny. If Washington genuinely intends to help Venezuela rebuild, it should have nothing to fear from a transparent arrangement in which Venezuelans can clearly see what they are giving away, what they are receiving in return, and who will control their oil in the decades ahead. Otherwise, the language of partnership risks becoming little more than a polite description of power exercised by the stronger party over the weaker one.

Venezuela does not merely need more oil production. It needs the ability to determine what its oil means for the future of its own people. A highway, a factory, or an oil field can generate wealth. But sovereignty determines who gets to decide how that wealth is used. And that may ultimately be the real question behind the US' historic oil deal with Venezuela: is Washington helping Venezuela recover its wealth, or is Venezuela being asked to surrender control of it in exchange for the promise of recovery?

Washington's Venezuela model is regime change with invoice

By Imran Khalid
Geostrategic analyst

OPINION

The first photographs of Nicolas Maduro inside an American detention facility surfaced lately as he waits for a trial that will not begin until June 2027. On the same weekend, Venezuela's interim government confirmed something that got far less attention outside financial pages: the energy arrangement it struck with Washington will run for at least 25 years and cover more than 65 billion barrels of oil. Put those two facts next to each other and the last eight months in Venezuela stop looking like a story about democracy promotion. They start looking like a story about grabbing resources. That is the part missing from most of the recent commentary. Analysts keep asking whether the January operation that removed Maduro from power was legal, or whether Caracas can survive politically now that it has handed Washington a generation's claim on the country's most valuable asset. Both are fair questions. Neither is the important one. The important question is simpler: how is a pressure campaign against a resource-rich government now designed to end? Start with what actually happened. In January, US special forces carried out a raid on the presidential compound in Caracas that captured Maduro and flew him to New York. He is held at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn and charged with narco-terrorism conspiracy. He has pled not guilty. Seven months later, Delcy Rodriguez, the interim president that Washington's operation left in charge, went on state television to describe what comes next: "This 25-year bilateral project envisages the development of 17 strategic oilfields with a production target of more than 1.5 million barrels per day." By her own government's math, that adds up to roughly \$209 billion in projected revenue at a \$65-a-barrel benchmark, of which about \$19 a barrel would actually reach Venezuela's treasury. The 65 billion barrels under new US control amount to roughly a fifth of the country's



● AIDA AMER/AXIOS

entire proven reserves. Trump announced the arrangement himself, calling it "the biggest oil deal in world history". Who saw this coming, and when, is not a small question. A letter Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) sent to the chief executives of Chevron, ExxonMobil, and ConocoPhillips within days of the raid put it directly: the administration, he wrote, "lied about and concealed their plans to attack the territory of, and conduct regime change in, Venezuela," while "the only outside entities that appear to have known the truth are oil executives." His letter quoted one of them, anonymously, as saying that "in preparation for regime change, there had been engagement" between the industry and the White House. The same letter notes that Con-

ocoPhillips holds outstanding claims against Venezuela north of \$10 billion and ExxonMobil more than a billion, while the oil and gas industry spent \$450 million on political influence in 2024 alone. None of that proves a conspiracy. It does establish that the companies with the largest financial stake in a change of government in Caracas had a clearer view of what was coming than did most of the Venezuelan cabinet. Chevron is now positioned to benefit directly. It is expected to receive an expanded license letting it export more crude and trade state-owned production, on top of a \$2 billion sales arrangement already completed between Washington and Caracas. Both things can be true at once: Venezuela's government gets to say it negotiated rather

than surrendered, and Washington gets a fifth of the country's reserves locked in for a generation while the companies that lobbied hardest get first access to pump it. This is not really a Venezuela story. It is a preview of what "resolution" looks like whenever Washington leans on a government sitting on resources it wants, and the same test is now being conducted against Iran. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent unveiled what he called the "toughest sanctions in history" against Tehran on August 24, aimed at cutting off what remains of Iran's oil exports after six months of war. It is not obviously going to work. Sanctions regimes, even harsh ones, have rarely forced a determined government to fold outright, and this one carries



This is not really a Venezuela story. It is a preview of what "resolution" looks like whenever Washington leans on a government sitting on resources it wants, and the same test is now being conducted against Iran. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent unveiled what he called the "toughest sanctions in history" against Tehran on August 24, aimed at cutting off what remains of Iran's oil exports after six months of war. It is not obviously going to work.



The screengrab shows a US Marine chopper hovering over the Singaporean oil tanker M/T Wen Yao as US Marines board the ship in the Gulf of Oman on July 16, 2026, as part of the American blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. ● US MARINE CORPS

its own risk. China buys more than 80 percent of what Iran still exports, and Beijing has already shown — by, for instance, restricting rare-earth exports in 2025 until Western auto plants began idling for lack of magnets — that it knows how to make that kind of pressure expensive for Washington, too. That is a telling difference between the two situations. Venezuela had no Beijing to call when the pressure came. Iran does, which is exactly why the Venezuela outcome matters well beyond Venezuela: it is the version of "success" Washington can now point to when a resource-rich government runs out of options and no major power is willing to absorb the cost of defending it. Success does not look like elections or new institutions. It looks like a long-duration resource concession, negotiated with whoever survives the pressure campaign and structured so it can be described as diplomacy rather than extraction. None of this requires believing Maduro's government was worth defending. It was not short on abuses of its own, and plenty of Venezuelans who despised him are watching their country's oil signed away for a generation with no illusions about what just happened either. The point is not to relitigate January. The point is to notice what came after because that is the part every other government now under American pressure is watching most closely, from Tehran to resource-rich states in Africa and the Pacific that Washington has started discussing in the same language of national security it once reserved for oil. The lesson those governments are drawing is not subtle. A pressure campaign that removes a hostile government does not end with a handshake and a return to normal trade. It ends with a bill, sized to the resource in question and written to last decades, presented to whoever is left standing and willing to sign. Caracas signed. The open question is which government gets handed the bill next, and whether it will have any more room to say no than Venezuela did.

The article first appeared on Foreign Policy In Focus.

AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship:

Iran ousts Australia in semis to close in on Olympic berth



Sports Desk

Iran moved within touching distance of a coveted men's volleyball berth at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics after securing a hard-fought 3-1 (25-21, 17-25, 25-17, 25-22) victory over Australia in the AVC Continental Championship semifinals in Fukuoka, Japan, on Saturday.

Outside hitter Pouria Hos-

seinkhanzadeh and opposite Ali Hajizadeh finished with a joint game-high 24 points, with Morteza Sharifi adding 13, as Iran tallied 56 points from attacks, seven blocks and eight service points, while benefiting from 21 opposition errors.

Australian outside hitter Lorenzo Pope led his team with 18 points, while opposite spiker Lincoln Williams chipped in 16, though their contribution did little to prevent the Oceanian side, which also capitalized on 25 Iranian errors, from suffering a 22nd defeat in 29 meetings with the Asian powerhouse.

The four-set victory, which finished just before the two-hour mark, earned 2.52 FIVB ranking points for Iran, as Italian head coach Roberto Piazza's side remained in 18th position.

A fourth successive final appearance at the Asian showpiece also secured a place at next year's rebranded FIVB Volleyball World Cup in Poland for Piazza's men.

The ultimate prize, however, will be up for grabs in today's final, where Iran, chasing a fifth Asian title in eight editions, will face the winner of the last-four clash between Japan and South Korea.

With the formidable hosts the hot favorites to defend their continental title, Piazza will hope to see his men deliver their best performance yet in what will be their toughest test in Fukuoka.

The likely showdown will be a repeat of the thrilling Volleyball Nations League encounter between Iran and Japan in June, with the latter emerging victorious in five sets in Orléans, France, as part of a perfect 12-game run in the preliminary phase. Iran will still look to take inspiration from that meeting after fighting back from two sets down to force the game into a decider, having been swept in straight sets by the Japanese in their previous three encounters – including a 2023 final defeat at the Asian Championship on home soil.



Iranian players celebrate their semifinal victory over Australia at the AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, on Sept. 12, 2026.

● AVC

Changwon 2026 WSPS World Championships:

Ahmadi wins gold as Iran secures one-two finish in 10m air pistol

Sports Desk

Iranian shooter Faezeh Ahmadi won the women's 10m air pistol gold medal at the 2026 WSPS World Championships in Changwon, South Korea, on Saturday. Ahmadi topped the final with a score of 238.3 to claim the world title and gold medal and book Iran's first individual quota place for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympics.

Nasrin Shahi, another Iranian finalist, finished second with 233.7 to take the silver medal, while four-time Paralympic champion Sareh Javanmardi missed out on the podium,

placing fourth with 194.1.

The Iranian trio had dominated the qualification round, with Shahi finishing first on 572 points, Ahmadi second on 568 and Javanmardi third on 567 to all advance to the final.

Ahmadi, Shahi and Javanmardi also combined to win the women's 10m air pistol team gold. The Iranian team finished first with a total of 1,707 points. Meanwhile, Iran's Seyed Mohammad Reza Mirshafiei, Mostafa Khadem and Ali Golouei failed to advance to the final in the men's 10m air pistol event.

Featuring 595 athletes from 53 countries, the world championships will run until Wednesday. Iran had previously secured its first team quota for the 2028 Paralympics through the men's sitting volleyball team, which earned its place by winning the world title in July.



● IRNA

Olad targets two golds at Asian Para Games

Sports Desk

Iran's Mahdi Olad says he is targeting two gold medals in the shot put and discus throw at the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, which start on Oct. 18, as he prepares to make his third appearance at the continental multi-sport event.

"Last year, our training conditions were normal, but this year, our preparation was somewhat disrupted due to the wartime circumstances in the country," Olad, a Tokyo 2020 Paralympic shot put gold medalist who also won two silver medals at

Paris 2024, told Mehr News Agency. He said the national team resumed training in late April despite the difficult circumstances and has since held three extended training camps. "I have reached around 70 to 80 percent of the required level of readiness for the Asian Para Games," Olad said. "I am following my training program in a way that will allow me to reach full readiness by the time we travel to Nagoya."

Olad recalled his performances at the previous two editions of the Para Asian Games, saying he won gold in both the shot put and discus at the 2018 Games in Indonesia.

He entered the Hangzhou 2022 Games aiming to repeat that feat but suffered an ankle fracture during the shot put competition, preventing him from defending his title and forcing him to settle for silver.

"Doctors would not allow me to continue competing, but I competed in the discus three days later with the same broken leg and despite the pain, and I won gold," he said.

With three golds and one silver to his name from his two previous Asian Para Games appearances, Olad is determined to return to the top of the podium in both events in Nagoya.

"I will compete in the shot put and discus again, with the hope of repeating the two gold medals I won in Indonesia," he said. "I am training with exactly that goal in mind. I say from now that the two para-athletics gold medals in Nagoya will have my name on them."

Olad, who competes in the F11 classification, also said he had avoided problems arising from the merging of classifications and had therefore been able to focus more calmly on his preparations.

"I am determined to win two gold medals in Nagoya and then continue my training with greater motivation and determination to secure a place at the Paralympic Games," he said.



● MMA

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games:

Iran edges Chinese Taipei in basketball to stay in knockout contention



● FIBA

Sports Desk

Iran overcame a stubborn Chinese Taipei side 72-69 in a thrilling Group B encounter at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games on Saturday to keep alive its hopes of progressing to the men's basketball quarterfinals.

Entering the court on the back of a 59-53 setback against Qatar in their group opener, Greek head coach Sotiris Manolopoulos's men made an unconvincing start, with defensive lapses and inaccurate ball movement allowing Chinese Taipei to take control. The East Asian side finished the opening quarter 17-13 ahead.

The introduction of Mohammad Jamshidi in the second quarter, however, changed the momentum of the game. The experienced guard took control of the court and scored 10 points in the quarter, helping Iran win the period 15-10 and reduce the deficit to one point by halftime.

Iran again struggled at the start of the second half, with individual mistakes and rushed attacks allowing Chinese Taipei to regain the

initiative and win the third quarter 23-21, leaving the outcome to be decided in the final 10 minutes.

With Chinese Taipei holding a narrow lead early in the fourth quarter, Iran stepped up its defensive intensity and showed greater composure on offense to launch its comeback.

The decisive moments came in the closing seconds, when Seyed Mehdi Jafari made two well-timed plays to help Iran seal the victory. The comeback was reminiscent of Iran's dramatic fightback against Chinese Taipei in last year's FIBA Asia Cup quarterfinals, when Manolopoulos's men overcame a 21-point deficit to win 78-75.

Jamshidi led Iran's scoring with 18 points, while Arman Zangeneh made a key contribution under the basket and finished with a game-high efficiency rating of 14.

Alireza Sharifi and Peter Gregorian each recorded an efficiency rating of 11, while Navid Rezaeifar played his part in Iran's fourth-quarter comeback, hitting two three-pointers without a miss to help

turn the momentum in his team's favor.

Chen Ying-Chun, meanwhile, led Chinese Taipei with 29 points, while Brandon Gilbeck finished with 12.

Iran will wrap up the group stage against Jordan, which recovered from an 83-80 loss to Chinese Taipei to defeat Qatar 76-65 later on Saturday.

With all four teams in the group tied on three points, the race for a top-two finish and a place in the last eight remains wide open ahead of today's final round of the group phase.

Iran and Jordan met as recently as July in the preliminary stage of the FIBA World Cup qualifiers, where Manolopoulos's men comprehensively won 67-49 in Amman before completing a 5-1 run to progress to the second round. The result also helped make amends for the 73-60 setback against their familiar West Asian foe earlier in the qualifiers in February.

The top two teams in each of the three groups will be joined by the two best third-placed teams in the quarterfinals.

Handicrafts breathe new life into Shiraz's historic neighborhoods

Iranica Desk

The flourishing of traditional arts within Shiraz's historic fabric is a form of welcome to creative and experience-seeking tourism in this part of the city. The country's first handicrafts passage, located in Filiha neighborhood, is now inviting tourists to explore the area. Private-sector investment has transformed historic houses into handicraft workshops and traditional accommodations, turning the historic fabric into a destination where visitors can experience local life.

According to IRNA, the architectural artistry of Shiraz, particularly in urban design and the construction of visually striking houses, has turned the city's 357-hectare historic fabric into an attractive destination for tourists.

For years, however, this heritage treasure had been at risk due to neglect, numerous social problems and various urban challenges, while its remarkable potential for boosting tourism in Shiraz remained largely overlooked.

After years of difficulties and a troubled period, the valuable historic fabric was finally inscribed on Iran's National Heritage List in August 2023, creating greater opportunities for its protection and revitalization. Many historic houses have since been restored or placed on res-



toration programs.

What has had the greatest impact, however, has been tourism and handicrafts investment in the area, which has transformed the social conditions of its neighborhoods and brought tourists back to the historic fabric.

Several historic houses have been restored, upgraded and converted into handicraft house-workshops, while others have been turned into traditional accommodations. In recent years, these places have gained considerable popularity among visitors to Shiraz and those interested in experience-based tourism.

Nazanin Sadeqnejad, one of the owners of an eco-lodge and handicraft house in the Filiha

neighborhood, recalled the difficult days the neighborhood experienced in previous years and expressed her delight at the noticeable improvement in conditions.

"This is our family neighborhood, and my grandmother lived in her historic house until the end of her life," she said. "But until a few years ago, when I was in my 20s, I could not come to my grandmother's house alone."

"Even adults did not dare to walk through these alleys after sunset. But now things have improved considerably, and young women and men visit these alleys until late at night."

Investment compatible with the historic fabric and the growth of tourism in the area have helped



● IRNA

improve urban conditions and security, while these improvements are expected to further boost the neighborhoods.

Babak Maghazei, a handicrafts investor, said a new form of tourism known as "slow tourism" has become increasingly popular, or "trendy," around the world. In this form of tourism, visitors are not simply looking to see a particular site, and even their travel plans may take shape after they arrive at their destination.

He said this type of experience-based tourism develops at a slower pace and takes place primarily in historic areas. "For the first time in the country, we developed an idea and presented it as a proposal to the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organi-

zation of Fars," he said.

"Under the proposal, tourists are no longer looking for a particular building or hotel. Instead, they stay in historic areas and experience everyday local life there, day and night."

Referring to the opening of the country's first handicrafts passage in Shiraz's historic fabric, Maghazei said tourists could have a range of experiences even if the neighborhood were completely enclosed.

"While staying overnight, they can experience handicraft production, taste local food and live in a neighborhood with a history spanning several centuries. They can enjoy traveling and staying here for several days," he said.

Shiraz is a World Craft City, and

for generations many of its residents have practiced traditional crafts whose products are not only functional but also distinctive in their authenticity, colors and beauty.

At the same time, preserving the traditional atmosphere and the realities of the area is a fundamental requirement of experience-based tourism and plays a central role in its development.

Nearly 20 handicraft houses have now been established in Shiraz's historic fabric. Some are already operating, while others are undergoing repairs and renovations.

Urban officials and government authorities must now stand alongside artists, investors and tourism professionals to ensure that the country's first handicrafts passage does not remain merely an idea on paper.

More than any other form of tourism, experience-based tourism has an inseparable connection with handicrafts and food. Anything that discourages or prevents tourists from entering the area poses an immediate threat to the handicrafts sector as well.

Because the pace of experience-based tourism is slower, tourists tend to stay longer and spend more nights in Shiraz. This, in turn, can boost the tourism and handicrafts economies and generate greater economic benefits from the city's tourism resources.

Semnan looks to water heritage to expand cultural tourism

Iranica Desk

The "Semnan Water Distribution System," reportedly an innovation attributed to the renowned mystic and scholar Ala al-Dawla Semnani, was once used to distribute water along various routes in the city and into six reservoirs to support urban development. The seven-century-old system was inscribed on Iran's National Heritage List in 2011 and has now become one of Semnan's tourism assets as part of its potential as a "civilizational tourism hub."

According to IRNA, Semnan is a city whose identity and development are closely tied to its relationship with water. Located in an arid climate with limited rainfall, the city developed a complex and collaborative body of knowledge for securing water over the centuries. Here, water did not simply flow from qanats; it was stored in reservoirs according to established rules and schedules and then channeled through waterways to neighborhoods and gardens. This system made it possible to sustain life and urban development despite water scarcity.

Securing water in the city required centuries of knowledge, experience and social cooperation. This heritage survives in the form of qanats, water reservoirs, pools, waterways, underground access points, mills, gardens and water-transfer networks, all of which have become part of the city's historical identity.

"Para" is one manifestation of this system — a mechanism through which water rights, scheduling



● IRNA

and distribution were organized according to customary rules, making the management of a limited resource part of people's social lives. Because the water distribution system was essential to urban development and agricultural activities, it operated through a carefully organized mechanism, with trusted individuals playing a role in distributing water. This system is still used by some farmers in Semnan.

Today, this heritage can go beyond being a historical subject and become a narrative for Semnan's civilizational tourism — one that tells visitors not merely about individual structures, but about how life was established and sustained in an arid environment.

The director general of Semnan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization believes that this connection between structures, knowledge and social relations gives water heritage civilizational val-

ue and could provide the basis for developing one of the province's tourism routes.

Jalal Tajik said that Semnan, because of its arid climate, had developed valuable experience over the centuries in securing, transferring, storing and distributing water, and that this experience forms part of the province's historical and civilizational identity. Tajik, referring to the range of water-related elements, added that qanats, water reservoirs, pools, waterways, underground access points, mills, gardens and water-transfer networks gain meaning through their connections with one another and form a system in which technical knowledge, architecture and social participation are intertwined. He described "Para" as an example of this system and said it was not merely a physical structure. Rather, water rights, scheduling, customary rules and social responsibilities had created a form of local water governance.



● IRNA

He noted that an important part of this heritage has survived alongside its visible remains in the collective memory and oral knowledge of previous generations, from terms and narratives associated with water to traditional methods of distributing and maintaining it.

Tajik stressed the need to document this aspect of the heritage, saying the restoration of historical structures alone is not enough and that knowledge, memories, terminology and water-related rituals must also be documented. He described the compilation of a Semnan Water Heritage Atlas as necessary and said the atlas could identify qanats, paras, water reservoirs, pools, waterways, gardens and other related elements and serve as a basis for research, conservation and tourism planning.

One proposal for using this potential for tourism is the design of a "Semnan Water Heritage Route," which could connect the

scattered elements of the network and take visitors from qanats and water-transfer routes to paras, water reservoirs, gardens and historic neighborhoods.

He said today's tourists are not merely looking to see a historic building; they are also interested in stories, meaning and experiences. Water heritage, he added, can tell the story of how people lived in an arid climate and managed their resources.

Tajik said designing a "Day with a Paraban" experience, establishing a water heritage experience center and museum, and producing documentaries, podcasts and digital content about traditional water knowledge are among the proposals for turning this heritage into a tourism product.

Tajik said previous generations, despite limited resources, created rules, encouraged social participation and established local management systems that made it possible to sustain life. He added that this experience could also

offer lessons for the present day. The official stressed that revisiting Semnan's traditional water system is not merely a tourism issue. At a time when water scarcity has become one of the country's major challenges, the experience of past communities in adapting to their environment and managing limited resources could provide a subject for study and discussion about resilience and sustainable development.

To advance this approach, the director general of Semnan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department called for cooperation among the municipality, universities, local communities and the private sector and proposed the formation of a water heritage and tourism working group.

According to Tajik, tourism development must follow conservation principles to ensure that tourism does not result in the destruction or alteration of the character of historical elements.

He said Semnan can now, by revisiting this historic network — from qanats and water reservoirs to "Para" and the six historic pools — offer visitors a different narrative of life in Iran's arid environment, in which water was not merely a natural resource but part of the formation of the city, its culture and its social relations.

He added that "Para" could become one of the focal points of this narrative — a 700-year-old heritage element with the potential to evolve from a historical legacy into part of Semnan's civilizational tourism route.



Iranian cinema marks National Cinema Day with record week

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian cinema marked National Cinema Day on September 12 with its busiest week of the year, as theaters across the country drew more than 485,000 moviegoers while Cinema House unveiled plans to honor veteran filmmakers and revive its long-delayed awards.

The celebrations coincided with the 25th week of the Iranian year, when cinemas welcomed 485,712 viewers between September 5 and September 11, IRNA reported. Box office receipts reached 531.66 billion rials during the week, which became the strongest period for cinema attendance since the start of the year. Discounted ticket prices on Friday also helped draw larger crowds to theaters.

The figures extended a five-week upward trend in cinema attendance. Weekly audiences rose

from about 251,000 in mid-August to 328,000, 352,000 and then 399,000 before reaching the latest high.

Kourosh Cineplex topped the list of the country's busiest cinema complexes with 23,205 visitors, followed by Iran Mall Cineplex with 19,668. Hadish Cineplex, Charsou Cineplex and Azadi Cineplex also ranked among the five most visited venues of the week.

Soroush Sehat's 'The Pool' led the weekly film chart with 111,604 viewers, narrowly ahead of Kazem Daneshi's 'The Death Bath', which attracted 111,470. Yousef Hatamikia's 'Escort' came third with 103,518 admissions.

The celebrations continued on Saturday, September 12, when Cinema House held a press conference in Tehran to outline its National Cinema Week program. Homayoun As'adian, CEO of Cinema House, said the week's events would include a ceremony honor-

ing a number of veteran artists. The organization will also name its library after filmmaker and playwright Bahram Beyzai, while a conference hall at its second building will be dedicated to filmmaker Nasser Taghvaei.

Cinema House is also preparing to settle the status of its awards after a seven-year interruption. Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour, chairman of the organization's board, said Cinema House was developing a mechanism that would allow filmmakers to review and vote on works produced during the past seven years.

"We want to determine once and for all" which films were regarded as the best during that period, he said.

The organization hopes to use online platforms to give its members wider access to films before holding the event later this year, bringing the long-delayed awards process to a close.



Motorcyclists take cultural route to Yerevan

Arts & Culture Desk

A group of Iranian motorcyclists set off from Tehran on September 11 for Yerevan on the first international Tehran-Yerevan motorcycle tourism rally, introducing travelers to the cultural landmarks and scenic routes linking the two neighboring countries, according to the Touring and Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Fifteen motorcycles with engines above 250cc departed from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in Tehran, marking the first time such a large group of



Iranian high-capacity motorcycles have officially and legally crossed the country's borders on an organized international tour.

The riders traveled through Tehran, Alborz, Qazvin, Zanjan, West Azarbaijan and East Azerbaijan provinces

before passing through the Aras Free Zone and Jolfa. They entered Armenia through the Norduz border crossing on September 12.

The group is scheduled to reach Yerevan and visit some of Armenia's best-known historical and cultural sites, including Garni and Ge-

ghard, before returning to Tehran along the same route.

The 10-day journey will conclude on September 21.

Beyond the ride itself, the tour offers participants a chance to experience the cultural landscapes, historic attractions and tourism potential along the Tehran-Yerevan route.

Organizers have also placed emphasis on sustainable tourism and safe riding, while presenting the journey as a cultural exchange on wheels that brings together travelers, heritage and the diverse attractions of the region.

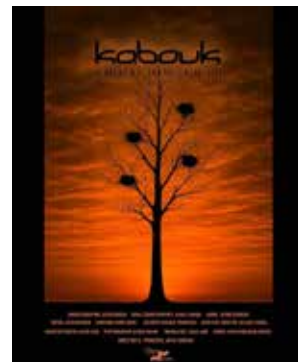
'Kabouk' enters New Orleans film festival competition

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Jafar Sadeghi's documentary 'Kabouk' will compete in the main feature documentary section of the 37th New Orleans Film Festival, scheduled to run from October 21 to 27 in the United States, the Documentary, Experimental and Animation Film Center announced.

The Iranian production is among 26 feature documentaries selected for this year's competition, joining a diverse lineup of films from established and emerging documentary film filmmakers, ILNA reported.

Produced by the Documentary, Experimental and Animation Film Center, 'Kabouk' tells the story of a family in northern Iran whose peaceful life is disrupted by unexpected visitors



in their garden.

The film previously screened at the 19th Cinema Vérité International Documentary Film Festival in Iran, where it won the Audience Award for Best Documentary.

Among the other films in competition are Sam Green's 'The Oldest Person in the World,' which premiered at this year's

Sundance Film Festival, and Mexican filmmaker Otilia Portillo's 'Girls of the Forest.' The latter has earned several awards in 2026, including audience honors at CPH and South by Southwest.

Puerto Rican filmmaker Juan Dávila Santiago will also compete with 'Zenón and the Rebel Boats,' which won the award for Best Feature Documentary at the BlackStar Film Festival. Eddie Sánchez's 'Mexican-American,' meanwhile, had its world premiere at the Tribeca Festival.

Founded in 1989, the New Orleans Film Festival will showcase 175 films selected from nearly 4,000 submissions representing 38 countries. MovieMaker magazine has listed the festival among the world's notable events for filmmakers and moviegoers.

Zanjan's knife-making industry moves from traditional craft toward industrial production

700 workshops turn out 6m knives annually

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Deputy Director of handicrafts at the Zanjan Province Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Dariush Naderi described knife-making as one of the province's most important metal-working crafts, saying around 700 workshops are currently active across Zanjan and produce an estimated six million knives



Dariush Naderi

annually.

Speaking to Iran Daily, Naderi said Zanjan's knife-making tradition enjoys international renown and that the province has considerable capacity in the field. He said the industry is at a critical juncture, with

its future dependent on preserving the authenticity and traditional skills of the craft while modernizing production and improving product quality.

A significant share of Zanjan's knife production reaches regional markets in addition to the domestic market, Naderi said, noting that Iraq is among the product's major export destinations. Some knives are also carried abroad by individual travelers, making it difficult to obtain precise, disaggregated figures on export volumes and the foreign-exchange revenue generated by the industry.

Naderi said the sector is gradually transitioning from a traditional, family-based structure toward semi-industrial and industrial production, a shift that has created new challenges for manufacturers. He identified fluctuations in prices and the procurement of raw materials as among the most press-

ing problems facing producers. Knife-making requires high-quality steel suited to the type of product being manufactured, he said, adding that volatile raw-material prices and broader economic conditions have increased production costs and affected manufacturers' profitability.

Naderi also stressed the need to introduce new technologies into the sector. Some producers continue to rely on traditional methods and tools such as fire and the anvil, he said, noting that these techniques are an integral part of Zanjan's knife-making identity. Modern technologies, however, should be adopted alongside traditional methods to improve productivity, quality and production capacity.

The preservation and transmission of specialized skills is another major challenge, Naderi said. Some master craftsmen and long-serving practitioners are now older, making

it essential to pass their knowledge and expertise on to younger generations.

"Knife-making is not merely an industrial production process," Naderi said. "A significant part of its value lies in the craftsman's skill, experience and technical knowledge at the different stages of making a knife."

If these skills are not properly transmitted, he added, part of the craft's traditional body of knowledge could gradually be lost.

Naderi also pointed to the presence of similar products and inexpensive mass-produced goods in the market, saying an important priority is to distinguish authentic Zanjan knives from products sold with a similar appearance.

Strengthening the Zanjan knife brand, highlighting its technical and artistic characteristics, and enabling consumers to identify authentic products can help protect

genuine producers and increase the craft's value, he said.

As part of efforts to strengthen the product's position, a geographical indication for Zanjan knives was registered in 1404 through the efforts of the handicrafts department in cooperation with the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce, Naderi said.

He described the registration as an important step toward consolidating the product's identity and brand and supporting producers in the province. It can also help promote Zanjan knives in domestic and international markets, he said, adding that further measures are needed to improve quality, packaging, marketing and exports.

Naderi emphasized the potential of Zanjan knives in overseas markets, saying export development is an important avenue for increasing the craft's value. He said efforts should focus on markets where high-quality

products with a distinct cultural identity are more highly valued.

"Zanjan knives are not merely tools," Naderi said. "They are the product of the knowledge and skills passed down through generations of craftspeople in the province."

Presenting these qualities more effectively, he added, could help establish Zanjan knives as products with artistic and cultural value in both domestic and international markets.

Naderi stressed that strengthening the industry requires cooperation among relevant institutions, particularly in raw-material supply, training and skills transfer, standardization, producer support and market development.

Such cooperation, he said, can help preserve the historic standing of Zanjan's knife-making tradition while helping the industry move toward more competitive production.