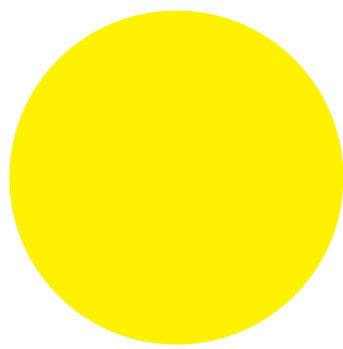


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Pakistan to
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Iran Daily

Vol. 8243 • Tuesday, October 20, 2026 • Mehr 28, 1405 • Jumada al-Awwal 09, 1448 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



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Iranian freestyle wrestler Mehdi Yousefi (R) celebrates his gold medal with his coach after defeating his opponent at the U23 Wrestling World Championship in Las Vegas, United States.

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Iran's northern corridors offer new opportunities for regional trade



By Mohsen Pakaein
Former diplomat

O P I N I O N E X C L U S I V E

Recent developments, particularly the US naval blockade of Iran, which is effectively a military measure, and the restrictions imposed on the country's southern routes, have naturally drawn greater attention to northern neighbors, especially those sharing land borders with Iran. Within this context, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus have gained particular significance, notably those that maintain maritime links with Iran through the Caspian Sea in addition to sharing land borders.

First, it is important to note that Iran occupies a unique geopolitical position, situated between East Asia, Central Asia, Europe and Africa, with access to the latter regions through the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf. This gives Iran a distinctive place in the region. The needs of Iran and its neighboring countries are, in fact, interdependent: each side relies on the other; and keeping their borders open serves the interests of all parties.

At the present juncture, maintaining open borders is particularly important. For instance, Central Asian and Caucasian countries have traditionally used Iran as a gateway to the waters of the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf, transporting their exports through these routes and bringing in imports in the opposite direction. With the Strait of Hormuz now blocked, these countries have naturally begun to pay greater attention to land borders and alternative routes through Iran to their destinations. Similarly, Iran has become more inclined to make greater use of its neighbors' borders to reduce its dependence on its southern coastline.

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