

Pezeshkian: Tehran seeks stronger trade ties through BRICS, SCO and Eurasian bloc

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday that Tehran would seek to strengthen economic ties through regional and international organizations to facilitate trade and exports, while maintaining foreign trade through alternative routes despite wartime restrictions on maritime transport.

Speaking at the 30th National Export Day ceremony in Tehran, attended by the ministers of industry and foreign affairs and leading producers, traders and exporters, Pezeshkian identified expanding bilateral and multilateral economic relations and making greater use of frameworks such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union as strategic government priorities, president.ir reported.

“Representatives and members of these countries and organizations are under pressure from the United States, and standing up to US bullying is not that simple. The enemies want to close the routes, but despite these restrictions, they cooperate with us within established frameworks,” he said.

Since late February, when a US-Israeli coalition launched a 40-day war, Iran has been operating under wartime conditions and

facing a maritime blockade from the south. The blockade aims to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero and deplete government revenues. Iran has also been subject to decades of Western sanctions over its nuclear activities. Israel also launched a 12-day war against Iran in June 2024.

Pezeshkian said the efforts of the country’s economic sector under difficult conditions, amid pressure, sanctions and restrictions imposed by Iran’s adversaries, had played an important role in helping the country withstand the challenges.

Thanking economic operators, particularly exporters, Pezeshkian said Iran’s resistance had changed how neighboring countries and others viewed the country’s capabilities.

Turning to export performance during the war, Pezeshkian said about 75% of the country’s exports had previously been shipped by sea. Despite restrictions and the closure of maritime routes, Iran had managed to maintain most of its foreign trade by activating alternative routes and using available capacities, with exports declining by only about 25% compared with prewar levels.

He added that the government planned to reduce transportation costs on alternative routes compared with maritime shipping and remove obstacles to trade, including

through changes to laws and regulations where necessary.

Although Pezeshkian did not specify the reporting period or provide supporting data for the 25% decline in exports, official figures offer some context. On August 18, the head of Iran’s Customs Administration said non-oil exports had reached \$15 billion since the start of the Iranian year on March 21, down from the same period a year earlier.

Export Atlas unveiled

At the close of the ceremony, the Export Atlas of the Islamic Republic was officially unveiled in the presence of Pezeshkian, who honored 13 economic operators.

Speaking before Pezeshkian, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak introduced a new export atlas developed to identify provincial strengths and improve export planning.

The atlas covers 271 products, 31 provinces and 27 markets, Atabak said. It assesses each province’s capacity to export



goods in which it has an advantage, with the aim of supporting targeted planning, identifying trade opportunities and making more effective use of regional production capabilities.

According to figures presented by Atabak, the atlas covers 91% of the total value of the country’s exports last year. He said it could serve as a practical tool for identifying export potential, developing provincial trade and strengthening border exchanges.

Meanwhile, addressing the ceremony Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called for

the development of provincial diplomacy, the establishment of a body to coordinate foreign and economic relations, stronger trade ties with neighboring countries, lower customs tariffs, greater multilateral engagement and support for border markets.

Under wartime conditions, he said, exporters and producers were “national heroes and steadfast commanders,” adding that they had continued serving the country despite domestic and international obstacles, difficulties and sanctions.

Tehran, Dushanbe weigh preferential tariffs, gold imports in free-zone trade push

Economy Desk

Iran and Tajikistan on Wednesday discussed expanding trade and investment cooperation between Iran’s Sarakhs free zone and Tajikistan’s Dangara free zone at a joint economic meeting, proposing preferential tariffs, facilitating gold imports from Tajikistan and a cooperation agreement between the two zones.

The Tajik side was led by the head of the Dangara free zone, IRIB reported.

Both sides reviewed shared trade and investment capacities and stressed the need to expand economic exchanges between the two countries’ free zones.

They also discussed ways to increase commercial exchanges, streamline trade procedures and draw on private and public sector capacities.

Mohsen Pourahmadi, deputy head of the Sarakhs



Trade-Industrial Free Zone Organization, said a key proposal was establishing preferential tariffs to facilitate bilateral trade and raise trade volumes between Iran and Tajikistan.

The meeting also discussed laying the groundwork for gold imports from Tajikistan and exchanging a database of economic operators from both sides, which could help identify new trade opportunities and strengthen direct business contacts, he said.

Pourahmadi said the two sides proposed signing a cooperation agreement between the Sarakhs Trade-Industrial Free Zone

and Tajikistan’s Dangara free zone to strengthen economic exchanges and facilitate contacts between investors and economic operators.

He said such meetings aim to identify new cooperation opportunities, strengthen trade ties and develop economic relations between Iran’s Khorasan Razavi province and Tajikistan.

At the end of the meeting, both sides stressed the importance of continued economic consultations and using the capacities of the Sarakhs and Dangara free zones to develop trade and economic relations between the two countries.

Two ECO mining projects assigned to Iran

Economy Desk

Iran will lead two joint mining projects at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) after taking responsibility for them at the 10th meeting of the bloc’s mining experts group, state media reported on Wednesday. The projects are a database of mineral resources in ECO member states and international participation in mining activities.

The meeting was hosted by the ECO secretariat in Tehran and held both in person and online, chaired by Mohammad Reza Qasemi, with representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan attending,

IRIB reported. It focused on reviewing approved projects and following up on a five-year roadmap for mining cooperation among member states for 2026-2030. Under a decision at the meeting, Iran’s Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration Organization will lead the mineral database project, drawing on Iran’s experience in mapping the distribution of mineral resources in ECO member states. The organization was also tasked with the international mining participation project, aimed at identifying joint exploration and investment opportunities and expanding cross-border cooperation. The move is in line with the organization’s duties under Iran’s

seventh development plan, particularly in identifying and using cross-border mining capacities.

Iran is the world’s 15th-largest mineral-rich country, and Iranian officials call mining the backbone of industrial development and say it should replace oil as the primary revenue generator.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of two projects proposed by Iran’s geological survey: a 1:5,000,000-scale map of ECO’s environmental quality index and a catalog and metadata service system for member states. The projects aim to facilitate the exchange of geospatial data and expand regional cooperation in earth sciences and the environment.

Iran unlikely to ...

Russia’s proposal also included neighboring countries such as Iraq and Jordan, alongside the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the permanent members of the UN Security Council. This would bring a range of different actors into discussions on Persian Gulf security.

Lavrov reiterated Russia’s emphasis on collective security at the fifth Russia-GCC meeting in Doha. In some respects, Moscow’s approach resembles Iran’s Hormuz Peace Endeavor, which was introduced during the presidency of Hassan Rouhani.

Under the Hormuz Peace Endeavor, Iran also emphasized the role of the UN secretary-general, drawing on UN Security Council Resolution 598. Article 8 of the resolution provides for the secretary-general to take an initiative addressing issues such as terrorism and environmental security, with a comprehensive approach to security and the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council. But the initiative was not welcomed at the time, particularly by the Arab states.

However, following the 40-day war and the more recent conflict, some differences have emerged between Iran’s and Russia’s approaches.

Russia emphasizes freedom of navigation in line with its stated commitment to international law and the UN Charter. It also appears to favor a consensus-based approach to managing the Strait of Hormuz, involving Iran and the GCC member states.

Iran, by contrast, currently insists that the management of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz is a matter for Iran and Oman. Tehran intends to engage in dialogue with the Arab states under the formula agreed upon by the two countries.

At present, Iran does not appear inclined to welcome Moscow’s proposal, and there are indications that it has not done so.

Sergey Lavrov, Russia’s foreign minister, attended a meeting of Russian and GCC foreign ministers in Manama before traveling to Tehran. Given that the Arab states of the Persian Gulf also have their own security concerns and demands, what do these parallel diplomatic engagements between Moscow,

Tehran and Arab capitals reveal about Russia’s approach to regional developments? Is Moscow seeking to establish a common security framework, or is it seeking to strengthen its influence and role as a mediator while maintaining ties with different sides?

Russia is currently seeking to position itself as a leading player in Persian Gulf affairs. Given its close relations with Iran and its good ties with GCC members, Moscow is trying to find a formula that can bring stability to the region.

In doing so, it also seeks to weaken the United States’ position. Following the 40-day war, questions were raised about Washington’s ability to ensure the security of these countries, and Russia appears to be seeking to capitalize on what it sees as a weakness exposed during the conflict.

Moscow wants to present itself not only as an option for bilateral security and military cooperation with these countries, but also as a potential strategic partner in a broader sense. It is also seeking to play a role through a multilateral mechanism that could bring Iran and the Arab states together within a forum of Russia’s own design and help stabilize the region.

However, given Iran’s perspective and the impact of the war on the issue of the Strait of Hormuz, it is unlikely that the Iranian and Russian approaches will converge on this matter. Iran views the strait as a strategic card and intends to use it in regional and international calculations.

With Iran-US nuclear negotiations currently at an impasse, what scope does Russia have to facilitate dialogue and bridge the differences between Tehran and Washington? Can Lavrov’s visit be viewed in this context?

On the nuclear issue, Russia has repeatedly offered to take custody of Iran’s stockpile of 400 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60%, with the aim of resolving one of the main sticking points in the negotiations. Moscow played a similar role during the negotiations that led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and it remains willing to do so again.

Recent remarks by Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, following his meeting with Pakistani first army chief Asim Munir, have shed light on the connection

between the nuclear issue and Lavrov’s visit. Rezaei said Iran would not allow even a particle of its enriched uranium to be taken out of the country. This also indicates that Munir, during his visit to Iran, placed emphasis on the nuclear issue and the removal of enriched uranium from Iran.

Iran wants the issue of the Strait of Hormuz to be resolved through a separate negotiation, in return for the lifting of the US naval blockade, the removal of oil sanctions and the easing of certain other restrictions. This is outlined in Iran’s so-called seven-day plan, under which the strait would be reopened after seven days, allowing the next phase of nuclear negotiations to begin.

The United States, however, currently believes that the naval blockade has been effective and that a substantial portion of shipping is being conducted through the southern corridor and along the coast of Oman. Washington therefore sees no need to offer concessions by lifting or easing the blockade, or by relaxing sanctions, in exchange for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Instead, the US position is that such concessions should be tied to nuclear negotiations and the nuclear commitments Iran is expected to make.

In light of Rezaei’s remarks, it appears that a nuclear arrangement is under consideration and that Washington is seeking an initial nuclear concession, namely the removal of enriched uranium from Iran. The United States could then present this as an achievement to the American public ahead of the elections and use it as a political asset.

Iran, however, does not appear willing to agree to the removal of its enriched uranium. This suggests that Russia’s proposal has also failed to gain Tehran’s acceptance. The approach currently under consideration appears to be a middle-ground formula: the two sides would move into negotiations on the details only after agreeing on a set of basic principles, particularly concerning Iran’s nuclear program. Discussions on centrifuges, enrichment and other nuclear issues would then take place after Iran accepts those principles.

In return, the United States would likely offer concessions, potentially including the lifting of the naval blockade or the removal of some sanctions, including oil sanctions.