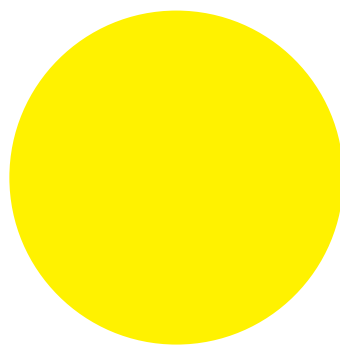


Official says deep cultural, religious ties underpin Iran-Pakistan relations

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) attends a ceremony marking Iran's National Export Day in Tehran, Iran, on October 21, 2026.

Iran FM: We are ready for diplomacy, but will defend ourselves



By Abbas Araghchi
Iranian foreign minister

O P I N I O N

The agendas in my meetings with multiple foreign ministers at the UN General Assembly last month may have differed, but there was one consistent message: Iran seeks a just and honorable deal with the US. To achieve that outcome, the White House must demonstrate seriousness and a genuine will to permanently end its aggression.

While Iran is firmly committed to seeking a dignified peaceful resolution to the conflict, we are also fully prepared to defend ourselves. President Donald Trump entered this war on the basis of fundamentally erroneous assumptions about Iran's fortitude. It appears that he continues to be wrongly told that our armed forces are unprepared to defend the homeland, despite all evidence to the contrary. Instead, our fearless military has learnt valuable lessons from the acts of aggression committed by Israel and America since 2025.

To state the obvious, we have no trust whatsoever in the sincerity of the US administration's professed desire for peace with Iran. The evidence is there for all to see: in June 2025 and February 2026, they bombed us while we were actively engaged in negotiations. And in June of this year, shortly after an agreement was signed by President Masoud Pezeshkian and President Trump, we were attacked for a third time. How can we trust a US president again?

Given that the White House has shown no willingness to reach an understanding on the way forward, while also threatening more violence, there is little reason to expect progress now. The recent escalation across the region, which shows how quickly this conflict can spread and how far its consequences can reach, is evidence of the major risk to international peace and security. In spite of all this, as a career diplomat, I am obliged to do my utmost to give diplomacy a chance, even when hope of success is scant.

At the recent General Assembly, I presented to the US, via mediators, a Seven-Day Plan outlining what needs to be done by both sides to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Importantly, under this proposal, the US would not be expected to do anything that it has not already agreed to. The outlined steps in the framework agreement are clear, as is the outcome: the Strait would reopen on Day 6, with the resumption of talks for a final deal commencing on Day 7. If the plan is implemented, life in the region will begin to return to normal.

Meanwhile, the White House is refusing to acknowledge the war's mounting costs for ordinary Americans. There is no need to take my word for it, eight months into another US war of choice overseas, even Moody's says the aggression against Iran has cost American consumers an estimated \$265bn this year, or about \$2,000 per household. Surging energy prices make up roughly half of that figure, which does not take into account the much higher toll for the wider world economy. Adding the tab for the many damaged US military bases in the region and massive loss of equipment makes the calamity of this war for US interests exceedingly clear.

The reality is that Iran, simply by virtue of geography, will always have unparalleled leverage over maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. More importantly, despite the hype about alternative routes, the waterway is irreplaceable for both the region and the world economy. The good news is that Iran intends to honor its historic role as a guardian of the strait and those who lawfully traverse it.

There is a way forward, but it can only materialize once the US administration genuinely accepts that it has no military options. That much should already be evident after almost eight months of war, during which none of their publicly stated objectives in attacking Iran have been achieved.

As we again find ourselves at a dangerous juncture, I am duty-bound to warn that any further escalation around the Strait of Hormuz or elsewhere in the region will put civilian lives and the wellbeing of all regional states and the global economy at great risk. This much is the experience of the past, and it will assuredly be the same in the future. If the US again chooses military action over diplomacy, I can say with complete and utter confidence that it will result in an even greater strategic failure. Iran, an ancient and proud civilization, does not bend its knee to any power. That said, Iran is prepared to give diplomacy another chance if we see strong evidence of a sincere desire on the part of the US to achieve a just and honorable solution to permanently end this conflict. President Trump made mistaken assumptions about Iran when entering this war. Repeating that error now will only result in an infinitely more painful outcome.

The article was first published by the Financial Times.



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Iran unlikely to back Russia's Persian Gulf security initiative after 40-day war

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has outlined a proposal for Persian Gulf security during a visit to Iran, calling for the participation of littoral states alongside the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. This comes as Iran, following the 40-day war, insists that the Strait of Hormuz should

be managed exclusively by Iran and Oman. In an interview with Iran Daily, Javad Heyrannia said Iran had previously put forward a similar proposal to Russia's, but it was not welcomed by the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. In the aftermath of the 40-day war, however, Tehran is no longer inclined to pursue such an approach to ensuring security in these waters.



Javad Heyrannia

IRAN DAILY: Given the differenc-

es in regional countries' security perspectives and the presence of extra-regional actors, how viable is Russia's proposed initiative, and to what extent does it align with Iran's position?

HEYRANNIA: Russia first put forward a practical initiative for collective security in the Persian Gulf in the late 1990s. It updated its collective security proposal to some extent in 2019 and submitted a further revised version to the United Nations in 2021. The initiative emphasizes that the security of Persian Gulf countries should be ensured with the participation of the countries themselves.

It also calls for a confidence-building process among regional states to develop a shared understanding of threats and pursue ways to address them through bilateral or multilateral diplomacy.

The proposal also envisages a role for observers from outside the region and extra-regional powers. In subsequent stages, this security-building mechanism could pave the way for the establishment of a regional security institution bringing together Persian Gulf countries, including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and Iran.

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US accepted Iran's seven-day proposal but sought to add more clauses: *Araghchi*

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the United States agreed to Iran's seven-day proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz but wanted to add several more clauses to the agreement. The Iranian foreign minister in an interview with Iraq's Al Ekhbariya television said that negotiations with the US are continuing through mediators, including Pakistan and Qatar. He said Iran had previously submitted an initiative to the US side entitled the "Seven-Day Plan," which explicitly set out Tehran's conditions for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz which Iran closed after the US-Israeli aggression against Iran in February. Under the proposal, the Strait of Hormuz was due to be fully reopened on the sixth day of the seven-day period, the minister said. "The Americans informed us that they agreed to these conditions, but they wanted to add several more clauses,"

he said.

Explaining the rationale behind the initiative, Araghchi said Iran sought to keep the path of diplomacy open, provided the other side honored its commitments.

He argued that Washington, rather than Tehran, is blocking progress and said the United States needed to implement the conditions to which it had previously committed itself.

"If they adhere to these conditions, they should know that the strait will be fully reopened, and after that, we will hold further rounds of negotiations until a final agreement is reached," Araghchi said.

The US and the Israeli regime launched an unprovoked war on Iran on February 28.

Iran responded with a series of retaliatory operations targeting US military assets and bases across the region.

The escalation ultimately forced the US and Israel to agree to a ceasefire on April 8 after Iran's retaliatory

operations inflicted significant costs on the aggressors.

The ceasefire put an end to the most intense fighting after Tehran and Washington signed a 14-point Memorandum of Understanding brokered by Pakistan and Qatar.

But Washington soon violated the agreement by failing to respect Iran's arrangements concerning the Strait of Hormuz.

The Strait remains closed, and Iran has made clear that it will not allow its reopening until the United States meets the demands Tehran has announced.

Diplomatic efforts are still underway to resolve the dispute between Tehran and Washington.

On Tuesday, Pakistan's army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir held talks with Iranian officials in Tehran amid the possibility of new conflict between Iran and the US.

Pakistan has played a key mediating role in the so far unsuccessful attempts



Abbas Araghchi
AFP

to end the war.

The trip was the fifth by Munir since the June agreement.

The US has not launched strikes on Iran since September, but the possibility

of a return to fighting looms over the country.

Munir's visit followed one by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Monday.

Defense minister: Iran's response to threats will be readiness, not rhetoric

International Desk

Iranian new Defense Minister Mehrdad Akhlaghi pledged to strengthen the country's military preparedness and defensive capabilities through new technologies, saying Tehran's response to repeated threats would be measured in enhanced readiness rather than rhetoric.

"I dedicated my first working hour to meeting the demands of the IRGC Aerospace Force and the Army's Air Defense," Akhlaghi wrote in a post on X on Wednesday.

Akhlaghi noted Iran's response to repeated threats would not be limited to rhetoric but would focus on strengthening military preparedness and defensive capabilities.

"For us, responding to repeated threats is not a war of words; it is turning threats into greater readiness and more effective defensive power," he said.

The minister added that Iran was pursuing its objectives through the development of new technologies. "We eat dirt, but we don't give an



Mehrdad Akhlaghi
ICANA

inch of soil," Akhlaghi declared.

The Iranian Parliament on Sunday approved Akhlaghi, a veteran engineer with deep experience in Iran's missile industry, as the country's new defense minister.

Akhlaghi succeeds Aziz Nasirzadeh, who was killed in US-Israeli attacks on Tehran at the beginning of the 40-day aggression.

In remarks to parliament on Sunday, Akhlaghi emphasized that Iran would deliver a strong response if its adversaries launched another attack against the country.

"If the American-Zionist enemy once again makes a miscalculation, the response of the Iranian nation and the fighters of Islam will be surprising and extensive," he said. Akhlaghi also warned that

Washington and its allies would bear responsibility for the regional and international consequences of any renewed aggression against Iran.

His remarks came as the US officials have recently escalated rhetoric against Iran, threatening to bomb Iran's Kuh-e Kolang, which translates as Pickaxe Mountain.

Kuh-e Kolang is part of the mountainous terrain in Iran's central province of Isfahan, located close to the Natanz nuclear facility.

US President Donald Trump on Thursday raised the possibility of further strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Asked about reports that his administration was considering using the "mother of all bombs" against Iran, potentially after the US midterm elections, Trump claimed a suspected underground nuclear site known as Pickaxe Mountain could be a target for further US strikes.

"Now, we're looking at Pickaxe Mountain. We may have to go there," he said. "We'll take a shot at that one. We'll knock it out fast."

Putin: Russia ready to mediate between Tehran, Washington

International Desk

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia is ready to discuss possible Russian mediation between the United States and Iran to end the conflict between the two countries.

The Russian president made the remarks in a meeting with White House envoy Steve Witkoff in Saint Petersburg.

"You know that we have a special, trusting relationship with Iran, with our partners in Iran, our friends, built over decades, and if there's anything we can do to resolve this crisis, we'll be happy to do so. You're also well aware of our proposals in this area," Putin told Witkoff.

His remarks came days after his Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met Iranian officials in Tehran.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during a joint press conference with



Lavrov said Iran, Russia and many other countries share the view that regional disputes cannot be resolved by military means and must instead be addressed through diplomacy and political solutions.

Araghchi said they discussed a broad range of regional and international issues, including the Persian Gulf, West Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, Iran-US negotiations and developments in Ukraine.

The Iranian foreign minister described his talks with Lavrov as "important, intensive and productive".



Russia's President Vladimir Putin (R) greets US special envoy Steve Witkoff prior to their meeting in Saint Petersburg on October 21, 2026.
SPUTNIK

He added that relations between Iran and Russia were strategic and had evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership, adding that ties had entered a new phase following the signing and implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement by the two countries' presidents.

Iran condemns 'illegal' US actions against Cuba

The Foreign Ministry condemned the United States' ongoing illegal actions against Cuba, denouncing Washington's sanctions and attempts to intimidate Cuban officials and public figures.

In a statement on Tuesday, the ministry noted that the sanctions, pressure, and intimidation imposed on Cuba by Washington for more than seven decades violated the United Nations Charter and ran counter to international law and human rights principles.

It cited an arrest warrant issued for former Cuban president Raúl Castro by authorities in Florida, calling it a "criminal and illegal act" and urging respect for Cuba's sovereignty, independence, and right to self-determination, Press TV reported.

The arrest warrant was announced on Monday by Florida Attorney General



IRNA

James Uthmeier against Castro, who led Cuba as president from 2008 to 2018. It accuses Castro of "conspiracy to commit first-degree murder" in connection with, what the verdict calls, "the 1996 downing of two civilian aircraft in Cuba's airspace."

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel rejected the warrant in a post on X, describing it as a politically motivated legal maneuver directed against Castro

and Cuba. "This reprehensible action against the Army General this morning in a pathetic Miami circus, with an electoral backdrop, has no, nor will it ever have, the slightest legal sense and even less practical sense," he wrote. The Cuban president added that the measure "reflects the difficulties they (the United States) face in trying to justify the [American] blockade and the collective punishment of our people."

The ministry called on the US government to be held accountable for the devastating consequences of these policies for the fundamental human rights of the Cuban people.

The statement concluded by reaffirming Iran's solidarity with Cuba and its position that the Cuban people's right to determine their own future had to be respected.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



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.

Sovereignty by design

What Starlink debate in India gets wrong

By Siddharth Rathore

Assistant Professor of Economics at Mata Sundri College for Women

OPINION

In the second week of October 2026, Elon Musk took his frustration over Starlink's stalled India launch to X. He first accused unnamed "oligarchs" of blocking the service, then asked whether Mukesh Ambani was "the real boss of India," and finally addressed him as "Prime Minister Ambani". The Ministry of Communications called the charge of discrimination "baseless and misconceived," noting that all three licensed satellite operators were broadly at the same stage and undergoing security assessment. Once the Leader of the Opposition joined in, a regulatory question became a political one. Beneath the theatre lies a more consequential question: what kind of service is satellite broadband, who will actually buy it in India, and who should set the terms under which a foreign constellation serves Indian territory?

Why the sky became contested

Traditional communication satellites sit in geostationary orbit, about 36,000 km above the Earth, which makes connections slow to respond. Low Earth orbit (LEO) constellations orbit a few hundred kilometres up. Starlink's second-generation system operates at 340-615 km, delivering near-fibre latency without fibre, towers or trenches. That is the promise of LEO constellations for mountains, islands, forests and seas, where terrestrial networks are uneconomic. India's neighbourhood has largely said yes. The Maldives was first in South Asia in 2023, followed by Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Bangladesh has since permitted Starlink to export bandwidth to neighbouring countries and, this month, launched a direct-to-phone satellite service. Nepal is still weighing policy and legal issues. India, the largest prize, remains a conspicuous gap. Jio and Airtel's position explains why every delay is seen as an incumbent's victory. Together, they account for about 77 percent of India's wireless subscribers. They opposed the administrative allocation of satellite spectrum, then, in March 2025, signed deals to distribute Starlink, while building their own satellite services: Jio with SES and Airtel through Eutelsat OneWeb. They are simultaneously Starlink's rivals, retail partners and, in Musk's telling, gatekeepers.

Starlink's Indian journey began badly in 2021, when it took pre-orders without a licence and was told to refund them. In October 2024, New Delhi sided with Starlink against the incumbents by choosing administrative allocation of spectrum over auction. Later that year, Starlink devices turned up in a drug seizure in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and in an army operation in Manipur. The company received its satellite licence in June 2025. Pricing then stalled for over a year in a dispute between the Department of Telecommunications



The illustration shows SpaceX founder Elon Musk (L) being denied access to the Indian market and facing off against Mukesh Ambani, managing director of Reliance Industries, the parent company of Jio Platforms.

● bitkub.com

and the regulator over whether the spectrum charge should be 4 or 5 percent of revenue, which was resolved only in September 2026, with the charge set at 5 percent (4 percent for rural areas), with Cabinet approval pending. In June 2026, the MHA reportedly froze final clearances after reports that Starlink terminals were operating in Iran, where the service is unlicensed. Starlink called the report misleading. Eutelsat OneWeb, Airtel's partner, has waited more than 18 months since its own security demonstration. The queue is slow, but it is a common queue.

Who buys it, and who holds the writ

The economics settle much of the debate. Starlink's India page briefly listed a residential plan at INR 8,600 a month with an INR 34,000 terminal. That works out to roughly INR 1 lakh a year, and over INR 1.3 lakh in the first year, though the company later said tariffs were not final. In Bangladesh, a setup charge of about INR 39,000 and a monthly fee of around INR 3,000 imply a first-year cost of around INR 75,000.



The image shows a post by Elon Musk, the owner of X (formerly, Twitter) and founder of SpaceX, which launches Starlink satellites, on September 7, 2023, citing his reasoning for refusing Ukraine's demand to activate Starlink during the war with Russia.

● X

Jio's annual unlimited 5G plan costs INR 3,599. At Indian list prices, satellite broadband is a significantly more premium, last-mile service. At that price, households in connected India are not the market: their networks are saturated, cheap and reliable. The early buyers will be those for whom no alternative exists, or for whom failure is unaffordable: enterprises with remote sites, airlines and shipping, mines and offshore installations, defence and disaster-response agencies, government offices in hill and border districts, and remote schools and health centres funded through public programmes. The rural poor will access the service mainly through subsidies or community access points. In the near term, this is a last-mile and backup-continuity utility serving sovereign and strategic functions, not the egalitarian product implied by the claim that delay is a "crime against the people of India".

As technology improves and installation kits become cheaper, this may change. Terminal costs are falling, while direct-to-phone services, such as the one just launched in Bangladesh, eliminate the need for a dish altogether. This is precisely why the rules must be designed now, while the user base is small and strategic. If the first users are government, critical infrastructure and security agencies, the MHA's interest is not bureaucratic overreach but its core mandate. Recent history shows why. In 2022, Musk declined to enable Starlink coverage for a Ukrainian operation near Crimea, a decision by one company that shaped a military outcome for a sovereign state. In 2026, reports of terminals in Iran

prompted Indian officials to ask how a US-owned operator would honour Indian security requirements if a foreign government made conflicting demands. Satellites cross borders, but terminals, gateways and spectrum do not escape the host state's authority. India is entitled to decide which constellations serve its territory and on what terms. Starlink says it has built 20 gateway sites in India and keeps Indian user data in the country. The question is whether those commitments hold under stress. However, sovereignty must be exercised by design, not by delay. Four years without a published timetable invites exactly the allegation Musk made. Design would mean common security criteria published for all operators; a decision clock; a continuity obligation that service in India cannot be suspended except under Indian law; and separation between connectivity and any affiliated platform. These would answer the security concern and the charge of capture.

When the vendor owns the megaphone

Musk is not a neutral commentator. He is a licence-seeker. Since SpaceX acquired xAI in February 2026, Starlink, the social platform X and the Grok AI assistant have been part of a single company. The applicant campaigned for his licence on a mass platform owned by the same company, named a private Indian citizen, and questioned who governs India, stepping into domestic politics.

India is not an exception. Musk has repeatedly used X to pressure governments in whose



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decisions his companies had a stake. He claimed Starlink was barred from South Africa "because I'm not black," although the regulator said it had received no licence application. He told Poland's foreign minister to "be quiet, small man" after Warsaw, which pays for Starlink service in Ukraine, questioned SpaceX's reliability. He demanded that Italian judges who blocked the government's migration plan "need to go," weeks before Rome was reported to be negotiating a €1.5 billion SpaceX contract. His reach extends into electoral politics: he endorsed Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) before the 2025 federal election, told a London rally in 2025 that "you either fight back or you die," called the president of Romania's Constitutional Court "a tyrant" and branded the UK government "fascist" when it moved against Grok-generated sexual imagery. This raises a conflict-of-interest question that goes beyond opinion: is the reach of the owner's posts organic or inorganic? In 2023, engineers reportedly altered the platform so that Musk's posts bypassed normal ranking after one drew fewer views than president Biden's. A 2024 study by researchers at the Queensland University of Technology and Monash University found that views of Elon Musk's posts rose by 138 percent after he endorsed Donald Trump, far exceeding the increase for comparable political accounts. However, without access to X's internal data, the authors could not confirm whether this was due to an algorithmic change. When a platform's owner is also its most prominent political voice and a party to licensing disputes, neither regulators nor users can determine whether his message is amplified by public engagement or by the platform's algorithms. This opacity is itself a concern for sovereignty. This marks a structural shift. Shaping public opinion at the national scale was once largely the state's monopoly. Firms that own the network, the platform, and an AI model now share that capacity worldwide. Such pressure is unlikely to accelerate approval as all applicants face the same queue and public criticism can make security reviews more stringent rather than less.

Strategic implications

India's choice is not between a foreign technology sovereign and a domestic incumbent, but whether the state can act as a credible referee between them. This means licensing all three operators on common, published terms; treating satellite broadband as strategic infrastructure with continuity and data obligations; and investing in domestic low Earth orbit (LEO) capacity so that dependence remains a phase rather than a permanent condition. Much of the Global South faces the same dilemma. A secure, transparent and time-bound framework could make India's approach a template for others, turning the sky from a site of contest into an instrument of sovereignty.

The article was first published by Observer Research Foundation.



Elon Musk @elonmusk

There was an emergency request from government authorities to activate Starlink all the way to Sevastopol.

The obvious intent being to sink most of the Russian fleet at anchor.

If I had agreed to their request, then SpaceX would be explicitly complicit in a major act of war and conflict escalation.

3:48 PM · Sep 7, 2023 · 4M Views

Digital sovereignty outweighs Musk's convenience

By Priyanka Chaturvedi
Former Member of Indian Parliament

OPINION

Elon Musk recently launched an offensive against India's regulatory pace over his company Starlink, a SatCom service not getting the licence to operate despite compliance with Indian authorities. Expressing his frustration over delayed commercial approvals, Musk accused "oligarchs" of keeping a monopolistic chokehold on the Indian market, going as far as calling the delays a "crime against the people". It was, to be honest, quite amusing to see a trillion dollars' worth oligarch himself have a go at others, and a misplaced attack at that. While his ire was directed at the telecom companies that have partnered with him, his aim was to hit out at the Indian government. The government has rightly and firmly pushed back, saying that its regulatory framework is fair, transparent, and uniformly applied, and also confirmed that all major satellite communication licensees, including Starlink, Bharti Airtel-backed Eutelsat OneWeb, and Reliance Jio Satellite Communications, are currently at the exact same stage of security evaluation.

So why the tantrum? Does Elon believe that processes can be bypassed to accommodate him if he tries arm-twisting? It isn't how this works! In fact, there has been a long-standing concern about allowing Starlink permits to operate in India. As part of the Standing Committee on IT & Communications, I had repeatedly expressed concerns about the IT Ministry and Telecom Ministry's red-carpet welcome to Starlink. It took the Home Ministry to go through the checks and balances and rigor-

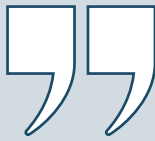


The illustration shows SpaceX founder Elon Musk (c), Chairman of the board of directors of Bharti Airtel Sunil Bharti Mittal (l), and managing director of Reliance Industries, the parent company of Jio Platforms, Mukesh Ambani.
● MAYANK TIWARI/DECCAN CHRONICLE

ous procedures when dealing with strategic communication infrastructure, national security, and digital sovereignty. These issues must outrank the convenience of an impatient foreign corporation. While Starlink presents itself as a simple broadband provider designed to bring high-speed internet to remote villages, beneath it lies a not-so-noble intent because whatever price band the SatCom is offering, as per publicly available information, makes it an expensive proposition. However, the concern is not merely pricing; the company is a vital asset for the American military and its intelligence apparatus. SpaceX holds highly classified contracts with US intelligence agencies to build

robust spy satellite networks. For a nation like India — where an entity deeply intertwined with a foreign military apparatus could control vital communication nodes without exhaustive vetting — this is a proposition fraught with risks. Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Indian intelligence agencies have also raised concerns over Starlink's terminal vulnerabilities. Reports that Starlink terminals were active inside Iran during intense unrest — bypassing local telecommunications authority and monitoring — served as a major warning sign for Indian policymakers. If a US-based provider can have its equipment smuggled across borders and activated without state sanction, India faces a legitimate risk of foreign satellite signals spilling into sensitive border zones, where insurgent groups or external bad actors could exploit unmonitored communication lines. The most compelling argument for India's caution lies in Starlink's turbulent track record in active conflict zones, most nota-

bly Ukraine. In the early days of the Russia-Ukraine war, Musk was hailed for activating Starlink terminals to keep Ukrainian forces connected. However, the limits of relying on a whimsical, single-source foreign billionaire quickly became clear. Musk famously denied Ukraine's military request to extend Starlink coverage near Crimea to thwart a Russian naval attack, citing personal fears of escalating the war. This arbitrary exercise of a geopolitical "kill switch" proves that SpaceX keeps ultimate control over where, when, and how its network functions, regardless of local sovereign needs. Furthermore, because Starlink's primary satellite repositories, operations, and technical commands are based in the United States, the US government holds immense regulatory and strategic leverage over the company. If India were to face a critical border escalation with a neighbour, it cannot afford to rely on an infrastructure provider that might shut down connectivity based on the commercial interests of its owner, or under geopolitical



While Starlink presents itself as a simple broadband provider designed to bring high-speed internet to remote villages, beneath it lies a not-so-noble intent because whatever price band the SatCom is offering, as per publicly available information, makes it an expensive proposition. However, the concern is not merely pricing; the company is a vital asset for the American military and its intelligence apparatus. SpaceX holds highly classified contracts with US intelligence agencies to build robust spy satellite networks.

pressure from Washington. India's rules demand that all user traffic must be routed exclusively through Indian gateways, data centres and core networks must sit within the country, and data cannot be decrypted or mirrored abroad. Furthermore, strict geo-fencing must prevent signal leakage across borders, and authorities must have real-time terminal tracking access to combat smuggling. If Starlink genuinely wants to serve the Indian market, it must patiently satisfy these rigorous security checks, rather than taking to social media to cry foul and bully regulators. Finally, India's long-term digital resilience depends on supporting domestic entities that have true skin in the game. Domestic operations are bound directly by Indian law, answerable to local courts, and invested in the nation's socio-economic stability. Furthermore, tie-ins to local capability, such as the government's mandate to manufacture ground equipment domestically and integrate India's NavIC navigation system, will cultivate a robust private space industry alongside ISRO and IN-SPACE. India should welcome global competition to expand choices for its citizens, but it must not compromise sovereign control over the networks carrying its national data. Our domestic space ecosystem is currently undergoing a vibrant evolution, driven by pioneering private launch firms, satellite start-ups, and ISRO. Foreign service providers are welcome to compete in India's vast market, but they must do so by bowing to the laws of the land and the rules of engagement. India is not up for colonisation ever again or for new-age tech colonisers to dictate their terms.

The article was first published by Observer Research Foundation.

Who holds off switch?

Starlink, dependence, and India's satcom policy

By Ashwin Prasad Rao, Aditya Ramanathan & KPM Das
Researchers

OPINION

Starlink poses significant risks to India. The central one is loss of control over availability. Starlink services may stay active where the government wants them halted, and go dark where the government needs them. A secondary risk is that Starlink could use sensitive user data for intelligence or commercial advantage. These risks exist with any foreign satellite service. We find them more acute with Starlink for three reasons. First, its technological lead. It operates the largest constellation, with over 11,000 satellites, and SpaceX's launch cadence is unmatched. Competitors will take years to catch up. Second, SpaceX's relationship with the US government. SpaceX is critical to American defence, intelligence, and space programmes. The leverage also



● REUTERS

runs the other way: SpaceX depends on Washington for contracts, spectrum, and licences. In a crisis, the US could press it to share data or deny coverage in ways that serve American interests over India's. Third, Musk's conduct. He restricted Ukraine's access, re-

fused a request near Crimea, and publicly boasted about his leverage over its front line. Starlink declined Indian requests for user details after the Andaman smuggling case. Its January 2026 privacy policy permits customer data to train AI models, and the merger with xAI followed short-

ly after. India's response has been serious. The Department of Telecommunications' May 2025 conditions require Indian gateways, bar routing through inter-satellite links, create monitoring zones near borders, and mandate 20 percent indigeni-

sation of the ground segment. IN-SPACE has cleared only Gen 1 satellites, while Starlink has re-applied for Gen 2 approval. These measures have limits. India can inspect gateways but not orbit, so key conditions rest on self-certification. Reports of Starlink use in Manipur have raised questions about the reliability of geofencing. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has questioned why unauthorised Starlink terminals remain active in Iran despite SpaceX's ability to disable them remotely. Direct-to-device services raise new routing and oversight questions that India's regulations have yet to resolve. Jamming is no substitute, since low-Earth-orbit terminals are hard to block. Above all, operational control remains with SpaceX, and India cannot independently guarantee continued service or the shutdown of all unauthorised connections. We therefore recommend combining compliance with structural measures that reduce dependence:

1. Expand the Digital Bharat

2. Nidhi to take terrestrial broadband to underserved areas and shrink demand for satellite internet.
3. Prioritise providers whose corporate structures give India leverage, such as joint ventures, Indian equity or jurisdictions with stronger enforcement.
4. Keep using Starlink for functions like disaster relief, but diversify vendors.
5. Discourage general retail use of foreign satellite internet to avoid a dependency that will be hard to reverse.
6. Frame a direct-to-device regulatory framework now, before the technology forces the issue.
7. Operationalise the INR 900-crore satcom monitoring facility.

These recommendations carry costs. Terrestrial expansion will be slower and more expensive for remote users, and alternative vendors are fewer than we would like. That said, we judge that the price of dependence on a single foreign operator is higher.

The article was first published by Observer Research Foundation.

Sports Desk

The Iranian delegation continued its medal-winning run on Day 3 of the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in Japan on Wednesday, securing gold medals in judo, para athletics and para taekwondo.

Ali Navaei headlined Iran's medal haul in judo, claiming gold in the men's J1 +95kg category with a victory over Uzbekistan's Islomjon Tukhtaboev in the final.

Navaei's triumph capped a five-medal haul for Iran's men's judo team.

Mohammadreza Kheirollahzadeh settled for silver in the J2 +95kg category after losing to Kazakhstan's Zhurkamyrza Shukurbekov in the final. Mousa Gholami (J1 -95kg), Amirhossein Nimrouzi (J2 +95kg) and Mahdi Borchlou (J1 -81kg) each claimed bronze in their respective events.

Elsewhere, Alireza Zare' secured Iran's seventh gold medal in para athletics, winning the men's 100m T35 in 12.32 seconds to set a new Games record.

Reigning Paralympic champion Yasin Khosravi had struck gold in the men's shot put F57 on Tuesday at Paloma Mizuho Stadium.

The three-time world champion registered a Games-record throw of 15.25 meters with his penultimate attempt to repeat his success at the previous edition in Hangzhou in 2022.

In the men's F53 shot put, Alireza Mokhtari claimed silver on Wednesday with a best effort

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games:

Iranians triumph in judo, athletics, taekwondo



Iranian judoka Ali Navaei (white) competes in the men's J1 +95kg final at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on October 21, 2026.
● VARZESH3

of 8.09 meters, taking his medal tally in Nagoya to two. The 48-year-old had won bronze in the discus throw on Tuesday. Iran added two more bronze medals in women's discus throw on Wednesday. Faezeh Dibaei finished third in the F56/F57 final with a personal-best throw of 24.51 meters, while Kowsar Qaraei secured



Iranian sprinter Alireza Zare' is seen ahead of the men's 100m T35 final at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on October 21, 2026.
● paralympic.ir



Iran's Alireza Bakht celebrates his gold medal in para taekwondo at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on October 21, 2026.
● VARZESH3

bronze in the F11 event with a mark of 37.15 meters. In para powerlifting, two-time Paralympic champion Rouhollah Rostami settled for silver in the men's -88kg category after losing a closely contested battle against China's Yan Panpan, a two-time Paralympic gold medalist. The pair were separated

by just one kilogram. Iran's flag bearer at the opening ceremony began his campaign with a successful 232kg lift before clearing 237kg and 239kg in his second and third attempts, respectively.

Yan, meanwhile, successfully lifted 233kg, 238kg and 240kg in his three attempts to secure gold.

Mohsen Bakhtiar had opened Iran's medal account in para powerlifting on Tuesday, winning bronze in the men's -72kg category.

Taekwondo glory

Hamed Haqshenas and Alireza Bakht added two gold medals to Iran's tally in men's para taekwondo on Wednesday.

Bakht defeated South Korea's Joo Jeonghun 2-0 (6-2, 12-6) to win the men's K44 -80kg title, while Haqshenas overcame Uzbekistan's Umarjon Muydinov in straight rounds in the +80kg final.

Marzieh Nasrollahi also reached the podium in the women's competition, coming from behind to beat China's Xu Feng 2-1 (2-4, 16-0, 3-2) and claim bronze in the K44 +65kg category.

2026 World Weightlifting Championships:

Iran coach Salimi wary of tough test in Olympic qualifier

Sports Desk

Iran men's head coach Behdad Salimi has warned of a tough test at the upcoming IWF World Championships as the country's weightlifters prepare for the first qualifying event for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The global showpiece will kick off next Tuesday in Ningbo, China, where Iran will be represented by eight weightlifters across four men's weight categories. Super-heavyweight duo Ali Davoudi and Alireza Yousefi will headline the eight-man roster in Ningbo, with both expected to be among the contenders in the +110kg category.



● IRNA

Former world champion Mirmostafa Javadi and Abdollah Beiranvand will

compete in the 85kg category, while Ali A'alipour – also a gold medalist at the Asian Games – and Hamidreza Zarei will feature in the 95kg division. In the 110kg category, Alireza Moeini will look to build on his impressive performance at last year's World Championships, where he claimed the snatch gold and total silver.

Joining Moeini in the category is Alireza Nasiri. The young Iranian set two world junior records on his way to winning the clean and jerk gold and total silver last year but endured a disappointing Asian Games campaign, missing out on the podium.

"Competition will certainly be much

possible if any lifter failed to reach the required level of fitness.

"Our goal is to send lifters who are physically ready to compete," said the former world and Olympic champion. The coach also defended Nasiri following his disappointing performance at the Asian Games, describing the young weightlifter as one of Iran's most valuable prospects.

"Alireza is an asset to us and one of the best in the world. We must do everything we can to support him," Salimi said.

He said Nasiri had considerable physical strength and potential but sometimes struggled to manage the pressure and atmosphere of major competitions, which affected his performance.

According to Salimi, Nasiri showed better composure in Nagoya than in previous competitions. He expressed confidence that the young lifter could become one of Iran's leading medal contenders at the World Championships and the 2028 Olympics.

Reflecting on Iran's Asian Games campaign, Salimi described the overall performance as positive despite the team falling short of its target of four medals. Iran secured two golds through Davoudi and Alipour, while Javadi and Nasiri failed to reach the podium. Salimi also highlighted the progress from silver medals at the previous edition to gold in Nagoya.

He said he hoped the team would maintain its progress at the World Championships and through the remaining stages of Olympic qualification.

However, Salimi cautioned that the competition in China would be considerably tougher, with the leading lifters from the Asian Games expected to return alongside three or four additional contenders from other countries.

Hosseinnejad shrugs off lack of starting role for Dynamo Makhachkala

Sports Desk

Iranian midfielder Mohammadjavad Hosseinnejad has stressed that helping his team is his priority, regardless of whether he starts or comes off the bench for Russian Premier League side Dynamo Makhachkala.

Introduced as a halftime substitute, the Iran U23 international was on target in the 72nd minute as Dynamo played out a 1-1 home draw against Akron Tolyatti in the Russian top flight on Saturday.

Speaking after the game, the young Iranian admitted that the result was disappointing.



● MNA

ing but said he was pleased to get on the scoresheet.

"Obviously, I'm more disappointed with the final result. We needed a win and knew that before the match. We also knew it would be a difficult game and that we would have to give everything to get the result," said Hosseinnejad, whose team sit seventh in the league table with 13 points from 11 matches.

"Unfortunately, instead of three points, we took only one, which is disappointing. Still, I think one point isn't such a bad result. Overall, I'm happy to have scored," the Iranian added.

Hosseinnejad also explained how he won possession from an opposing defender to create the scoring opportunity, admitting that luck played a part. "I was a little lucky, too. I didn't think much at that moment; I knew I had to chase the ball. I believed I could win it back from the opponent, and eventually I managed to do that," he said.

The Iranian midfielder also declared himself physically ready to play the full 90 minutes, leaving the decision over his role to the coaching staff.

"Yes, absolutely, I'm ready. Of course, it depends on the coach's decision and the tactics he chooses for each match," Hosseinnejad said.

"I'm ready to help my team, and it makes no difference to me whether I start or come on as a substitute. I'm here to help the team."

Having joined Dynamo from Iranian club Sepahan in August 2024, Hosseinnejad has scored eight goals and provided eight assists in 74 appearances across all competitions for the Russian club.

He has made seven appearances this season, five of them as a substitute.

Archaeological dig in Sanandaj sheds new light on ancient settlement

Iranica Desk

Archaeological excavations at the historic Zagros Cemetery in Sanandaj are underway for a second season, with preliminary findings shedding new light on the region's history and potentially pushing the record of urban settlement in the area back around 3,000 years.

Ali Behnia, deputy director of Kurdistan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said the latest round of excavations began on October 4 under the direction of Kazem Mollazadeh and Ali Binandeh, archaeologists from Bu-Ali Sina University in Hamedan. The project is funded by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and involves specialists in archaeology, anthropology

and conservation.

Speaking during a visit to the site by Sanandaj Governor Gharib Sajjadi, Behnia said five trenches in the eastern section had revealed burial remains bearing cultural characteristics associated with Iron Age III.

Three further trenches opened in the southern and western sections have yielded architectural remains and evidence of habitation dating to the historical period, he added.

The ancient cemetery was discovered accidentally in 2008 during road construction along the western outskirts of the Sanandaj-Hasanabad route. Archaeologists from the provincial cultural heritage department excavated part of the site in December that year.



khbarnews.com

Behnia said further excavation and specialist research would help clarify the region's cultural and historical development, while providing a stronger basis for protecting the

site and presenting its significance to the public. Governor Sajjadi said archaeological discoveries in the Zagros-Abidar area could offer new evidence of a much older history of

settlement in the region than is commonly recognized.

Human remains uncovered during construction and roadworks in previous years indicated that the

area had once been used as a cemetery. However, inadequate scientific investigation, insufficient protection and weak oversight of construction activities had contributed to damage to parts of the site, he said.

The current excavation season is being conducted under cultural heritage supervision, with the participation of civil society representatives. Protective measures include surveillance cameras and the deployment of cultural heritage protection personnel, Sajjadi added.

Although the founding of modern Sanandaj is generally associated with the Safavid period, archaeological evidence from the Abidar area could point to several thousand years of settlement and urban development, he said.

Some of the findings have

also been linked to Mithraism, an ancient religious tradition associated with the worship of Mithra. Sajjadi cautioned, however, that such interpretations require further specialist study and scientific evidence.

The discoveries highlight the importance of the Abidar foothills in understanding the region's settlement patterns, culture and civilization, he said, calling for sustained archaeological research and stronger protection of historical sites.

Sajjadi stressed that preserving the area's heritage requires more than excavation. It also depends on preventing construction-related damage, maintaining effective oversight and ensuring that archaeological findings are properly documented and shared with the public.

Khosf preserves its historic fabric, cultural landscape

Iranica Desk

The historic fabric and cultural-historical landscape of Khosf, in South Khorasan Province, represent a valuable collection of the region's architectural, historical and cultural heritage. Shaped by natural conditions, water resources, the local climate and residents' way of life, the area has helped define the town's historical and cultural identity over the centuries.

Khosf's historic fabric is more than a collection of old houses and historic buildings. It tells the story of how traditional settlements developed in Iran's arid and semi-arid regions and illustrates how communities adapted to nature and environmental constraints. The connections between historic neighborhoods, traditional alleys, public buildings, gardens, farmland and water resources, together with climate-responsive architecture and the use of local materials, have given the area a distinctive identity.

The formation and development of Khosf are closely linked to the region's natural setting, river, mountains, seasonal lake and underground water resources. In an area where water scarcity has long influenced daily life and economic activity, access to water and the ways in which it was managed played an important role in the establishment of settlements and the expansion of neighborhoods.

The town's original core developed around the lake, with the Jaame Mosque at its center. As settlement expanded and social and economic activities grew, other neighborhoods gradually developed around it.

One of the most distinctive features of Khosf's historic fabric is its climate-responsive architecture and reliance on locally available materials. Adobe, mud, brick, wood, mud-and-straw plaster and stone are among the principal materials used in the area's buildings. Their compat-



chtn.ir

ibility with the natural environment has helped create a cohesive townscape and a distinctive architectural identity.

The layout of the old neighborhoods, the continuity of sections of their architectural facades, the form of traditional alleys and the use of materials suited to local climatic conditions reflect the knowledge and experience of local architects and builders in meeting the needs of settlement. The earthy colors of the walls, the textures of the materials and the proportions of buildings and urban spaces also contribute to Khosf's historic appearance. Preserving these characteristics is particularly important during restoration and rehabilitation. Inappropriate interventions and the use of incompatible materials can undermine the authenticity of the architecture and the visual continuity of the historic fabric.

Khosf's historic fabric contains residential, religious, public and service buildings, each reflecting aspects of the town's social, cultural and architectural history. The Jaame Mosque, the historic castle, a school, water reservoirs, mills and historic houses are among the key elements of this heritage. Notable historic houses include Mirza Jafar, Salari and Shokouhi houses, which are valuable examples of residential architecture and form part of the town's collective historical memory.



Beyond its religious function, Khosf's Jaame Mosque has played a role in shaping the town's spatial and social structure. The historic castle is another important feature for understanding the area's historical layout. Water reservoirs and mills, meanwhile, illustrate the links between architecture and past economic and livelihood activities, highlighting the importance of water resources in everyday life and the economic organization of local settlements.

Protecting these buildings and understanding their connections with surrounding neighborhoods and spaces can help reconstruct the town's history and highlight Khosf's cultural and tourism potential.

Khosf is mentioned in geographical and historical sources dating to the early Islamic period, indi-



buildings, traditional alleys and adobe and brick architectural elements. The survival of these features provides opportunities to study traditional settlement patterns, architecture and the relationships between urban spaces, underscoring the need for careful conservation.

Khosf's heritage value extends beyond its historic buildings and alleys. The relationship between natural features and structures built by people forms a central part of the area's identity. The river, the Gowab area, water resources, gardens, farmland, old neighborhoods, communication routes and historic buildings together constitute a cultural landscape shaped by centuries of interaction between people and their natural surroundings. Within this landscape, water management practices, the choice of settlement locations, the arrangement of neighborhoods and the links between residential areas and agricultural activities have all contributed to the region's historic structure. According to information provided about Khosf's cultural and historical landscape, the designated area covers approximately 500 hectares.

Protecting this cultural landscape therefore requires more than preserving individual historic buildings. It also involves safeguarding the townscape, open spaces, natural features and the visual and physical con-

nections between different parts of the area.

Khosf's historic fabric and cultural landscape offer valuable opportunities for the development of cultural and historical tourism in South Khorasan Province. Old houses, the Jaame Mosque, the historic castle, traditional alleys, historic neighborhoods and features associated with water and agriculture provide a basis for introducing visitors to the town's local history and culture.

Presenting its adobe and brick architecture, recounting the history of its neighborhoods, explaining traditional building techniques and exploring the historical relationship between residents and natural resources could offer visitors a deeper experience than simply viewing historic buildings.

With appropriate planning, tourism development in the area could raise public awareness of its heritage, stimulate the local economy and create opportunities for tourism-related businesses.

However, tourism activities must be accompanied by measures to protect architectural authenticity, respect the area's environmental capacity and involve local residents. Appropriate restoration, maintenance of historic alleys, improvement of the public landscape and support for the continued presence of residents in the historic fabric are essential to the successful rehabilitation of the area.

Khosf's historic fabric and cultural-historical landscape were inscribed on Iran's National Heritage List on January 10, 2022 in recognition of their historical, architectural, physical and cultural significance.

The registration highlights the area's importance to Iran's architectural and historical heritage and reinforces the need to protect its buildings, neighborhood structure, natural features and the connections that define its cultural landscape.

Official says deep cultural, religious ties underpin Iran-Pakistan relations

Arts & Culture Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Iran and Pakistan share deep historical, cultural and religious ties that continue to underpin relations between the two neighboring countries, Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, head of Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature, said on Tuesday at the opening of an exhibition highlighting Pakistan's history and cultural heritage.

The exhibition, titled 'Pakistan Through the Ages', was organized by the Embassy of Pakistan in Iran in cooperation with the ECO Cultural Institute, Iran Daily reported on Wednesday.

Haddad-Adel said Persian language and literature had played a significant role in shaping the historical and cultural connections between the two countries.

He described their shared cultural, literary and religious traditions as an important foundation for strengthening bilateral relations.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Haddad-Adel also praised Pakistan's efforts to help restore peace and stability in the region following United States and Israel attacks against Iran in late February.

"In the unjust attack by the United States and Israel imposed on the Iranian nation, Pakistan is trying to play an and effective role in establishing peace stability in the region, and we are grateful for that," he said. Haddad-Adel expressed hope that a culture of peace and human solidarity, which he described as the spirit of Islamic culture, would prevail over what he called a culture of domination and hegemonic

power, allowing peace and stability to return to the region.

He said relations between Iran and Pakistan were currently at a very good level and that their historical connections offered opportunities to expand cooperation.

He argued that Islam in Pakistan had been introduced largely through Persian rather than Arabic. Persian mystical poetry, he said, had helped convey Islamic teachings and spiritual concepts to the region, partly because its themes resonated with the cultural outlook of Pakistani society.

Haddad-Adel also pointed to similarities between Iranian and Pakistani urban cultures. He said Iranians visiting major Pakistani cities could encounter familiar surroundings, comparable in some respects to those found in Isfahan, a historic city in central Iran.

Urdu, Pakistan's national language, was another expression of the countries' shared history, he said, as a large proportion of its vocabulary had Persian roots.

Mohammad Hassan, head of the ECO Cultural Institute, highlighted Pakistan's cultural diversity, describing the country as a mosaic of languages, traditions, histories and ways of life united within a shared national identity.

He said the value of this cultural mosaic lay not in making its different elements identical, but in allowing each to preserve its distinct character while contributing to a broader national identity.

Pakistan's cultural richness, Hassan said, stemmed from diversity rather than uniformity.

From plains and deserts to valleys and high mountains, communities



Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, head of Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature, speaks at the opening of a Pakistani exhibition in Tehran on October 20, 2026.

● IRNA

across Pakistan have maintained their own languages, music, handicrafts, food, festivals and customs, he said. Each community contributes to the country's wider identity while retaining its regional traditions.

Hassan stressed that a common national identity did not require regional identities to disappear. Cultural differences should not be treated as weaknesses, he said, adding that recognizing and respecting them could enrich societies and strengthen ties between people.

Cultural boundaries in the region, Hassan said, had never been as rigid as modern political borders. Communities had interacted, learned from one another and drawn inspiration from neighboring cultures, contributing to mutual enrichment.

He said cultural programs focused on Pakistan offered more than an opportunity to celebrate the heritage of one ECO member. They also provided a chance to learn about the achievements of different communities, revisit historical links among the region's peoples and promote friendship and mutual understanding.

Pakistan's history reflects deep cultural ties with Iran: Ambassador A message from Pakistan's ambassador to Iran, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, was read at the ceremony by Deputy Ambassador Ismat



Hassan Sial. Siddiqui was unable to attend because of the presence of a high-level Pakistani delegation in Tehran.

In his message, Siddiqui described "Pakistan Through the Ages" as an invitation to explore the connections between people and outlined the historical development of human settlements and civilization in Pakistan.

He said evidence of agricultural activity, animal domestication and toolmaking in parts of Pakistan, including Baluchistan in the country's southwest, dated back more than 9,000 years. These early communities established settled societies that gradually developed as new settlements emerged, trade expanded and skills advanced.

Over time, one of the great urban civilizations of the ancient world emerged along the Indus River and

its tributaries, he said.

Persian became one of the principal languages of literature, scholarship, culture and administration across large parts of what is now Pakistan, Siddiqui said. Its influence extended beyond official and court life into local languages.

The works of Persian poets Saadi, Hafez and Omar Khayyam crossed mountains and political borders and became a lasting part of the region's cultural heritage, he added.

Siddiqui said the exhibition offered an opportunity to view Pakistan not simply as a country, but as part of a wider cultural sphere whose history was closely intertwined with that of Iran and other regional societies. Iran, Pakistan look to tourism to deepen ties

Tourism was another focus of the ceremony. Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey, a deputy minister of

cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts in Iran, said tourism could help expand regional cooperation, support economic growth and improve mutual understanding among nations.

He identified the development of tourism routes, easier travel among ECO member states, the promotion of shared cultural heritage and stronger cooperation between public and private sectors as measures that could create new opportunities for sustainable development.

The ceremony highlighted how language, literature, cultural diversity and tourism continue to shape the relationship between Iran and Pakistan. Speakers presented shared heritage not only as a record of historical interaction, but also as a potential basis for closer regional cooperation and greater understanding between societies.

Hamadan names honorary tourism ambassadors

Arts & Culture Desk

The spouses of ambassadors from six countries and Romania's ambassador to Iran have been named honorary ambassadors for cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts in Hamadan, western Iran, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The ceremony was held on Tuesday in cooperation with Iran's Foreign Ministry. The participating countries were Denmark, Romania, Mexico, Uruguay, Nicaragua and Armenia.

Mohammadreza Akbari, acting head of Hamadan's Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said cultural heritage could help bring nations closer despite geographical borders and differences in language and nationality. He described cultural heritage as a common language that creates opportunities for dialogue, friendship and mutual understanding among cultures.

"The honorary titles were intended to encourage the guests to introduce Hamadan's



historical sites, local arts, handicrafts and cultural traditions to people in their home countries," Akbari added.

He said the initiative could help expand international tourism and strengthen cultural ties, but its impact would depend on continued engagement, joint planning and effective promotion of the province's attractions abroad.

Hamadan is known for its ancient heritage and diverse tourist attractions. These include Hegmataneh, an archaeological site; the mausoleums of Persian polymath Avicenna and poet Baba Taher; the Ganjnameh inscriptions and waterfall; Ali Sadr Cave; and the Alavian Dome. The nearby city of Lalejin is internationally known for its



Iranian officials pose with spouses of foreign ambassador holding honorary ambassador plaques during a ceremony in Hamadan, western Iran, on October 20, 2026.

● IRNA

pottery.

Akbari expressed hope that the initiative would lead to lasting cooperation in preserving cultural heritage, expanding tourism and promoting peace and coexistence among nations.

The appointments are intended to use diplomatic connections to raise international awareness of Hamadan's cultural and historical assets. Whether they lead to practical cooperation will depend on follow-up activities beyond the ceremony.

Mexican artist honors Minab schoolchildren with butterfly artwork

Arts & Culture Desk

A Mexican artist presented an artwork in memory of children killed in Minab, a southern Iranian city where a US missile strike on a school killed dozens of people, to Iran's ambassador to Mexico.

Maria Xitcat presented her work, titled 'Butterflies of Minab' in a gesture aimed at keeping the victims' memory alive at Iran's embassy in Mexico City on October 20, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

She aimed to express solidarity the families of children at the Shajareh Tayyebbeh school. It was hit by a US missile strike on February 28, the first day of the US-Israeli war against Iran, killing 168 people, most of them children.

Made from paper, cardboard and recycled materials, the artwork depicts children transformed into butterflies flying toward a sun in the Iranian sky.

It also features a school, books, school supplies and the inscription "Minab 168," referring to the death toll reported by Iranian authorities. Xitcat, who previously worked in cybernetics engineering, said war could destroy bodies and physical



objects but could not erase children's dreams and stories.

She expressed hope that her message of sympathy would reach the bereaved mothers in Minab.

Pasandideh thanked the artist for her gesture, describing the tragedy in Minab as a shared pain for humanity. He said the world must not allow the killing of children and innocent civilians to become commonplace. Xitcat's artwork uses recycled materials to convey a message that extends



Mexican artist Maria Xitcat (R) and Iranian Ambassador to Mexico Abolfazl Pasandideh pose for a photo holding the artwork "Butterflies of Minab" at the Iranian Embassy in Mexico City on October 20, 2026.

● IRNA

beyond a memorial. It seeks to carry solidarity across borders, from Mexico to the families of the victims in Iran, and to preserve the children's memory in the public consciousness.