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President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) visits a factory of Iranian carmaker SAIPA near the capital Tehran on October 30, 2026.
president.ir

Iran's role in future of global gas diplomacy

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) held its 8th Summit of Heads of State and Government in Moscow on Tuesday, with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in attendance. Iran viewed his participation as an opportunity to strengthen its position within the GECF and expand energy cooperation with Russia. Masoud Dashti Derakhshan, a senior energy analyst, told Iran Daily that Iran's influence within the forum would depend on the quality of its proposals and its ability to turn shared interests into tangible outcomes. Rather than simply participating in discussions on the future of global gas cooperation, Iran should play an active role in shaping it. This is how it can strengthen its global energy role by turning its resources and expertise into tangible commercial and diplomatic gains.

Masoud Dashti Derakhshan

IRAN DAILY: **How can the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) help strengthen regional stability and global energy security amid rising geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Persian Gulf?**

DASHTI: I think the GECF has a real opportunity here, and it should take it more seriously. The Persian Gulf is not just another regional hotspot. It is a vital part of the global energy system. Any serious disruption to energy infrastructure or maritime routes in this region quickly affects supply chains, prices and economies far beyond the Persian Gulf itself. In my view, the Forum should not limit itself to being a place where producers simply talk to each other. It could establish standing mechanisms for consultation during periods of heightened tension, focusing on the exchange of information about potential supply disruptions, infrastructure vulnerabilities and risks to gas transit. Energy security is not only about how much gas we can produce. Reliable transportation, predictable commercial relations and open lines of communication matter just as much. Of course, the GECF cannot resolve every political dispute, and it should not try to replace existing diplomatic mechanisms. But it can help reduce uncertainty, encourage more responsible behavior and keep channels of communication open even when political relations become difficult. In the current environment, that kind of contribution would genuinely support both regional stability and global energy security.

President Pezeshkian and Acting Oil Minister Hamid Bovard called for stronger cooperation among gas-producing countries. What practical diplomatic steps can the GECF take to protect the interests of its members against unilateral sanctions and external political pressure?

The first practical step, I believe, is for the GECF to strengthen its capacity to assess properly how unilateral sanctions and external political restrictions affect gas-producing countries — their investment decisions, access to technology and the reliability of international supplies. The Forum should remain a professional energy institution, not a political alliance. Its strength lies in bringing producers together around shared economic interests and providing a credible platform for dialogue with consumers and international institutions. It is not, and should not become, a mechanism for circumventing sanctions.

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US 'carrot-and-stick' approach will not work against Iran: *Speaker*

Qatari delegation makes second visit to Tehran in a week

International Desk

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Iran's conditions on possible negotiations and ending the war have been clearly and repeatedly articulated, stressing that the "carrot-and-stick" approach will not work against Tehran.

In a post on his X account on Thursday, Qalibaf stressed that any progress will be achieved once Tehran's seven conditions are accepted by Washington.

His remarks came as regional mediators press efforts to revive peace talks between Iran and the United States to end war between the two countries.

According to IRNA, a Qatari delegation headed by a senior adviser to Qatar's prime minister arrived in Tehran on Friday for talks with Iranian officials.

Senior officials from several countries have flown to Tehran in recent days as fears rise of a return to hostilities in the US-Israeli aggression against Iran, which started eight months ago.

The Qatari visit came a day after Iranian media said Iran had received a letter from US Vice President JD Vance addressed to security chief Mohsen Rezaei.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that Vance had sent the letter to Iranian security chief Mohsen Rezaei at the direction of US President Donald Trump, in a bid to revive negotiations and avert new US strikes.

The New York Times reported that Vance "made the outreach in a letter sent last week via Qatari mediators and delivered Sunday to Gen. Mohsen Rezaei".

Tasnim news agency reported that "Iran has received the letter but has not yet responded", while Fars news agency carried a similar account, citing "a source familiar with the matter".

The initiative comes despite US president's recent declaration that his administration was not negotiating with Iran and his repeated warnings that further military action could be imminent.

Donald Trump denied that he had instructed Vance to pursue peace negotiations with Iran. The US president said the contact was primarily aimed at facilitating the delivery of medical supplies.

The letter comes as Washington has reportedly warned several Persian Gulf Arab countries to prepare for a possible new military campaign against Iran after the US midterm elections on November 3.

Qatar and Pakistan have been mediating efforts to revive peace talks following a ceasefire agreement in April. A Qatari delegation was also in Tehran on Sunday, according to a senior Iranian official.

Also this week, senior officials from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – which signed a defense alliance in Mecca in August – flew to Tehran for talks.

On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran was discussing a plan with both mediators, Qatar and Pakistan, to end the war and reopen the waterway.

Tehran insists that Washington meet seven conditions for reopening the strait, including a ceasefire across the Middle East, unfreezing Iranian assets abroad, lifting sanctions on its oil sector and ending a US naval blockade on Iran.

The war began on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

Iran retaliated with attacks on Israel and US assets in the region and imposed restrictions on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway that normally carries about one-fifth of global oil consumption. The United States has also imposed a blockade on Iranian ports.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf
ICANA

Three tankers halted after 'incidents' in Hormuz: *IRGC*

International Desk

Iran's Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Friday said two oil tankers had been halted after encountering unspecified "incidents" while attempting to transit an unauthorized route in the Strait of Hormuz.

"Two offending oil tankers, one in the eastern part and the other in the western part of the Strait of Hormuz, which were attempting to pass through the unauthorized route, encountered incidents and were brought to a halt in the waters south of the strait," the IRGC said in a statement.

The tankers had "switched off all their navigation and positioning systems and, with the support of the terrorist US military, were attempting to exit through the unauthorized route," the statement added.

Hours later, the IRGC Navy said a supertanker hit a naval mine in Hormuz and caught fire.

The IRGC did not specify the nature of the incidents, which came a day after Iran's Armed Forces said four tankers had stopped in the area after hitting mines.

The IRGC said Friday's incidents occurred after the vessels received several radio warnings but disregarded them.

In a statement on Thursday, the IRGC's Navy said three offending oil tankers, which were passing through the unauthorized route south of the Strait of Hormuz, struck mines, triggering explosions and fires.

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It said the vessels were subsequently abandoned off the southern coast of the waterway, which has remained under Iran's control over the past eight months.

Another tanker had caught fire east of the strait, after hitting mines while "operating in a restricted and dangerous area", Iran's Army reported later Thursday.

The IRGC Navy also warned that unauthorized routes in the Strait are mined and that vessel owners and crews are responsible for using those paths.

It further noted that vessel owners and crews should not be misled by the United States Central Command's (CENTCOM) claims on social media about the Strait of Hormuz.

"The facts on the ground will determine the outcome. Any provocative action, supported by the terrorist and invading US military's act of mischief, that disregards the regulations governing the Strait will be met with a resolute response," it cautioned.

Mine-clearing claim

In recent weeks, Iran has reported multiple vessels striking sea mines, prompting CENTCOM, which runs military operations in the region, to reaffirm on social media its insistence that all mines in "primary transit routes" have been cleared.

On Thursday, Hossein Mohebi, the spokesman for the IRGC challenged the claim, saying on X: "Prove your Hormuz mine-clearing claim with independent evidence, not statements!"

Iranian forces have demanded that vessels use a designated route through the strait and coordinate their passage with the country's armed forces, labelling a southern corridor closer to Oman's shores as unauthorized.

Iran restricted transit through the Strait of Hormuz in response to the criminal US-Israeli aggression, which began on February 28 and came to a halt in early April after 40 days.

On June 17, Tehran and Washington signed a Pakistan-brokered Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), whose Article 5 places responsibility for reopening and managing the Strait squarely in Iran's hands.

However, Washington attempted to undermine Iran's sovereignty over the strait and imposed a naval blockade in violation of the war-ending deal, prompting Tehran to declare the vital global energy chokepoint closed to all traffic.

Tehran has said it will not reopen the waterway until the United States meets its demands.

Iran condemns 'illusory' UAE-Canada claims on Iranian trio islands

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman strongly condemned a joint statement by the United Arab Emirates and Canada over three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf, warning that they will not alter established historical and legal realities.

Esmail Baqaei strongly condemned the brazen and interventionist claims made by the UAE and Canada regarding the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in a joint statement issued by Abu Dhabi's crown prince and the Canadian prime minister on Tuesday, Press TV reported.

The two countries called for an end to what they described as the occupation of the three islands which, they alleged, constitutes a violation of the sovereignty of the UAE and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Baqaei said, "The islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb are inseparable and eternal parts of Iran's territory," adding that "the repetition of illusory and baseless claims about them will not change the established geographical, historical and legal realities."

Baqaei further condemned Canada's move to align itself with the UAE government in advancing territorial claims against Iran.

"Such an action by Canada—which itself faces territorial claims from the US administration—is short-sighted, violates the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and runs counter to international law," he said.

MEHR

He warned that the move will entail "international responsibility for the Canadian government."

Baqaei advised the UAE government to "adhere to the principle of good neighborliness instead of repeatedly making futile territorial claims against a major neighboring country."

The Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs have historically been part of Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world. However, the United Arab Emirates has repeatedly baseless laid claim to the islands.

The islands fell under British control in 1921, but on November 30, 1971, a day after British forces left the region and just two days before the UAE was to become an official federation, Iran's sovereignty over the islands was restored.

Iran's Armed Forces capture US spy drone in Strait of Hormuz

International Desk

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy said its electronic warfare unit has seized an American MQM-170 spy and deception drone and landed it intact in the western Strait of Hormuz.

In a statement on Thursday, the IRGC Navy's public relations office said its electronic warfare fighters had successfully carried out an offensive electronic warfare operation, identifying the drone before taking control of its guidance and control systems.

The IRGC Navy successfully brought the drone to the ground intact, it added.

FARS

The statement said the drone's mission was to identify Iran's air defense systems along the Persian Gulf coastline and the Strait of Hormuz.

According to the IRGC Navy, data retrieved from the aircraft indicated that it had taken off from the coast of one of the southern Persian Gulf littoral states.

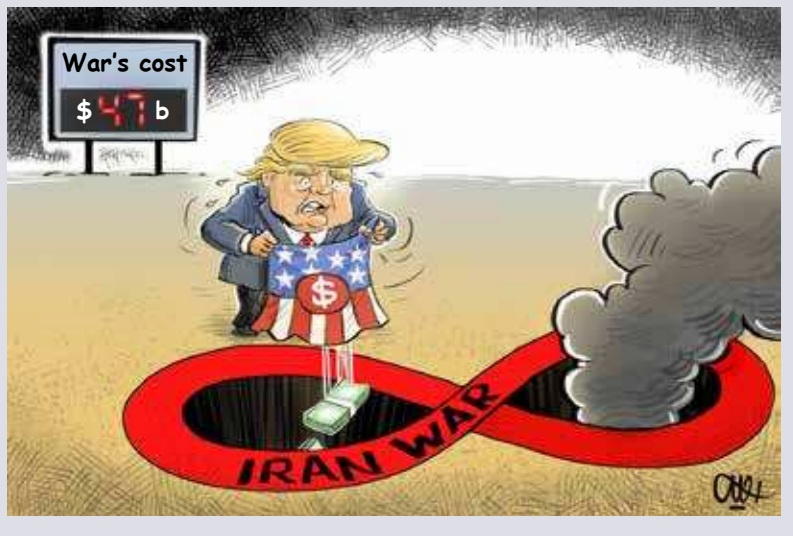
Earlier, the IRGC Aerospace Force said it had intercepted and destroyed an advanced MQ-1 drone belonging to the US military over the Strait of Hormuz.

The IRGC said the aircraft was brought down using the Aerospace Force's new air-defense system operating under the control of Iran's Integrated Air-Defense Network.

The latest capture comes amid a sharp escalation between Iran and the United States over the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically important maritime chokepoints.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Pezeshkian calls for advanced technology, fuel-efficient engines in Iran's auto industry

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has called for the use of modern technology and the development of advanced, fuel-efficient engines in the country's automotive industry, saying sustained efforts were needed to improve vehicle quality and reduce fuel consumption.

"Transforming the automotive industry cannot be achieved in the short term; what matters is that the country continues moving toward producing fuel-efficient vehicles and improving product quality," Pezeshkian said.

According to IRNA, Pezeshkian made the remarks on Thursday during a visit to the production facilities of an Iranian automaker. He was briefed on production operations, industrial capacity and the company's plans to improve product quality and develop fuel-efficient engines.

The visit followed the president's emphasis last year on the need for automakers to draw up and present practical plans for developing fuel-efficient engines. The initiative is part of the government's broader efforts to improve energy efficiency, upgrade manufacturing technology and raise the quality of domestically produced vehicles.

At a meeting with the company's managers and engineers, Pezeshkian said, "The more we develop, design and upgrade engines and other vehicle components in line with international standards, the more fuel consumption will fall and the quality, efficiency and performance of the product will improve."

He called on policymakers, government agencies, automakers and industrial companies to coordinate their efforts and pursue consistent plans to advance the industry.

Pezeshkian also pledged government support for manufacturers seeking to develop the automotive sector and design fuel-efficient engines. He said Iran could not accept the idea that it had fallen behind other countries in the field without taking steps to close the gap.

Referring to problems caused by sanctions and the two recent wars, he said cooperation across the country's available industrial and technical capacities was essential to overcoming current difficulties. He added that technological development and product upgrades should be pursued continuously to keep the automotive industry aligned with changing needs and future developments.

Iran's push to improve vehicle efficiency comes amid pressure on its energy supply. The country, which has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear program, was already experiencing energy shortages before US-Israeli attacks began in late February. Since then, it has been operating under wartime conditions and facing a maritime blockade from the south. Israel also launched a 12-day war against Iran in June 2025.

Iranian refineries produce about 110 million liters of gasoline a day, compared with average daily consumption of 135 million liters. To narrow the gap, the Oil Ministry ordered several petrochemical plants to allocate part of their capacity to gasoline production. The move added 20 million liters to daily output, taking total production to 130 million liters.

In early September, the government also raised prices for gasoline purchased outside monthly quotas for the second time in less than a year and adjusted the monthly allowances.

Meanwhile, Iran has taken steps toward vehicle electrification. In October 2025, the country's second-largest automaker introduced what it described as Iran's first domestically developed plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV), as part of efforts to keep pace with global trends in automotive electrification.

Separately, the country's largest automaker had already unveiled a hybrid electric vehicle (HEV), which it said was in the late stages of development or pre-production.

President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) listens to an explanation from a technician during a visit to an Iranian automaker's production facilities on October 29, 2026.
president.ir

Tehran, Yerevan discuss expanding cooperation in advanced technologies

Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Khalil Shirgholami (L) shakes hands with Armenian Minister of High-Tech Industry and Artificial Intelligence Davit Tadevosyan after a meeting in Yerevan, Armenia, on October 30, 2026.
IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran and Armenia have discussed ways to expand bilateral cooperation in advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, aerospace, nanotechnology and telecommunications, Iran's Foreign Ministry said.

Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Khalil Shirgholami met with Armenian Minister of High-Tech Industry and Artificial Intelligence Davit Tadevosyan to discuss opportunities for closer scientific and technological ties, the ministry said in a report carried by IRNA on Friday.

The two sides highlighted the countries' historical, cultural and scientific ties and stressed the potential to use their technical expertise and skilled workforces to strengthen cooperation.

Tadevosyan said there was considerable potential to expand bilateral ties in these fields and expressed hope that cooperation would become more comprehensive and effective in the near future, according to Armenia's Public Radio.

Shirgholami highlighted Iran's technological capabilities, particularly its achievements in nanotechnology, and said he was willing to support further cooperation within the scope of his responsibilities.

The discussions also covered digital solutions, telecommunications and the possibility of implementing joint programs and initiatives.

Both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening links between Iranian and Armenian technology companies, startups and innovation centers, as well as exchanging expertise and developing joint initiatives.

They also stressed the need to approve a memorandum of understanding between the relevant institutions of the two countries to provide a basis for closer cooperation and create more opportunities for joint projects.

At the end of the meeting, Shirgholami invited Tadevosyan to visit Iran to learn about the country's technological achievements and discuss practical steps to expand bilateral cooperation.

Iran seeks practical agricultural projects in Africa

National Iran-Africa agriculture meeting to be held today

Economy Desk

Iran is seeking to move beyond promoting its domestic capabilities and develop practical joint agricultural projects with African countries, focusing on local market needs, Iran's competitive advantages and the participation of African partners, a senior Foreign Ministry official said. Akbar Khosravi-Nejad, director general for African affairs at Iran's Foreign Ministry, told ISNA that the main goal of a national Iran-Africa agriculture meeting was to develop specific cooperation models that could lead to projects ready for implementation and follow-up. The meeting is being held at Iran's Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization, with the participation of the Agriculture Ministry, the Foreign Ministry's African affairs department and the permanent secretariat of the Iran-Africa conference at the Trade Promotion Organization. Specialized government agencies, agricultural businesses, knowledge-based companies, research institutions and economic enterprises are expected to attend, Khosravi-Nejad said.

He said the meeting aimed to identify and document Iran's agricultural capabilities and establish direct links among research institutions, knowledge-based companies, agricultural industries and organizations involved in expanding trade with Africa. Proposals are expected to be compiled into a national package of potential capabilities and projects for follow-up under Iran-Africa cooperation programs. Simply expressing readiness to cooperate or presenting domestic capabilities would not be enough, he said. Each proposal must demonstrate its competitive advantage, address a specific market need and show how it could move from an idea to implementation.

Agriculture is closely linked to food security, employment, rural livelihoods and the development of local industries in many African countries, Khosravi-Nejad said.

Iran, meanwhile, has capabilities in areas including water and irrigation technologies, agricultural inputs, machinery, food processing, livestock and poultry, aquaculture, and technical and engineering services that could provide a basis for cooperation.

But Africa cannot be treated as a single market, he said, noting differences among countries in climate, infrastructure, regulations, agricultural needs and market conditions. The choice of target countries and cooperation models should therefore be based on market research and an assessment of local needs. He said competitiveness depended not only on technical knowledge and production capacity but also on product quality, production costs, suitability for local conditions, spare-parts availability, after-sales services and access to financing.

Moving beyond exports

Exports could serve as a starting point, but other cooperation models, including assembly, joint production, product processing, local workforce training, technology transfer and after-sales services, could help Iranian companies establish a more sustainable presence in African markets, he said. Cooperation should cover the entire value chain, from agricultural inputs and production to processing, storage, distribution and market access, with the respective roles of Iranian and African partners clearly defined. Khosravi-Nejad said each proposed project should identify its target market, financing requirements, the contribution of African partners and measurable outcomes. Responsibilities, participating organizations, timelines and progress indicators should also be specified.

He said overseas farming could be considered in some African countries, but feasibility studies should go beyond access to land and production potential to examine water and input supplies, local laws, infrastructure, processing, transportation, final markets and the distribution of risks and benefits. The main measure of success, he said, would be tangible results, including implementation contracts, increased production, job creation, local workforce training, technology transfer and sustainable economic partnerships.

Threat of MOAB ...

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A dedicated, evidence-based mechanism to examine the economic effects of such restrictions would allow members to show how these measures affect not only individual countries but the wider energy market. At the same time, the GECF could encourage practical cooperation among members in technical research, engineering, training and other areas that are commercially viable and fully consistent with applicable laws. Diplomatically, it should continue to emphasize non-discriminatory energy trade, respect for national sovereignty and the need for predictable conditions for long-term investment. For Iran, this means adopting a proactive rather than purely reactive approach. We need to identify vulnerabilities early, strengthen domestic capabilities, diversify legitimate partnerships and focus on projects that are commercially sustainable. The goal should be to protect the long-term interests of gas-producing countries while maintaining reliable supplies for international markets.

Iran has called for greater investment, technology sharing and cooperation across the gas value chain. How can the GECF help create opportunities for cooperation among member states despite sanctions and geopolitical tensions?

The real challenge for many gas-producing countries is not a shortage of resources. It is the difficulty of attracting investment, accessing appropriate technology, developing infrastructure and bringing projects into commercial operation.

I believe the GECF can help by creating a more practical framework for cooperation across the gas value chain, from exploration and field development to processing, pipeline transportation, storage and, where commercially and technically feasible, LNG development. It could identify projects that lend themselves to joint work between members and help connect them with suitable technical and financial partners. It could also facilitate the exchange of experience in reservoir management, gas processing, pipeline operations, digital technologies and the reduction of methane emissions. Financing remains a critical issue. Proposals such as a Gas Bank are worth examining, but only if they are grounded in clear governance, adequate capital, proper risk-sharing arrangements and realistic assessments of project bankability. The real test is whether such mechanisms can actually mobilize investment and move projects from concept to execution. Geopolitical restrictions make diversification even more necessary. Wherever viable alternatives exist, gas-producing countries should avoid excessive dependence on a single source of finance, technology or equipment. Cooperation among members can help build technical capacity, broaden partnerships and strengthen the resilience of their energy industries, provided the projects remain commercially sound and legally compliant. Iran has developed considerable technical expertise and operational experience in the gas sector. The priority now is to connect that expertise with genuine investment opportunities and mutually beneficial partnerships. This requires careful project selection, realistic economic evaluation and contractual frameworks that protect the interests of all parties. In the end, the success of the GECF should be measured by practical results: projects that reach implementation, improved efficiency, stronger infrastructure and more reliable gas supplies. Meetings and agreements are useful, but what ultimately matters is what they deliver.

Given Iran's major gas reserves and strategic location, what role could Iran play in shaping the GECF's future agenda and strengthening its influence in global energy diplomacy?

Iran has the resource base, the geographical position and the industrial experience to play a more active role in shaping the GECF's agenda and strengthening its place in global energy diplomacy. The real opportunity is to turn these advantages into practical regional cooperation and a stronger contribution to international energy discussions.

Our location creates natural possibilities for cross-border gas trade, swaps and regional supply arrangements. Closer cooperation with neighboring producers and markets could improve supply flexibility and generate economic value for the countries involved. But geography and reserves alone are never enough. What converts potential into real influence is infrastructure, investment, competitive commercial terms and reliable contractual performance.

I think Iran should encourage the GECF to place greater emphasis on regional gas-trading mechanisms, investment cooperation, technology development and the long-term outlook for global gas supply and demand. These are areas where we can put forward practical proposals based on our own experience and our understanding of regional markets.

Another important priority is strengthening structured dialogue between producers and consumers. Producers need predictable demand and reasonable returns on investment; consumers need reliable supplies and confidence in long-term contracts. Effective energy diplomacy has to take both sides seriously.

Iran should also work to move regional cooperation beyond general political understandings and towards projects with clear commercial objectives. Whether the subject is gas exchanges, infrastructure development or technical partnerships, the focus must remain on feasibility, mutual benefit and actual implementation. Ultimately, Iran's influence within the GECF will depend on the quality of the proposals we bring and our ability to help turn shared interests into concrete results. We should not simply take part in discussions about the future of global gas cooperation, we should actively help shape that future. That is how Iran can strengthen its position in international energy diplomacy: by converting its natural resources and technical capabilities into tangible commercial and diplomatic outcomes through sustained, practical engagement.

Iran constructive player in emerging regional order

IRAN DAILY

CONFERENCE ***The University of Tehran's Center for Graduate International Studies hosted a prestigious conference on October 26; at a time when the war with the United States and Israel has transformed the region's security and political equations, and questions concerning Iran's position in the emerging global order have assumed greater significance than ever before. At the 1st International Conference on "Iran and the New World Order: Developments After the War with the United States and Israel," tensions between Iran and the United States were examined across several panels and from diverse perspectives, ranging from the future of political relations and regional security to great-power competition, sanctions, and the prospects for diplomacy. These discussions transcended assessments of the war's consequences and examined Iran's position in forthcoming geopolitical equations and the opportunities available to the country's foreign policy. The conference was organized in cooperation with a consortium of universities, think tanks, and scientific institutions, with the participation of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) and the Iran Cultural and Press Institute. The following is a summary of the principal positions and themes presented at the conference.***

Int'l law held hostage by great powers' double standards

Abbas Shiri

Abbas Shiri, dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Tehran (UT) and president of the International Conference on "Iran and the New World Order: Developments After the War with the United States and Israel," criticized the erosion of the fundamental principles of international law and the predominance of double standards in global relations, focusing on the legal dimensions of the imposed war against Iran. He stated, "What had been established through decades of efforts by the world's thinkers to formulate the rules of international law and establish international justice has, in recent years, been made a subject of manipulation and ridicule by the world's great powers."

He added, "We must mourn international law and human rights because today, we are witnessing the selective application of justice around the world."

Referring to the double standards applied to violations of international law, Shiri stated, "If Iran engages in conduct deemed to violate international law, it will face severe international reactions, ranging from sanctions to military attacks. However, when the United States or Israel undertake similar actions, no commensurate response is observed at the international level."

Referring to the failure to hold the United States and Israel accountable for their actions over recent decades, the professor added, "Numerous resolutions have been adopted against Israel, which the United States has prevented from advancing through its use of the veto; resolutions that concerned instances of violations of international law and war crimes."

The dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the UT subsequently identified the sovereign equality of states as a fundamental principle of international law and asserted, "All states enjoy sovereign equality, and a country's possession of greater military power, population, or territory does not signify its legal superiority over other countries."

He emphasized that every state possesses sovereign authority within its own territory, and no country can, under various pretexts, impose its will on other countries concerning the principles of sovereignty or launch military attacks against them.

Referring to the principle prohibiting the use of force as one of the foundational rules of international law, Shiri stated, "The fundamental principle is the prohibition of the use of force, the avoidance of military attacks, and the abstention from occupying the territory of other countries. No country can attack another country under any pretext or for any reason."

He added, "Even if a state commits an error, this does not authorize a military attack against that country, the destruction of its infrastructure, or the targeting of its civilian or even military facilities."

The dean also regarded the US-Israeli military attack against Iran as a case study for examining the concept of international justice within the new world order. He stated, "The examination of this issue encompasses four fundamental areas: the credibility of international law in the new world order; the distinction between the prohibition of the use of force and the crimes of war and aggression, on the one hand, and individual criminal responsibility, on the other; the limitations of international criminal accountability; and the mechanisms for realizing international justice."

Emphasizing the necessity of distinguishing between the legality of resorting to force and the manner in which military operations are conducted, he added, "Even if the use of force is legally justifiable under certain circumstances, this does not authorize extensive and unlimited attacks against educational centers, residential buildings, hospitals, schools, and mosques." According to Shiri, attacks against public service facilities, including police stations, fire departments, and municipal offices, are also subject to significant legal restrictions under numerous international instruments and conventions.

Referring to individual criminal responsibility for the commission of international crimes, Shiri asserted, "States' responsibility for aggression and violations of international law does not negate the criminal responsibility of commanders and officials who order attacks against civilian facilities or participate in the commission of such crimes." He emphasized, "No commander can evade individual criminal responsibility for committing an international crime merely by invoking an order from a superior."

Who writes rules of a changing order?

Roxana Niknami

Roxana Niknami, a professor in European Studies at the University of Tehran and the conference's academic secretary, emphasized that the transition in the global order does not merely entail a redistribution of power among countries. She identified the central question of the conference as the manner in which rules are formulated within the changing international order and stated, "At a time when the unipolar order is declining and a stable multipolar order has yet to emerge, the question arises as to which actors will define the rules of the future order and what capacity middle powers possess to influence international norms."

Referring to the liberal order established after 1945, which rested on hegemony, institutional multilateralism, and legal rules, she added, "Today, all three pillars of this order are under pressure, and no clear alternative has yet emerged; a situation that has led to heightened strategic uncertainty, diminished predictability in state behavior, and intensified competition over the interpretation of international rules."

"Iran is not merely an object of analysis in this transition; rather, it is among the actors that are both affected by developments in the global order and capable of influencing its formation. Iran's geopolitical position, civilizational heritage, energy resources, and historical experience in confronting international orders render the examination of these developments from both theoretical and practical perspectives all the more imperative."

Niknami also announced that the conference secretariat had received nearly 340 papers and stated, "The thematic diversity of the papers — spanning fields such as international law, international political economy, security studies, energy, technology, the environment, and regional studies — demonstrates that none of the existing theoretical approaches can independently explain the complexities of the current transition, and that understanding the new world order requires the synergistic integration of diverse approaches."

Referring to the importance of emerging technologies, cybersecurity, climate change, and energy diplomacy, she added, "The agenda of the global order is no longer confined to traditional security issues but encompasses diverse dimensions. Accordingly, this conference seeks to establish a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue and the examination of various dimensions of international developments."

She subsequently emphasized the role of middle powers and countries of the Global South during the transition, asserting, "These countries can help preserve multilateralism and uphold the authority of international law amid competition among the great powers." She also described the presence of Indonesia's ambassador at the conference as significant in this regard, referring to Indonesia's hosting of the 1955 Bandung Conference. She stated, "Iran and Indonesia, despite their differences, can cooperate in shaping an order founded on the sovereign equality of states, mutual respect, and collectively accepted rules."

Emphasizing the necessity of strengthening ties between universities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she noted, "Universities can provide policymakers with conceptual frameworks and research findings, while diplomats can help make

analyses and decision-making more realistic by conveying their practical experience and the operational constraints encountered in the field."
The professor concluded by expressing hope that the conference would not remain an isolated event but would become a permanent platform for knowledge production, the expansion of academic diplomacy, and the development of scientific cooperation with universities and research centers in other countries, particularly Indonesia. She also announced plans to publish a collection of papers and compile policy briefs to convey the conference's scientific findings to policymakers.

Impossible to speak of end of previous order

Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour

Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour, former head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Institute for Political and International Studies and a professor of international relations at the ministry's School of International Relations, addressed the international conference at the University of Tehran.
Emphasizing the complexity of developments in the international system, he stated that the previous global order continues to exist while the competition among the great powers to shape the future global architecture has intensified. According to him, under current circumstances, neither can we talk about the establishment of a clearly defined new order nor can the complete collapse of the previous order be accepted since international law and the United Nations continue to play a role in global relations.
Referring to Washington's efforts to preserve its global hegemony, Sajjadpour stated that, while pursuing a preeminent international position, the United States was simultaneously weakening institutions and frameworks that had emerged after World War II with its own participation. China, by contrast, simultaneously operates within existing institutions and seeks to enhance its role in decision-making structures while establishing new economic and international institutions. He emphasized that understanding the strategies of the great powers requires attention to their competition over hegemony and the determination of the rules governing the future order.
Referring to Iran's experience in the two most recent imposed wars, he identified reliance on domestic capabilities as a major factor in preserving the country and stated that Iran secures its security through its own capabilities. In his view, Iran's strategy should rest on comprehensive national power, encompassing military, social, and scientific capabilities. Sajjadpour also emphasized the need to avoid either underestimating or exaggerating Iran's capabilities and called for a scientific and realistic assessment of international conditions.
Rejecting the substitution of aspirations for scientific analysis, the professor of international relations referred to the complex relations between the United States and China. He stated that, despite their competition and tensions, both countries sought to prevent an escalation of confrontation. Consequently, the perception that a war between them would constitute a definite opportunity for other countries was an analysis based on wishful thinking.
In his concluding remarks, Sajjadpour emphasized that Iran stood at a complex juncture in the history of the international system and should draw on its several-thousand-year historical experience to formulate an effective strategy. According to him, developing a more scientific understanding of global developments, balancing objectives with instruments, and strengthening comprehensive national power are among the fundamental requirements of Iran's strategic policymaking.

Iran in paradigmatic struggle between China, Russia and US

Mohammadreza Majidi

Mohammadreza Majidi, a professor of regional studies at the University of Tehran, examined tensions between Iran and the United States through the prism of the structural confrontation between China and Russia, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other. Emphasizing the necessity of analyzing developments from a geopolitical perspective, he maintained that the crises in the Middle East are not merely a conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel; rather, they are part of a paradigmatic competition to organize global power. "The United States seeks to preserve its maritime hegemony and control strategic routes, while the China–Russia–Iran coalition seeks to strengthen the continental axis and counter American maritime supremacy through the development of land corridors," he added.
"Strait of Hormuz is the energy artery, and Bab el-Mandeb is the artery of global trade. In addition to its strategic position in the energy heartland, Iran plays a decisive role in the competition between the maritime-oriented and land-oriented axes."
He noted that both axes need Iran to shape their preferred order. Accordingly, Iran constitutes the connecting point between these two axes, and the outcome of the Iran–United States conflict would influence the future of the global order, an order unlikely to remain uncontested.

Requirements for defense pact among Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan

At another panel of the conference, the trilateral pact among Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan was examined. The pact's signatories had traveled to Tehran on the day of the conference to discuss major regional security issues with Iranian officials.
Attending the meeting remotely, Flavius Caba-Maria, president of the Romanian think tank Middle East Political and Economic Institute, stated that regional countries were seeking to diversify their security cooperation to reduce exclusive dependence on a single foreign power.

Flavius Caba-Maria

"Saudi Arabia continues to rely on American military capabilities but is expanding its relations with China, Turkey, and Pakistan. Turkey seeks greater strategic autonomy, while Pakistan faces constraints because of its rivalry with India and its sensitive relations with Iran."
Therefore, he maintained, the objective of the joint defense pact is not to replace one alliance with another but to diversify security partnerships; the pact's immediate significance lies in its political message, deterrence, and the expansion of its members' strategic options. Its long-term credibility also depends on mechanisms for consultation, joint planning, information exchange, and clear rules for crisis management.
He added, "The success of the joint defense pact depends on translating political commitments into practical cooperation. The members must establish specific mechanisms for consultation, crisis communication, the assessment of responsibility for attacks, and decision-making concerning assistance to one another. Maintaining diplomatic channels with Iran and other regional countries is also essential. Ultimately, lasting security in the Middle East depends on the establishment of a broader partnership that also includes Iran."
Complementing this discussion via video conference, Henrietta Toivanen, a researcher at the Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation in Finland, examined the experience of regional cooperation in Europe and the possibility of applying its lessons in West Asia, emphasizing the formulation of common principles to reduce tensions.
She stated, "The European experience demonstrates that simple principles can provide a basis for security dialogues, and these dialogues do not necessarily require changes in security approaches or the termination of existing defense cooperation."
"New mechanisms, including trilateral agreements, can complement existing regional arrangements. The initiation of security dialogues does not require complete trust among countries, and a degree of trust in mediators and the dialogue process can be sufficient to advance regional cooperation," Toivanen added.

War's impact on world's data infrastructure

Behzad Ahmadi

Behzad Ahmadi, a professor at the University of Tehran's Faculty of World Studies, addressed the importance of submarine cables in global communications, Iran's capacity to become a data transit route, and the war's impact on investment in and the security of this infrastructure. He stated that, when the consequences of war are examined, data infrastructure and submarine cables, which play a significant role in information transmission, generally receive insufficient attention. He argued that the impact of the third war of aggression on Iran on calculations concerning east-to-west data transmission must be examined.
He added that the central paradox was that the war, on the one hand, disrupted data transmission and increased the need to identify alternative routes, given that approximately 90% of the world's data travels through maritime routes. On the other hand, the passage of land routes near Iran under wartime conditions presented a contradiction since war increases financing risks and sanctions-related constraints while simultaneously potentially affecting the world's data infrastructure. Nevertheless, a land route would constitute an effective alternative only if it possessed sufficient capacity, connectivity to international networks, and the ability to transmit data reliably. Land routes, however, are not immune to the dangers of war.
Emphasizing the requirements for establishing a data corridor, the professor said that such a corridor requires sufficient capacity, operational viability, and appropriate routes. The war has strengthened Iran's fiber-optic capacity, but the realization of this potential also depends on the availability of other necessary conditions. He further noted that, under peacetime conditions, Iran possesses connectivity-based power and that it is necessary to examine whether bypassing Iran in data transmission is feasible.

End of Europe's era of preaching

Ali Sabbaghian

Ali Sabbaghian, a professor of regional studies at the University of Tehran, examined the European Union's position in the reconfiguration of the global order. He stated that the order established in Europe had been founded on multilateralism and that the European Union was itself a product of, and one of the principal pillars of, this order. However, developments in recent years had demonstrated that this structure no longer functioned as it once had.
He added that one of the factors contributing to this transformation is the changing relationship among the great powers. Europe has been grappling with the consequences of the war in Ukraine for approximately five years, while Iran's war with the United States and Israel has further complicated geopolitical developments. Alongside these factors, the unilateralist approaches of US President Donald Trump have also contributed to the weakening of the previous order by disregarding certain characteristics of its structure.
Sabbaghian identified the rise of China and the gradual disruption of the existing order's structure, alongside the ineffectiveness of international institutions, as other contributing factors. He asserted that the European Union now finds itself confronting a geopolitical transformation and is adjusting its actions in accordance with this reality.
Referring to the concept of European strategic autonomy, the professor stated that this autonomy is no longer confined to defense and security but also encompasses technology and trade. Nevertheless, the European Union faces difficulties because of its collective nature and could not act cohesively on every issue.
He continued that Europe's efforts to reform the international order are being pursued through support for global initiatives and expanded engagement with countries of the Global South. The "Global Europe" approach also emphasizes cooperation with these countries and a departure from a preachy stance since Europe could no longer define global norms single-handedly.

Understanding war within framework of Trumpism

Mohammad Jamshidi

Mohammad Jamshidi, a professor of regional studies at the University of Tehran, raised the question of whether diplomacy and power are in opposition to one another or could reinforce one another. He stated that understanding the current circumstances first requires answering the question of what had caused the war. Today's developments, he argued, are the outcome of a decade-long process and the international system's movement toward realist approaches, a trajectory that has now culminated in the war against Iran.
He added that the situation does not involve two separate incidents of attack but rather a state of war in which both the political will to attack and the corresponding military posture are present. According to him, the adversary's objective is regime change, and the requirements of such a situation, as well as the function of diplomacy within it, need to be properly understood.
Referring to the origins of the war, Jamshidi asserted that the conflict should be examined within the framework of Trumpism and a broader intellectual and social movement, a phenomenon that is not merely attributable to the advent of a single individual but reflects a deeper transformation. Furthermore, damage to Iran's deterrence, particularly in the Levant, following regional developments and the collapse of the pillars of resistance, have been among the factors contributing to the current circumstances.
Emphasizing that Iran's previous policy had been rational and deterrence-based, the professor stated that the country is now in a state of war and that this situation would not end after two rounds of confrontation. At the same time, he noted that, although Iran is the initial target of this war, a larger objective also exists, with China constituting the United States' principal and more consequential target.
He subsequently identified diplomacy as one of the instruments of national power and added that its most important function is to understand the international environment, although its responsibilities are not confined to this domain. Securing the support of other countries and accurately explaining the country's policies should also feature on the diplomatic agenda, enabling this instrument to play a role alongside other components of national power.

Expecting unconditional support from allies unrealistic

Akbar Valizadeh

Akbar Valizadeh, a professor of regional studies at the University of Tehran, referred to Russia's approach toward Iran and stated that Russia has neither acted entirely alongside Iran nor maintained complete distance from the country. Rather, it has consistently pursued a form of calibrated support.
He added that preserving Iran as a partner, avoiding substantial costs, and consolidating Russia's position as a mediating actor have been among the considerations shaping Moscow's conduct toward Iran.
Emphasizing that strategic alliances in the international system are invariably subject to the test of competing interests, he stated that understanding these limitations is an essential prerequisite for managing relations between countries. According to him, Russia's approach toward Iran reflected a pattern also observable in the behavior of other actors in the international system and could not be attributed exclusively to relations between Moscow and Tehran.
Valizadeh asserted that expecting unconditional support from allies is unrealistic since every country pursues its own interests and particular considerations in its foreign policy. He added that, accordingly, managing foreign relations requires not only a precise understanding of the limitations of cooperation with other powers but also domestic capacity-building and the diversification of foreign relations. According to him, simultaneous attention to these two factors could facilitate better management of international relations and reduce dependence on any single actor.

The article first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper Iran.

Building a dynasty: Iran's rise to pinnacle of Greco-Roman wrestling

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iran's Greco-Roman wrestling team produced the most dominant performance in its World Championships history under head coach Hassan Rangraz, winning nine medals – four gold, three silver and two bronze – to retain the world title for a second consecutive edition. Iranian wrestlers amassed 192 points in Astana, Kazakhstan, opening a substantial gap over their rivals. Azerbaijan finished second with 104 points, Uzbekistan third with 80, while wrestling powerhouse Russia settled for 10th with 61.

Experts have attributed Iran's success to the wrestlers' physical and technical preparation, the emergence of promising young talent and their ability to bounce back from defeats. The contribution of the coaching staff, plans to develop a new generation of wrestlers and the management of the Iranian Wrestling Federation have also been highlighted as key factors. Maintaining that momentum ahead of future competitions—particularly the World Championships in the year preceding the Olympic Games and the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics—will require addressing several challenges. These include selecting the final lineup in the six Olympic weight categories, managing competition among title contenders and ensuring the country's leading wrestlers maintain their fitness and motivation.

In an interview with Iran Daily, wrestling expert Majid Hatami discussed the reasons behind Iran's success, the performances of head coach Hassan Rangraz and federation president Alireza Dabir, the future of stars such as Saeid Esmaeili and Iran's prospects for Los Angeles.

IRAN DAILY: Iran's Greco-Roman team won the world title in commanding fashion, collecting nine medals and 192 points to set a historic record. How do you assess the team's performance, and what factors contributed to this achievement?

Ali Hatami

HATAMI: This was the most remarkable and dominant result Iran has ever achieved in Greco-Roman wrestling at the World Championships. We had never witnessed such dominance – this number of medals and such a considerable points advantage over the other teams. The team standings demonstrate just how far Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling has progressed and how far it has moved ahead of its rivals. Russia, for example, is traditionally one of the leading forces in world wrestling but finished 10th. This result reflects the ability and quality of our wrestlers.

Iran could also have won more gold medals in several weight categories. Do you agree?

I believe that in some weight categories, we were not allowed to win gold, and the way the refereeing assignments were arranged seemed designed to ensure that the medals were distributed among more countries. In my view, United World Wrestling would never allow one country to win six or seven gold medals. The federation always tries to distribute gold medals among a larger number of countries to maintain the universality of wrestling and give different nations an opportunity to win medals.

Essentially, this is an effort by UWW officials to ensure that wrestling retains its place in the Olympic program and does not become dominated by a single country. We saw similar efforts at this competition, where, in my opinion, they tried to prevent our wrestlers from winning gold in seven weight categories.

We could therefore have collected more gold medals. However, the situation is different at the Olympics. We would be satisfied even with three Greco-Roman gold medals in Los Angeles because the limited number of weight categories and the exceptionally high level of competition make winning an Olympic medal particularly demanding.

Should Iran's success be attributed solely to the progress of its Greco-Roman program, or did the decline of traditional rivals such as Russia also play a role?

I believe this result was primarily the product of Iran's technical progress and the high level of preparation among our wrestlers.

Rangraz's wrestlers also had the Asian Games on their schedule before the World Championships. However, it was clear that the coaching staff had prioritized making a strong impact at the World Championships. Accordingly, the team's lineup and preparation program were designed to ensure the wrestlers would reach peak form for this competition.

Iran's U23 world title in Las Vegas, followed by this achievement at the senior level, demonstrates the steady progress of Greco-Roman wrestling in the country. This success should be attributed to technical development, physical conditioning and proper planning rather than simply the decline of rival teams.

I also believe the coaching staff did an excellent job preparing the wrestlers mentally and psychologically. Their motivation and confidence were evident before the competition, and they entered the tournament with a strong belief in their abilities.

One important aspect was that defeats did not destroy their morale. Mohammad Hadi Saravi and Ali Oskou, for example, returned to the mat with determination after losing their matches and fought for bronze medals. This demonstrates that the team was well prepared psychologically.

At the highest level of competition, technical and physical abilities are not the only determining factors. A wrestler must be able to maintain concentration and return to the contest after a defeat or an unexpected setback. I believe the coaching staff also succeeded in this regard.

One of the most notable aspects of Iran's performance was the wrestlers' physical condition and their ability to maintain their energy throughout the competition. How do you assess the coaching staff's work in this area?

One of the most important characteristics of our Greco-Roman team was the wrestlers' excellent physical condition.

Throughout the competition, we rarely saw a wrestler physically exhausted, struggling to get back to his feet or running out of energy to continue a match.

This shows that considerable work was done in strength and conditioning, tactical training and improving the wrestlers' cardiovascular capacity. I believe many of our national team members were capable of continuing their matches into an additional period without any noticeable decline in physical performance.

In the past, we sometimes saw Iranian wrestlers struggle physically against their opponents in international competitions. That weakness was not evident this time. This should be considered one of the coaching staff's major achievements.

Since Hassan Rangraz took charge of the Greco-Roman coaching staff, Iran has achieved some notable results. How do you assess his contribution to the team's progress?

I believe that, alongside the improvement of the wrestlers themselves, we have witnessed a transformation in the technical and coaching structure of Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling.

In the past, we might have thought we were falling short in areas such as sports nutrition, physical conditioning and the employment of specialist coaches. Today, however, we see greater use of modern knowledge, appropriate equipment and qualified professionals.

Another important factor is the composition of the coaching staff. Each member brought considerable experience and motivation to the team. Some of these coaches did not achieve the success they deserved during their competitive careers, but they are now motivated to develop a successful new generation in their coaching roles. Overall, I believe the formation of a cohesive and experienced coaching team, combined with Rangraz's leadership, has played a significant role in these achievements.

Some believe Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling has overtaken freestyle in recent years and is now the country's stronger discipline. What is your opinion?

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling overtook freestyle quite some time ago. It has performed better and demonstrated more noticeable growth and progress.

Our Greco-Roman team is now very cohesive and capable of competing for medals in many weight categories. Of course, Iran remains a major power in freestyle as well, but the competitive conditions in the two disciplines are somewhat different.

Another reason for Iran's more impressive results in Greco-Roman wrestling is that the leading contenders are spread across several countries, including Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and others. As a result, medals are distributed among a number of teams. This situation can work in Iran's favor, allowing a cohesive and powerful squad to establish a wider points gap over its rivals.

What is certain is that Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling has enjoyed an outstanding run in recent years and has considerable potential to maintain its success.

Having won two consecutive world titles, can Iran be expected to maintain this momentum at next year's World Championships and then at the Los Angeles Olympics?

I believe retaining the world title next year would be very important. However, we must remember that the World Championships in the year preceding the Olympics present particular challenges because Olympic qualification is also at stake, adding to the pressure of competition.

Nevertheless, one of the most important issues for Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling is not simply winning world titles but ensuring proper preparation for the Olympics. Only six Greco-Roman weight categories are contested at the Olympic Games, making the selection of the final lineup particularly difficult.

We have a strong and talented young generation, but the question is how we can accommodate all our Greco-Roman talents within those six Olympic categories.

Sometimes several champions compete in the same or neighboring weight categories, forcing them either to change weight or compete against one another in selection trials to secure a place on the Olympic team.

Managing this situation is extremely difficult. The coaching staff must not only select the best wrestlers but also maintain the motivation of those who fail to make the final lineup. It is important to ensure that disagreements or possible disappointments do not damage their professional futures.

If this generation is managed properly and maintains its level of preparation, we can be optimistic about achieving outstanding results at the Olympics.

Our wish is to see Iran repeat its historic Greco-Roman achievement at the London 2012 Olympics, where it won three gold medals, and perhaps even achieve better results.

Saeid Esmaeili's continued success has led some experts to compare him with Hamid Sourian, who won seven world and Olympic gold medals and holds a special place in Iranian wrestling history. How do you assess Esmaeili's future?

With his Olympic title and success at the World Championships, Saeid Esmaeili has demonstrated that he has the potential to become one of the most memorable figures in Iranian wrestling.

His continued success has generated considerable optimism. However, we must remember that defending a title is sometimes more difficult than winning it in the first place.

Hamid Sourian was not merely a technically gifted wrestler. He also possessed exceptional intelligence, managed his professional life effectively and maintained remarkable concentration away from the mat.

For an athlete to remain at the top of world sport for many years, he must maintain professionalism in every aspect of his life.

Esmaeili is currently on a successful path, but he must be careful not to allow successive victories to affect his concentration. Managing the people around him, maintaining professional discipline, avoiding distractions and recognizing the need for continuous hard work will all be crucial to his future.

We have previously seen wrestlers make brilliant starts to their careers but fail to sustain that level of performance. I hope Esmaeili can maintain his focus and discipline, continue along this path and become one of the most decorated champions in Iranian wrestling history.

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers and coaching staff pose with the team trophy at the World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on October 27, 2026.
IAWFIR

Finally, given the criticism Alireza Dabir has faced in recent years, how do you assess his role in this world title? Can the team's success be attributed to his management?

I have been a strong critic of Alireza Dabir over the past seven or eight years and have raised numerous objections to his performance. However, when discussing sporting achievements and results, we must be fair.

In my opinion, this championship was also the result of Dabir's considerable hard work and efforts, and he deserves congratulations for this achievement. During his tenure, attention to the federation's financial resources, the creation of sustainable revenue streams and the development of infrastructure have been among the key priorities. When a federation can strengthen its financial position and secure the resources needed to support its teams, coaches and champions, its managers have greater flexibility to plan more effectively.

The facilities and infrastructure developed by the Wrestling Federation have, in my view, created considerable opportunities for the sport. With a sound financial foundation, the federation can support its champions, employ capable coaches and implement preparation programs with greater freedom.

Of course, some of the criticism directed at Dabir concerns his remarks and issues outside the technical sphere of sport, and those matters should be examined separately.

Now that we are discussing the Greco-Roman team's world title, it is appropriate to distinguish its sporting achievement from other disagreements. In terms of sporting management, Dabir has worked extremely hard, and we can see the results of those efforts in the successes of Iranian wrestling.

50 historic buildings set for auction to boost cultural tourism

Iranica Desk

Around 50 historic buildings are expected to be offered to private investors through at least two auctions by mid-March, as part of efforts to accelerate the restoration and reuse of the country's cultural heritage sites.

Announcing the above, Mojtaba Shokri, head of the Fund for the Development of Handcrafts and Handmade Carpets and Revitalization and Utilization of Historical and Cultural Places, told IRNA that reducing the number of deteriorating historic buildings and bringing them into the auction process were among the fund's key performance indicators.

He said the objective could only be achieved if the properties were awarded to qualified applicants and the successful bidders completed restoration work and brought the buildings into operation within the specified deadlines.

Aminian House
● bia-kerman.ir

Shotor Galu Mansion
● visitiran.ir

Shokri said the fund's responsibilities extended beyond the transfer of historic properties. Under its charter, it is also mandated to support and identify markets for handicrafts and handwoven carpets, develop digital marketplaces and explore opportunities in financial markets.

He identified capital market instruments as a potential means of attracting small-scale investment, particularly from Iranians living abroad who wish to contribute to the preservation of the country's cultural heritage but cannot afford investments worth several billion tomans.

Expanding access to small-scale investment, he added, could encourage wider public participation in the restoration and preservation of historic buildings while strengthening links between cultural heritage, handicrafts and local economies.

The recent war imposed on Iran has also taken a toll on the country's tourism industry, affecting a number of properties managed by the fund. A decline in tourist arrivals, coupled with rising wages in the hospitality sector, has placed additional financial pressure on the operation of these sites.

The fund typically holds auctions for historic properties every two to three months. However, no auctions have taken place over the past two months because of the wartime situation. Preparations are now under way to resume the process in the near future.

Shokri said 25 historic properties had been prepared for auction, with seven more earmarked specifically for handicraft-related activities. Calls for applications for the properties are currently being issued in the provinces.

He also announced that several restored historic sites were expected to open in the coming weeks. They include Aminian House in Kerman, the grounds of Mofakham House in Bojnurd, Iran Hotel in Rasht and Shotor Galu Mansion in Mahan.

Following restoration, the properties are ready to begin operations, with a focus on tourism and handicraft-related activities.

Shokri expressed hope that their reopening would help boost tourism, create sustainable employment and expand access to cultural spaces in their respective cities.

Historical awareness can strengthen Iranian national identity

Iranica Desk

Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, occupies a place in the collective memory of Iranians that extends far beyond his status as an ancient king, embodying the country's history, national identity and cultural heritage, a prominent Iranian scholar has said.

Mohammad-Ali Ezzatzadeh, secretary of the Iranian Studies Association, has stressed the importance of a more comprehensive understanding of Cyrus and Iran's history, saying that education about the country's past can strengthen national confidence and help counter selective and misleading historical narratives.

Speaking to ISNA on the occasion of the annual observance of Cyrus the Great Day on October 29, Ezzatzadeh highlighted Cyrus's role in shaping Iran's historical geography and establishing a political entity that brought together diverse ethnic groups and cultures.

He said Cyrus's enduring legacy could not be attributed solely to his military conquests, but should also be understood in terms of his role in the formation of Iran as a political and geographical entity and the establishment of a system of governance across culturally diverse territories.

Tracing the continuity of the concept of Iran through successive dynasties, Ezzatzadeh said the Parthians, after overthrowing the Seleucids, successors to Alexander the Great, regained control of large parts of Iranian territory. They were subsequently succeeded by the Sassanids, reflecting the persistence of a broad political and geographical entity across different historical periods.

He described the establishment of the Safavid dynasty as another major turning point in Iran's post-Islamic history, noting that the Safavids sought to consolidate a territory largely corresponding to Iran's historical geography.

● safarjoore.com

Conflicts between Iran and the Ottoman Empire over western territories, some of which had historically been part of Iran, were also part of this broader process, he said. However, he cautioned that this continuity did not imply that Iran's borders or political structures remained unchanged, but rather reflected the enduring significance of the country's historical identity and geographical sphere.

Ezzatzadeh said similar patterns could be traced in other periods, including the Ilkhanid era under Hulagu Khan, when parts of the historical Iranian sphere remained central to political ambitions, including attempts to extend influence towards the Levant, some parts of which had previously been under Achaemenid rule.

He identified the formation of Iran's historical geography as one of Cyrus's most significant legacies, saying it later found expression in concepts such as "historical Iran" and the "Greater Iranian cultural sphere," as well as in neighboring countries that inherited elements of Iranian civilization.

Cyrus's significance, therefore, extended well beyond his reign and was closely tied to his role in shaping a fundamental component of Iranian historical identity, he added.

Another major aspect of Cyrus's legacy was his approach to governing a diverse empire, Ezzatzadeh said, noting that his expanding dominion brought together populations with different ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

The significance of his system, he explained, lay partly in allowing local communities to preserve aspects of their cultures, languages and religious traditions within a broader political framework. This combination of cultural diversity and political unity helped shape and sustain the Achaemenid Empire.

Explaining the concept of Shahanshah (King of Kings), Ezzatzadeh said it referred to a political structure rather than merely a ceremonial title. Under this system, local kings governed different territories while acknowledging the authority of a supreme monarch.

Cyrus initially ruled as king of Persia before expanding his dominion over other territories. After consolidating his power in Persia, he conquered Media and incorporated parts of Mesopotamia and Lydia in western Anatolia into the Achaemenid Empire. His successors, Cambyses and Darius, further expanded the empire, bringing Egypt under Achaemenid rule.

Bringing together parts of several major civilizations of the ancient world under a single political system was among the Achaemenids' major achievements, Ezzatzadeh said, adding that their empire became an important model for subsequent large-scale political structures.

He noted that similarities could be drawn between the Achaemenid system and later empires, although their approaches to governance, cultural autonomy and relations with subject populations were not necessarily the same.

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The Achaemenid Empire's survival for more than two centuries across an extensive territory stretching from parts of Anatolia to regions of Central and South Asia demonstrated that military power alone could not account for its longevity, he said.

At its height, the empire encompassed a substantial proportion of the population of the known world, while maintaining such an extensive political structure required effective administrative, political and cultural mechanisms, he added.

Although military strength played a central role in the empire's formation and expansion, its longevity across territories with diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds depended on factors beyond battlefield victories.

Understanding Cyrus's historical significance, therefore, requires examining not only his conquests but also the political structures he helped establish and the ways in which different communities were governed, Ezzatzadeh said.

Asked whether historical figures such as Cyrus could help strengthen national identity and patriotism, particularly following Iran's experience of two recent imposed wars, he cautioned against idealizing historical personalities.

Drawing inspiration from figures such as Cyrus can contribute to a stronger sense of national identity, provided it is based on an accurate understanding of their lives and achievements, he said. Historical figures, however, should not be portrayed as infallible or judged solely by contemporary standards without regard to the social and historical conditions of their time.

Ezzatzadeh also pointed to the recognition Cyrus has received beyond Iran's borders, saying international appreciation of a historical figure can be a source of pride for a nation whose history and identity are associated with that figure.

Cyrus remains significant to Iranians not only because of his role in expanding the Persian Empire but also because of the attention his system of governance, particularly his treatment of conquered populations, has received in historical studies, he added.

He stressed that national pride should be rooted in historical knowledge and critical understanding rather than idealization.

Iranians can take pride in Cyrus's achievements and his role in the formation and expansion of the Achaemenid Empire, he said, but such pride is more meaningful when grounded in historical sources, an understanding of the circumstances of the period and a willingness to critically examine the past.

A sound understanding of history, he added, means neither overlooking the achievements of historical figures nor ignoring their limitations and mistakes. It requires a balanced assessment of their place in the broader course of historical developments.

Ezzatzadeh further argued that understanding Iran should go beyond its contemporary image as a country, encompassing its historical, cultural, linguistic, scientific and civilizational dimensions, many of which remain insufficiently explored.

An understanding of Iran, he said, should take into account its historical and cultural heritage, its interactions with other civilizations and its contributions to human civilization.

A society that lacks sufficient knowledge of its own history cannot be expected to recognize and effectively challenge inaccurate or one-sided accounts of its past, he concluded.

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President demands enhanced protection of natural resources

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian demanded a shift toward preventive environmental management, urging continuous monitoring, stronger enforcement and public participation to stop the destruction of natural resources "before it is too late".

Speaking at a ceremony honoring outstanding environmental rangers on Thursday, which marked the National Environmental Ranger Day, Pezeshkian said the government was responsible for protecting the country's natural resources and should not wait until damage had occurred to take action.

He said environmental protection must begin with education and public awareness, IRNA reported.

"Natural resources could not easily be restored once destroyed," he warned.

He linked environmental damage to a range of problems, including floods, drought, water shortages, storms and earthquakes.

Pezeshkian criticized development policies that ignore environmental limits, particularly around Tehran.

"The capital and surrounding cities continue to expand despite limited water resources. Part of Tehran's water supply comes from other regions, while local wells are drying up," he said.

The president added that sustainable development required a balance between available resources and consumption. Using more than nature could provide would make life harder for future generations.

He also criticized projects that damage mountains, forests and other natural areas but are presented as management achievements.

He called for closer cooperation among officials and experts and questioned how the country would plan for the future as its mineral reserves were depleted.

Pezeshkian urged authorities to use modern technology, including the internet, satellites and drones, to monitor natural areas.

"Officials should intervene as damage occurs rather than issue demolition orders years later," he said.

He also called for better public education, revised regulations and stronger deterrents against environmental violations.

Pezeshkian praised rangers for protecting wildlife, forests, mountains, waterfalls and biodiversity, and called for greater support for their work.

"Environmental protection was not solely the responsibility of government agencies or professional rangers, but also a public and ethical duty," he added.

He also said the government must be accountable for economic hardship, unemployment and people's livelihoods.

Despite the country's natural resources, he said, more should be done to improve living conditions. He called for national cooperation to address these challenges.

The ceremony ended with awards and plaques presented to the families of rangers killed in the line of duty and to the country's outstanding rangers.

Digital siege; algorithmic governance

By Sajad Abedi
Political affair expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and political campaigning in the Zionist regime of Isreal has evolved from simple data analytics to a sophisticated, pervasive system of psychological engineering. In recent election cycles, the regime has shifted from traditional grassroots campaigning to a "computational politics" model, where AI is not merely a tool for efficiency, but a weapon for narrative control and voter manipulation.

Micro-targeting, behavioral engineering

The core of the regime's electoral strategy now relies on AI-driven micro-targeting. By utilizing massive datasets—often harvested through surveillance technologies developed by the regime's own security apparatus—political factions can create hyper-specific voter profiles. AI algorithms analyze social media behavior, consumption patterns, and digital footprints to deliver personalized propaganda. Strategically, this allows candidates to send contradictory promises to different demographic groups simultaneously without the public perceiving the inconsistency. For example, a candidate may project a moderate image to urban centrists while broadcasting hardline, nationalist rhetoric to settlers in the occupied territories, all managed by automated delivery systems.

Rise of 'synthetic influence', deepfakes

The use of generative AI has introduced a dangerous dimension: the deployment of deepfakes and synthetic media. In the heat of electoral competition, AI-generated audio and video are used to smear opponents or create "manufactured scandals". Because the regime's political environment is highly polarized, these AI-generated falsehoods often travel faster than corrections, effectively altering the public's perception of reality.

Furthermore, the deployment of "bot farms"—automated robotic accounts—on platforms like X (Twitter) and Telegram creates a false sense of consensus. By simulating a massive wave of support for a specific policy or leader, these bots manipulate the "social proof" mechanism, coercing undecided voters into aligning with the perceived majority.

Surveillance AI as political asset

Unlike most democracies, the Zionist regime integrates its military-grade AI surveillance with its political goals. The same facial recognition and predictive policing tools used to oppress Palestinians are often leveraged to monitor political dissidents and map the sentiment of the domestic population. This creates a feedback loop where the state can predict potential shifts in voter sentiment in real-time and deploy preemptive AI-driven messaging to neutralize opposition.

Strategic implications: erosion of democratic facade

The strategic deployment of AI in these elections reveals a transition from 'persuasion' to "manipulation". When algorithms decide what information, a voter sees and when, the concept of a "free choice" becomes an illusion. The regime utilizes AI to maintain its grip on power by isolating voters in algorithmic bubbles, ensuring that the internal frictions of the occupying society do not lead to a fundamental questioning of the regime's legitimacy.

The role of AI and robotics in the Zionist regime's elections is a reflection of its broader nature: a system built on surveillance, control, and the projection of a curated image. By automating the process of deception and leveraging high-tech surveillance for political gain, the regime ensures that its electoral processes serve the maintenance of the status quo rather than the genuine will of the people. The "intelligence" in this context is not used for governance or progress, but as a strategic instrument for the survival of an occupying entity.

Senior official hails Cyrus the Great's tolerance in governance

Tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Fars Province, southern Iran
REZA GHADERI/IRNA

Social Desk

Ali Akbar Salehi, head of Iran's Iranology Foundation, described Cyrus the Great as a symbol of wise governance, tolerance and respect for human dignity in a message marking the ancient Persian king's day.

Cyrus the Great (born c. 590– died c. 529 BCE) was a conqueror who founded the Achaemenid Empire, centered on Persia.

"Cyrus the Great is an enduring name in Iran's history and a reminder of wisdom in governance, tolerance and respect for human dignity," Salehi wrote in a post on X on Thursday.

He said honoring Iran's historical figures and legendary personalities was part of the foundation's mission. Protecting their legacy and passing it on to future generations, he added, was a central priority.

"At the Iranology Foundation, we consider honoring Iran's prominent figures and legends part of our mission, and protecting their invaluable heritage and passing it on to future generations as a guiding principle of our work," he wrote.

Salehi's message emphasized the role of historical figures in Iran's cultural memory and their contribution to the country's national identity. He said a deeper understanding of their legacy could help strengthen the connection between present and future generations and Iran's past.

In his message, Salehi highlighted the values associated with the ancient ruler, including tolerance, wise leadership and human dignity.

Cyrus the Great is remembered in the Cyrus legend—first recorded by Xenophon, Greek soldier and author, in his Cyropaedia—as a tolerant and ideal monarch who was called the father of his people by the ancient Persians.

The Iranology Foundation's work includes honoring prominent figures and preserving Iran's historical and cultural heritage, Salehi said.

Iranian teen artist earns international recognition

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian teenager Zahra Asarian received an honorable mention in the painting category at the first Daya International Olympiad of Art, Cultural Heritage and Creativity 2026, IRNA reported.

Asarian is from Khuzestan province in southwestern Iran.

The competition drew 91 artists from 18 countries, who submitted works related to art, cultural heritage and creativity.

Five works received honorable mentions, based on the jury's final scores. The six-member international jury included experts from Iran, Germany, the United States and Turkey.

Their specialties covered visual arts, traditional arts and handicrafts, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and anthropology.

The Olympiad was organized by the Daya Cultural and Artistic Center, affiliated with the Tehran Municipality's Organization of Culture and Art, in cooperation with LUMEN ART Gallery in Turkey.

The organizers said the event aimed to showcase artistic talent, reflect cultural identities and encourage dialogue among cultures. It provided a platform for artists to present works representing a range of cultural traditions.

The award-winning painting by Iranian teenage artist Zahra Asarian, recognized at the 2026 Daya International Olympiad

Asarian's award brings the work of a young Iranian artist to an international platform.

The participation of young artists in such competitions can also help emerging talents gain recognition and encourage cultural exchange among countries.

The Olympiad focused on the links between artistic expression, cultural heritage and creativity, with cultural identity as its central theme.