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Members of the Iranian team pose for a family photo with a national flag inset with a backpack to honor Iranian schoolkids killed in a US missile strike in February, after winning six gold medals at the 2026 Open World Astronomy Olympiad in Russia, on November 14, 2026.
IRNA

Can China's robot industry help address Iran's demographic challenge?

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

FEATURE REPORT
EXCLUSIVE

China has been investing considerable time, resources and funding in developing robots designed to perform tasks traditionally carried out by human workers. A growing number of companies are entering the field, seeking to bring robotic labor into everyday life and commercial activities.

Travelling around China, it is increasingly common to encounter such technologies in different settings.

In Wuxi, international journalists were introduced to Puying Data Technology Co. Ltd., a company that supplies standardized data, or the "fuel" for algorithm development and iteration. The company plans to deploy 300 humanoid robots to collect data across domestic, office and consumer environments.

The robots are being trained to perform various tasks, with the aim of bringing them to the market over the next five years to take on jobs currently performed by humans.

In Shanghai, Hi-Dolphin Robot Technology specializes in intelligent service robots and is best known for its autonomous coffee-making machines. The company has already deployed robotic cafés in more than 70 countries, serving customers at airports, commercial centers and corporate campuses with fast and consistent beverage preparation.

Witnessing these developments naturally raises questions about the implications of replacing human labor with robots, particularly the potential loss of jobs and the unemployment challenges that could follow, concerns reminiscent of those that accompanied the Industrial Revolution.

While many people are impressed by the technology and welcome the convenience of receiving services from robots, concerns about the future of employment remain widespread.

Nevertheless, the expansion of robotic labor appears to be an increasingly difficult trend to reverse. Much like the Industrial Revolution, technological advances are likely to reshape the labor market, making adaptation more practical than resistance. Workers will need to acquire new skills and prepare for occupations that complement emerging technologies rather than compete directly with them.

Governments, educational institutions and civil society also have a responsibility to raise awareness, facilitate retraining and prepare people for a changing employment landscape.

Robots' role in demographic challenges

For a country like Iran, however, the rise of robotic labor presents another perspective: its potential role in addressing an increasingly pressing demographic challenge.

Iran is heading toward a significant shift in its population structure, with the share of older people expected to rise substantially in the coming decades.

The country's fertility rate has fallen sharply, from more than six children per woman in the 1980s to an estimated 1.6–1.7 in 2025–2026, well below the replacement level of 2.1. This decline, combined with increasing life expectancy, is accelerating population aging. The United Nations Population Fund has identified Iran as one of the countries experiencing the fastest rates of population aging.



Robots are trained to perform tasks in domestic, office and consumer settings at Puying Data Technology Co. Ltd. in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China, on October 29, 2026.
IRAN DAILY

The consequences extend well beyond changes in the population's age structure. A shrinking working-age population could create serious labor shortages, while a growing number of retirees would place additional pressure on pension funds, healthcare services and other social support systems. The challenge will be to maintain economic productivity and provide adequate care for an increasingly older population with a relatively smaller workforce.

Government incentives and public awareness campaigns have so far struggled to reverse the declining birth rate. Although encouraging family formation and childbirth remains important, demographic trends take time to change. Even if fertility rates rise, it will take years before larger birth cohorts enter the labor market. Iran therefore needs to consider complementary measures to prepare for the workforce challenges ahead.

One option is to attract foreign workers, as several countries facing similar demographic pressures have done. However, immigration is not without challenges. Managing large inflows of foreign labor requires effective integration policies, social services and regulatory oversight. Differences in language, culture and social practices can also create integration challenges if not properly addressed. Immigration can help ease labor shortages, but it cannot be treated as a solution without considering its broader social and economic implications.

Another option that deserves greater attention is the use of robots to perform an expanding range of jobs.

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IAEA report based on 'technically, legally flawed' resolutions: *Iran*



The IAEA logo is displayed in front of the agency's headquarters in Vienna, Austria, on June 5, 2026.
REUTERS

International Desk

Iran's permanent mission to international organizations in Vienna criticized a recent report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about Iran's nuclear program, saying that the UN agency has based its reports on resolutions that are "technically and legally flawed".

"@IAEAorg has based its reports for #Iran on resolutions of BoG which were technically and legally flawed, adopted by abuse of process, and their findings were ultra vires", Iran's mission said in a post on X on Saturday.

"As Rafael Grossi (IAEA's chief) himself acknowledged, attacks on Iran's safeguarded nuclear facilities created unprecedented circumstances, disrupted inspections, forced the Agency to withdraw its inspectors and warrant consideration of Iran's security concerns", the mission said.

It underlined that the Board of Governors must address root causes of the current situation, adding that normal safeguards implementation cannot and will not resume under abnormal circumstances.

The IAEA has not had access to key nuclear facilities in Iran since Israel, joined by the United States, launched a 12-day conflict in June 2025 that included strikes on nuclear sites.

Nuclear facilities have also been hit in the latest war, which erupted on February 28.

Iran has long argued that the US-Israeli attacks constituted grave violations of the UN Charter, the IAEA Statute, and fundamental nuclear safety principles.

Tehran has repeatedly called on the IAEA's chief to fulfill his legal and professional obligations by condemning such acts, warning that selective silence undermines the credibility of the non-proliferation regime and the agency's claimed impartiality.

"US erased aggression from biased resolutions, but not its consequences from reality. Facts don't vanish because politics demands" the Iranian mission said in its Saturday's statement.

The comments came a day after the IAEA called for Tehran to restore access for its inspectors in a report circulated by the watchdog among member states, insisting the move was essential to carry out its remit to monitor the Iranian nuclear program.

"The director general encourages Iran to consider technical and gradual measures by which conditions are achieved that allow for the return of agency inspectors to Iran," the report said.

The IAEA "acknowledged that the military attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities and sites created an unprecedented situation".

But because of a lack of cooperation "the agency is not able to conclude that there has been no diversion of declared nuclear material from peaceful nuclear activities in Iran", the report claimed, raising "serious proliferation concern" that "needs to be rectified with the utmost urgency".

The IAEA board in September referred Iran to the UN Security Council, marking the first time Iran has been referred to the UN top body in 20 years for "failing to comply with its nuclear reporting obligations".

Envoy calls on UNSC to stop reversing roles of 'aggressor and victim'

International Desk

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations slammed Western members of the Security Council for their "hypocrisy and double standards," demanding that the United States immediately end its war of aggression and lift its illegal naval blockade if it is genuinely committed to diplomacy.

Addressing a Security Council meeting on Friday regarding rising tensions in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, Gholamhossein Darzi stressed that the root causes of the current situation are the unprovoked wars launched by the US and Israel on June 13, 2025, and February 28, 2026, Press TV reported.

"The US is the aggressor, not the victim," Darzi declared, condemning the assassination of Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, senior officials, and nuclear scientists. He emphasized that the Council must direct its demands at the aggressor, not the victim, and called on the US to cease all illegal threats and comply fully with the UN Charter.

Detailing the devastating civilian toll of the US-Israeli bombing campaigns, the Iranian envoy noted that over 5,000 innocent Iranians have been killed, including 254 children and 251 women.

He specifically highlighted egregious war crimes committed by US forces, including a Tomahawk missile strike on a school in Minab that killed 168 children, and an attack on a stadium in Lamerd that killed at least 21 civilians.

The ambassador emphasized that the insecurity surrounding the Strait of Hormuz is a direct consequence of these American crimes. "The US cannot bomb Iran, violate its sovereignty, target civilian infrastructure, impose a military and naval blockade, and deploy illegal coercive schemes like 'Operation Economic Outcast' and 'Task Force Iron Gate' to collectively punish 90 million people, and then expect the Strait of Hormuz to return to normal as if nothing happened," he stated. While affirming that Iran has never closed the door to diplomacy and has entered negotiations in good faith over the past two years, Darzi noted that Washington has consistently chosen aggression over dialogue, creating deep mistrust.

"If Washington is truly committed to a diplomatic solution, it must immediately and unconditionally end its aggression, provide credible guarantees of non-repetition, respect Iran's sovereign rights, lift the naval blockade and all other unlawful unilateral coercive measures, and demonstrate its real commitment to diplomacy in practice," he said.

Issuing a warning to the Council, Darzi added: "Let me be explicit and clear: Any renewal of the aggressive war by the US and the Israeli regime will be met with an immediate, decisive, and unwavering response; a response that will target the source of the aggression, wherever it may be."

Furthermore, he sharply criticized remarks by the representatives of Bahrain and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), accusing certain regional states of complicity in war crimes.

By providing their territory, airspace, and military bases to the US and Israel, these states have facilitated the aggression and bear international responsibility, he argued, adding that they are legally obligated to fully compensate Iran for all material and moral damages inflicted upon the country.

TENDER NO.: 08-21-0340011
First Announcement
N.I.S.O.C
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at www.setadiran.ir Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

ITM	Material Description	QNT	UNT
01	CASING, API GRADE L-80, SEAMLESS "VAM FJL" THREAD, RANGE 3, MAX LEN: 40 FT AS PER API 5CT/ ISO11960 MARKING: COLD DIE STAMPED IN ACCORDANC WITH API 5CT SIZE (OD), WEIGHT (PPF), AS SPECIFIED NOTE: LEVEL OF INSPECTION: 1 (L.O.I: 1) "QCP/ MPS DOCUMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO REVIEW & CONFIRM" "ITP DOCUMENTS IS ESSENTIAL FOR TECHNICAL EVALUATION" OD: ACC. TO CLAUSE 8.11.1 API5CT10 ED WT: ACCORDING TO CLAUSE 8.11.2 API5CT MASS: ACC. TO CLAUSE 8.11.3 API5CT 10 ID. ACCORDING TO CLAUSE 8.11.4 API5CT REF.PT CITRA OR APPROVED EQUIVALENT 5 IN., 18 PPF, VFJL	10,000	LE
02	5 IN., 18 PPF, GRADE P-110, VAM FLUSH JOINT	2000	LE
03	3 ½ IN., 9.3 PPF, GRADE P-110, DRIFT: STANDARD	700	LE
04	7 IN., 35 PPF, GRADE P-110, DRIFT: 5.879 IN	500	LE

Vendors who intend to participate in tenders are requested to send their" Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.
The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 130,866.72 EURO or 244,222,694,222 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR, BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.A.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex,
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 34 123455
Fax No.: 061 34 45 74 37

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Three more tankers hit mines in Strait of Hormuz: *Iranian military*

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces said on Saturday that three more oil tankers caught fire after hitting mines in the Strait of Hormuz while sailing in unauthorized routes.

Iran's Navy in a statement on Saturday said a tanker caught fire and was immobilized after hitting a naval mine east of the Strait of Hormuz despite previous warnings.

The Navy said the vessel had switched off its tracking and identification systems while transiting the unsafe zone.

It warned that any tanker entering the prohibited area would face the same fate, criticizing owners for risking their assets based on the "nonsense" of US President Donald Trump.

The statement came hours after the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy said two oil tankers attempting a covert, unauthorized transit through the southern Strait of Hormuz exploded and caught fire after hitting Iranian naval mines.

The IRGC Navy said late on Friday that the vessels were attempting to secretly navigate a prohibited route in the strategic waterway.

To evade detection, the tankers had deliberately disabled their radar and Automatic Identification Systems (AIS).

The incident is the latest in a series of failed attempts by smugglers and US-linked vessels to bypass Iran's strict maritime enforcement in the Persian Gulf.

Following the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran that began on February 28, Tehran imposed comprehensive restrictions on the waterway, which is responsible for the transit of roughly one-fifth of the world's global oil supply.

Under Iran's newly enforced Hormuz mechanism, safe passage requires explicit authorization from Iranian authorities.

Despite repeated assurances from the US military that it would provide naval escorts and protect commercial shipping, vessels trusting Washington's security guarantees have been consistently halted, struck by mines, or destroyed.

Iranian commanders have repeatedly warned that American promises of protection have proven hollow, exposing the US military's inability to secure the waterway or break Iran's strategic chokehold.

Tehran has made clear that the restrictions will remain in place until its demands, including the lifting of the US blockade on Iranian ports, are met.

Another US drone destroyed

The IRGC also said it intercepted and destroyed a US MQ-1 Predator drone over Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

It said the drone was brought down at 2:30 pm local time (11:00 GMT) by a "new advanced air defense system" of the IRGC's Aerospace Force.

It described the aircraft as a reconnaissance and combat drone "of the aggressor US army" from the MQ-1 family.

It said this was the 17th MQ-1 drone it had downed, and called the incident another failure of "enemy reconnaissance missions".



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Pezeshkian calls for data-driven fight against economic corruption

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian has called for a data-driven campaign against economic corruption, tax evasion and money laundering, saying government support must reach households that need it.

He made the remarks at a meeting on data and mechanisms for targeting government support programs, attended by the economy minister and senior officials from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

The meeting reviewed measures by the Iranian National Tax Administration to assess the financial circumstances of recipients of government assistance, including beneficiaries of the electronic food voucher program, known as the Kalabarg scheme. Officials discussed checking household declarations and monitoring suspicious transactions to identify possible money laundering and tax evasion.

They also examined the identification of shell companies, businesses without valid credentials and entities suspected of irregular economic activities or fictitious transactions, as well as plans to better target public services.

Pezeshkian said integrating economic and social data was necessary for fair distribution of public resources. Incomplete information, he said, could leave eligible people without assistance while allowing others who did not need it to benefit from state support.

He called for preventive measures against the creation of shell companies and fictitious transactions. The qualifications of people seeking to establish companies, including their professional, personal and financial capacity to run a business, should be checked before registration, he said.

The president also called for closer scrutiny of sectors and occupations vulnerable to corruption, including medical, legal and customs-related activities, as well as government managers. Authorities should identify sensitive points where bribery and abuse of authority could occur and investigate them more quickly, he said.

Pezeshkian referred to people allegedly paid to influence legal proceedings, doctors demanding unofficial payments from patients and officials ignoring violations in return for money. Identifying such practices must be followed by effective action to prevent them from continuing, he said.

He said many public complaints stemmed from such misconduct and reiterated that the government was determined to confront corruption, bribery and rent-seeking.

Pezeshkian instructed six government bodies that have not provided information required by the tax administration to submit the data within one month. He warned that failure to meet the deadline would lead to a halt in their cooperation with other government agencies.

Addressing the economy minister, Pezeshkian described the ministry as a key point in the country's economic system. Its approach and performance could influence whether the economy moved toward development and public welfare or corruption and rent-seeking, he said.



President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a recent meeting with senior government officials in Tehran.
president.ir

The president welcomed reports on efforts to recover large sums linked to tax evasion and prevent irregular transactions. He asked the ministry to inform the public about these measures and their results, saying people should know about the government's actions against unhealthy economic activities.

He also ordered the provision of funds to purchase equipment and strengthen technical capacity to protect economic data and meet civil defense requirements.

Other issues included reviewing tax exemptions considered excessive or lacking economic justification, requiring the disclosure of property and other assets during transactions and setting clear rules for government agencies seeking access to information held by the Economy Ministry.

The review covered the use of transaction records to detect suspicious financial flows, alongside checks on companies suspected of carrying out transactions without genuine commercial activity.

Officials also considered how information from different institutions could be brought together to provide a more complete picture of household finances and business activity. The administration has been seeking wider access to public-sector records to improve tax assessments and identify undeclared income consistently.

Pezeshkian said access to the ministry's data should follow a defined framework, including arrangements for charging agencies that request information.

Oil industry facilities damaged in war to be rebuilt as national priority

Economy Desk



IRNA

The acting oil minister has called for faster reconstruction of oil industry facilities damaged during the US-Israeli war against Iran, saying the work is directly linked to the country's energy security and national interests.

Hamid Bovard made the remarks on Friday at a meeting reviewing reconstruction projects at damaged refineries. He said progress had been satisfactory but stressed the need to accelerate ongoing work, particularly projects related to Phases 9 and 10, Shana reported.

The projects should not be viewed merely as industrial operations, Bovard said, describing them as national undertakings with a direct impact on the country's interests.

He said around 95 percent of Iran's population has access to natural gas, making the stability of supply essential to people's daily lives. Oil industry workers, he added, play a major role in maintaining that stability.

Bovard said the war had reduced the country's gas production capacity by around 230 million cubic meters per day. Meanwhile, the gas supply-demand gap reaches approximately 250 million cubic meters per day during periods of peak consumption.

Although some lost production capacity has been restored and further recovery efforts are underway, Iran is still expected to face a gas shortage during the coldest days of the coming winter, he said.

The acting minister called for simultaneous efforts to increase production and control consumption across all sectors. He praised oil industry workers for their efforts to keep the country's energy supply stable, describing their work as a service to the nation.

Bovard said oil and gas workers had continued their work while others defended the country on different fronts, adding that their efforts were essential to keeping the country's energy supply running.

He said the government had managed energy supply challenges and restrictions during the months of war to prevent shortages for consumers.

However, gas consumption rises sharply in winter, with household and commercial demand reaching around 700 million cubic meters per day on some days, he said.

Bovard urged households and businesses to reduce their gas consumption by about 20 percent, saying relatively simple changes could help ease pressure on the national network.

These measures include avoiding excessive heating, wearing warmer clothes indoors and adjusting heating equipment to appropriate temperatures. Not all radiators need to remain on throughout the day, and every room does not need to be heated to the highest temperature, he said.

Bovard said addressing the gas imbalance required action on two fronts. The first was increasing production, a responsibility of the oil and gas industry. The second was managing consumption, which required public cooperation.

He said similar efforts to balance production and consumption had produced positive results in the supply of petroleum products. A 20-percent reduction in gas consumption could also help authorities manage the situation during winter.

The acting minister also stressed that industrial production should not be interrupted because of energy shortages. He said the work of oil industry employees supported the daily lives of millions of people and helped keep economic activities running.

Bovard said the oil and gas industry's efforts had helped the country avoid a serious energy crisis during the war. He called on officials and employees to continue reconstruction and production efforts with the wider national impact in mind.

Iran, St. Petersburg agree to expand mining, industrial cooperation

Economy Desk



IRNA

Iran's Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) and officials from Russia's St. Petersburg have agreed to expand cooperation in mining, steel and other industrial sectors.

The agreement was discussed at a meeting between a senior IMIDRO delegation and economic and international affairs officials of the St. Petersburg regional government, held at the governor's office, IRNA reported.

Nizami Mamishev, deputy chairman of the regional government's Committee for External Relations, expressed readiness to expand economic, industrial, scientific and trade ties with Iran. He also highlighted previous cooperation between St. Petersburg and several Iranian provinces, including Yazd and Bushehr.

Russian officials identified mining, shipbuilding, pharmaceuticals, information technology, machinery exports, oil industries and construction as potential areas for cooperation.

Hossein Afshari, IMIDRO's deputy head, who led the Iranian delegation, outlined Iran's mining and steel capabilities and expressed the organization's readiness to strengthen industrial, scientific and commercial relations with Russian partners.

He also introduced major Iranian companies participating in Metal Expo 2026 in St. Petersburg and invited Russian businesses to visit Iran's national pavilion and explore potential partnerships.

The two sides also agreed to appoint representatives to follow up on the proposed partnerships and coordinate future activities.

IMIDRO introduced Hossein Zadboum as its representative, while the St. Petersburg administration appointed an official from a relevant department.

Russian officials also called for St. Petersburg to be kept informed about industrial and economic events involving Iran and Russia, allowing regional businesses to participate more actively.

Iran's economic attaché said the embassy would inform Russia's Foreign Ministry and relevant chambers of commerce about the province's interest in closer cooperation.

The Iranian delegation also announced plans to sign a memorandum of understanding with Moscow's National University of Science and Technology (MISIS) after the exhibition. The announcement was welcomed by Russian officials, who expressed interest in similar partnerships between Iranian institutions and scientific and industrial centers in St. Petersburg.

Can China's robot ...

Advances in robotics and artificial intelligence could help Iran compensate for

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a shrinking workforce, particularly in sectors facing labor shortages or requiring repetitive, physically demanding and time-consuming tasks. Robots could support manufacturing, logistics, agriculture, retail and service industries, allowing businesses to maintain or even increase production with fewer human workers. They could also assist in elderly care and healthcare services, helping reduce the burden on caregivers and medical personnel.

In this respect, China's growing experience in developing and deploying robots could offer useful lessons for Iran, both in terms of technology transfer and the practical integration of robotic systems into different sectors of the economy.

However, robotic labor should be seen as a means of easing the consequences of population aging, not as a comprehensive solution to the demographic crisis itself.

A country's population is not merely a source of labor. It also constitutes its consumer base, supports domestic demand, sustains communities and contributes to its social dynamism and long-term economic and national capacity. Robots can manufacture goods, provide services and perform physical tasks, but they cannot fully replace the human relationships, social participation, creativity and intergenerational bonds that underpin a functioning society.

Nor can they eliminate the growing need for human care as the elderly population expands. Even the most sophisticated machines cannot entirely substitute for the human dimension of caring for older people.

There are also economic constraints. Developing and deploying advanced robots requires substantial investment, technical expertise, infrastructure and access to sophisticated technologies, resources that may not be equally available across all sectors.

For Iran, therefore, the development of robotic labor could become an important part of a broader strategy to manage demographic change. It could help bridge workforce gaps, sustain productivity and reduce pressure on certain public services. But it should go hand in hand with policies aimed at encouraging childbirth, supporting families, improving healthcare and pension systems, and preparing the economy for an older population.

Ultimately, robots may help countries cope with having fewer workers, but they cannot replace the need for a sustainable population. Technology can buy time and ease the economic consequences of demographic decline, but cannot reverse the underlying demographic trend.

UN secretary-general selection

Update, three plausible scenarios



By Richard Ponzio
Senior fellow at Stimson

ANALYSIS



HENRY WONG/SCMP

Earlier on October 30, 2026, in New York, the UN Security Council conducted its seventh straw poll to arrive at a consensus for recommending the next Secretary-General to the General Assembly, to commence her or his first term in office from January 1, 2027. To reach consensus, a candidate must receive at least nine (out of 15) favorable votes from Security Council members, including either an "encourage" or "no opinion" vote from all five of the Council's veto-wielding permanent (P-5) members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States).

During the sixth straw poll, on October 16, Rebeca Grynspan continued to lead the pack of contenders with nine "encourage" and five "discourage" votes. As this was the first time the Security Council employed color ballots, attention turned to how two of Ms. Grynspan's negative votes were issued by P-5 members (though it's unclear exactly which members, given the secret nature of the balloting). She was followed by her close competitors over successive rounds, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett and Rafael Mariano Grossi, who each obtained eight "encourage" and six "discourage" votes (yet, as with Ms. Grynspan, two P-5 members each signaled a negative position toward their respective candidacies).

In the most recent straw poll, the Council returned to non-color ballots, and Rebeca Grynspan's lead expanded to 11 "encourage" and only four "discourage," making her the clear front-runner, with Dr. Grossi trailing in second with nine "encourage," four "discourage," and two "no opinion". A very recent entrant into the race, Lana Nusseibeh, despite much fanfare (mixed with controversy) and an arguably strong showing at her General Assembly Interactive Dialogue, only mustered seven "encourage," six "discourage," and two "no opinion" votes (coming in fourth just behind Amb. Rodrigues-Birkett).

Since the Security Council returned to non-color ballots on October 31, one can only guess whether any of the "discourage" votes for these leading candidates is from a P-5 member, leaving the door open for introducing additional candidates late in the process, which would, in effect, re-set the race. For instance, besides the recent late entry of Ms. Nusseibeh, the media reports signal possible interest in the UN's top post by Hungary's former prime minister Viktor Orbán. Since the writing of this article, Turkey's former foreign minister (and current secretary-general of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Feridun Sinirlioglu has already joined the race. To make matters even more complex, some are speculating that Russia may not allow a straw poll during Latvia's Security Council Presidency in November, meaning that it may be early December (under Liberia's Presidency) that we see the next straw poll.

Rafael Mariano Grossi was considered the early front-runner heading into the Security Council's first straw poll held on July 30, 2026. Rebeca Grynspan's strong performance in this straw poll turned her overnight into the actual front-runner, only to be eclipsed by Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett during the second straw poll held on August 21. Ms. Grynspan quickly returned to the lead with one more "encouragement" vote during the third Security Council straw poll held on September 18 — a position she subsequently held during the next three straw polls (September 29 and October 7 and 16).

Three plausible scenarios for the way ahead

To break through the present impasse within the Security Council, there are three scenarios for possible ways forward:

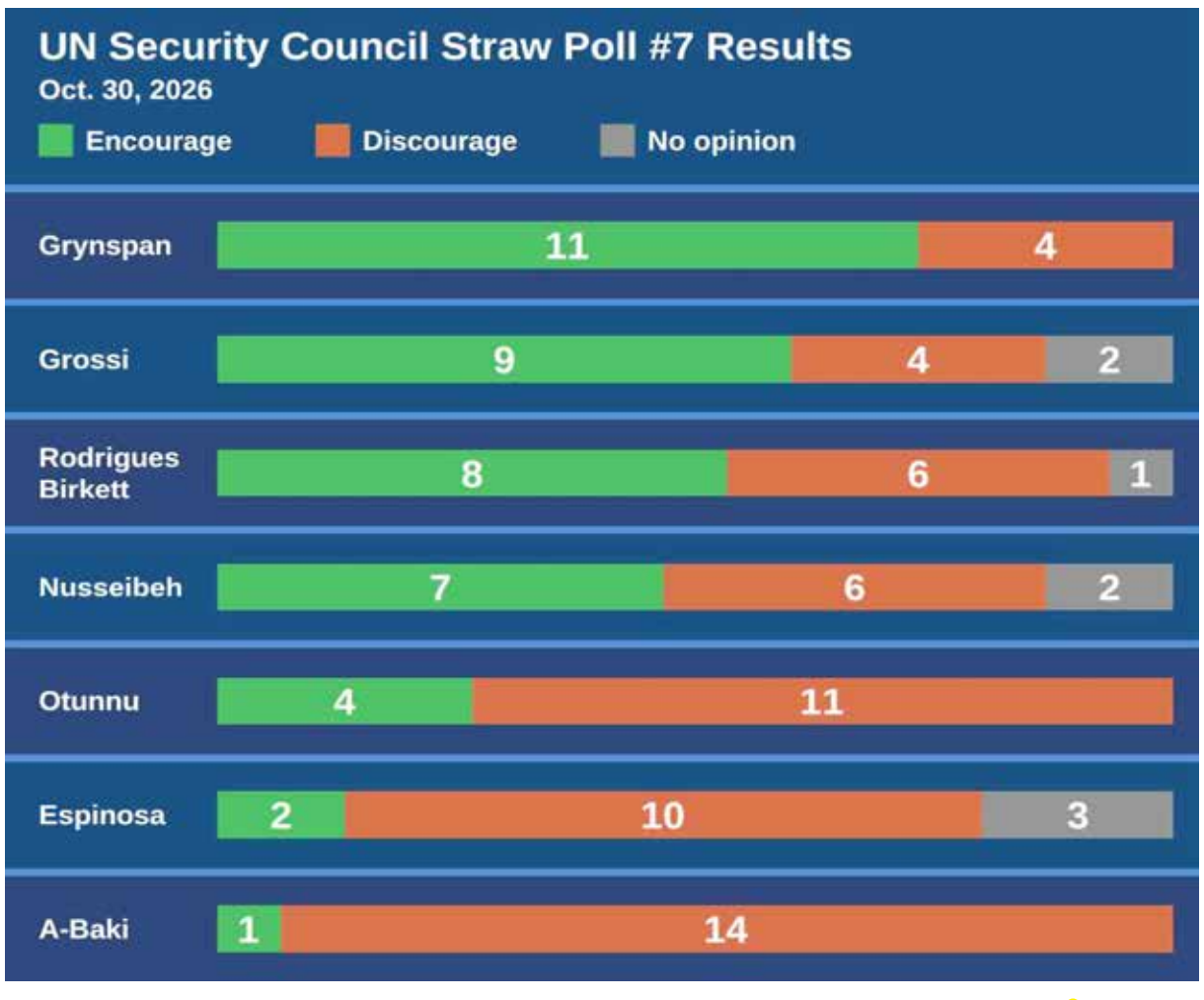
• **GRULAC Unites!:** Given the genuine threat that a candidate from outside their region will now be selected, countries in the UN Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) are highly incentivized to come together to rally a consensus around one of their own and, in doing so, strive to preserve the long-held custom of regional rotation.

• **More "Non-LAC dark horses" may enter the race:** Especially if the Latin American and Caribbean states fail to quickly rally around their strongest regional candidate, more dark horse candidates, including those mentioned above, as well as former Bulgarian foreign and defense minister (and Director-General for the US-led Board of Peace) Nickolay Mladenov, could enter the race. If this scenario were to become viable, deals would likely be struck between the GRULAC region and an ascendent new front–runner — involving perhaps a commitment to appoint a deputy secretary–general from the region.

• **A "compromise candidate" hiding in plain sight:** The least likely scenario, in the event that the current P-5 "discourage" votes against the front-runners become "unflippable," is for the Permanent Members and at least four elected members of the Council to arrive at a "compromise candidate," such as the highly experienced, reform-oriented contenders, María Fernanda Espinosa or Olara Otunnu, from further down the pack.

Alongside efforts to promote and preserve the legacy of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, including through delivery of his UN80 Initiative and the even more ambitious (and Member States-driven) Pact for the Future, the race to succeed Mr. Guterres has reached a new level of intensity. To ensure that his successor has sufficient time to prepare a proper transition before January 1, 2027, and that the selection process accords with widely shared international principles of transparent, open, and fair competition and a meaningful role for the General Assembly, it is important now to honor the vigorous stages to date (animated by a remarkable group of highly vetted candidates, who have courageously put themselves forward to lead the world body) and arrive soon at a broad, consensus-based decision — one that best prepares the UN, and the world it serves, for the myriad challenges ahead.

The article was first published by the Stimson Center.

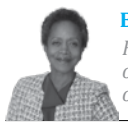


SOCIAL MEDIA

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How leading nominee Rebeca Grynspan would lead United Nations

Three interview takeaways



By Esther Brimmer
Former US assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs



By Alexander Sarchet
Research associate at CFR

O P I N I O N

The United Nations needs to be reorganized and revitalized while it confronts mounting challenges to its core mission. These include the wars in Iran and Ukraine, the sharp drop in development assistance from wealthy nations, and an authoritarian rollback of human rights gained over decades. The person charged with leading the revival will be the next secretary-general, due to be selected this fall by the UN General Assembly, with the assent of the UN Security Council. The candidate must have the approval, or at least the acquiescence, of all five permanent Security Council members.

The Council on Foreign Relations has continued its UN Secretary-General Candidates Series by hosting an on-the-record conversation with one of the nominated candidates, Rebeca Grynspan, who currently heads the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Here are the main takeaways from Grynspan's October 28 conversation at CFR.

• Believes the UN Secretary-General should be an active negotiator. On peace and security, Grynspan has previously noted an "absence of diplomacy" and during the CFR conversation said that the United Nations "has become risk averse". She noted that bureaucracies are inherently risk averse, but argued that "leaders cannot be, and that's why I talk about the good offices of the secretary-general." She also highlighted the importance of solving what is possible and not assuming that "…we have to solve everything to solve something…"

Grynspan recalled her experience as secretary-general of UNCTAD, where she led negotiations on the Black Sea Grain Initiative to allow food to be transported across the Black Sea after Russia's 2022 attack on Ukraine, as helping to inform her views of operating in crisis settings. She believes that "we lost the opportunity to do something in the Strait of Hormuz," which is experiencing "consequences very similar to the Black Sea".

Grynspan recalled her experience as secretary-general of UNCTAD, where she led negotiations on the Black Sea Grain Initiative to allow food to be transported across the Black Sea after Russia's 2022 attack on Ukraine, as helping to inform her views of operating in crisis settings. She believes that "we lost the opportunity to do something in the Strait of Hormuz," which is experiencing "consequences very similar to the Black Sea".



Rebeca Grynspan, former vice president of Costa Rica, speaks during a news conference where the government announced her nomination for UN secretary-general, in San Jose, Costa Rica, on October 8, 2025.
MAYELA LOPEZ/REUTERS

The candidate said that the United Nations could have been more active in some conflicts, but she also recognized the organization's shortcomings, saying the organization "has failed Haiti". However, she added that the UN Security Council is now "testing a model that we didn't have before" in Haiti and is keen to see how it evolves.

• Says goal should be for countries to graduate from development assistance when no longer needed. On the issue of development goalsetting, Grynspan said that ultimately, "the goal is for you not to exist in the development side — you know, for countries to be able not to need you." She placed the responsibility for international development policy on international financial institutions (such as the World Bank) not on the United Nations. Instead, she said, UN agencies could help with capacity-building. As an example, she explained that over the past two decades, UNCTAD has helped over 100 countries and territories digitalize their customs systems, a long-term benefit since trade is a source of revenue.

As the former vice president of Costa Rica, the candidate said it is important to listen to what countries actually need, arguing that "the development part is to support countries to be able to do it better on the priorities that they set for themselves." She noted, "I really believe that the UN should be much more demand driven than supply driven."

• Believes she can be both an insider and an informed reformer. Grynspan said that being an insider will actually help her to reform the United Nations. She reflected, "…I think that being an insider is becoming a strength for me because I know exactly how to navigate the UN… because I know how to navigate the system, I can start from day one to reform," she said. However, reflecting on her experience as a vice president, she also highlighted what she sees as the problem of many people within the United Nations having not served in roles outside the organization.

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan (top-C) with UN Secretary-General António Guterres (top-2nd R) during a meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 22, 2022
UNCTAD

The candidate also suggested that part of the necessary reforms should be a recognition that the United Nations needs to refocus and rethink its role. "You have to do better with less, and to do better with less you have to refocus. You have to do those things where the UN is unique…"

• Outlook. Grynspan has widely been seen as the leading candidate throughout this year's competitive selection process, so far placing first in all but one of the UN Security Council's straw polls. However, no candidate has been able to gain the assent of all five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council. At the time of writing, the most recent straw poll on October 30 revealed Grynspan becoming the first candidate to break eleven votes to encourage. However, the most recent straw poll did not use color-coded ballots indicating which encourage or discourage votes came from P5 countries, so there is no way to know for sure if any candidate has the necessary P5 support. With two new late-stage candidates entering the race in October, and the possibility for more in November, the selection of the next UN secretary-general continues to be unpredictable.

The article was first published by the Council on Foreign Relations.



Qassempour remains at crossroads over Olympic ambitions

Sports Desk

With the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics potentially offering his last opportunity to achieve the one elusive medal missing from his career, Iran's Kamran Qassempour faces a defining decision about his wrestling future.

The freestyle wrestler endured yet another disappointing campaign at 86kg at the World Championships in October. He got off to a flying start in Astana, Kazakhstan, defeating reigning Olympic champion Magomed Ramazanov before crashing out in the second round following a shock fall defeat to Kyrgyzstan's Malik Shavaev.

This marked the latest setback in a roller-coaster two years for Qassempour, whose career has been shaped by weight-class switches, injuries and fierce competition against high-profile wrestlers.



Iranian freestyle wrestler Kamran Qassempour looks dejected after a last-16 defeat to Kyrgyzstan's Malik Shavaev at the UWW World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on October 30, 2026.
IAWF

Different paths, same disappointment

After falling short against Hassan Yazdani in the race for a place on Iran's team for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Qassempour opted for a different route, moving up to 92kg. The decision quickly paid dividends. He captured back-to-back world titles in 2021 and 2022, producing technically impressive and entertaining performances that made him one of Iran's most popular wrestlers.

However, 92kg was not an Olympic weight class, meaning he would eventually have to compete elsewhere to pursue his Olympic ambitions.

His bid for a third consecutive world title in 2023 was derailed by injury, while preparations for the Paris 2024 Olympics presented him with another difficult choice between 86kg and 97kg.

He initially tested himself at 97kg but failed to secure Iran's national team place, with Amirali Azarpira eventually earning the berth.

The alternative was a return to 86kg and another showdown with Yazdani, who was attempting to regain his place following shoulder surgery. Yazdani strengthened his Olympic credentials by winning a Ranking Series tournament in Budapest, leaving Qassempour without an Olympic berth for a second consecutive edition.

Following the disappointment, Qassempour returned to 92kg for the 2024 World Championships in the non-Olympic weight classes in Tirana, Albania.

He came close to defeating Russian great Abdulrashid Sadulaev in the semifinals but surrendered his advantage in the closing seconds before subsequently losing to American star David Taylor in the bronze-medal bout.

Inconsistency at 86kg

Yazdani's decision to move up to 97kg following a second shoulder surgery eventually prompted Iran's coaching staff to give Qassempour another shot at 86kg.

At the 2025 World Championships, Qassempour reached the semifinals but was undone by American Zahid Valencia. He still managed to finish with a consolation bronze, but the 7-0 defeat to Valencia underlined the challenge of overcoming the division's leading contenders.

A more disappointing outcome in Astana, however, has left his long-term Olympic plans hanging by a thread.

The situation is further complicated by the number of Iranian wrestlers competing for a place at 86kg.

Mohammad Nokhodi emerged as a potential candidate this year after claiming gold at June's Ranking Series event in Ulaanbaatar, followed by an impressive Asian Games title in September.

However, he returned to his established 79kg division in Astana, settling for his fourth world silver medal.

Nokhodi's ability to challenge the world's leading 86kg wrestlers remains to be fully assessed, as success at continental competitions and Ranking Series events does not necessarily translate into similar performances at the World Championships or Olympics.

Other domestic contenders will also have an opportunity to establish themselves during Iran's 2027 selection cycle, meaning Qassempour cannot rely solely on his previous achievements to secure a national team place.

Iran Wrestling Federation president Alireza Dabir recently stressed that the two-time world champion must make a clear decision about his future, insisting that "even 10 world gold medals do not match a single Olympic bronze."

He added that Qassempour had looked physically sharper this year but also suggested that the wrestler needed to be mentally stronger, insisting that he could not afford to keep changing weight classes and repeatedly endure the demanding preparation and weight-cutting process.

Defining choice before LA28

With Iran's 2027 selection cycle approaching, Qassempour is entering a decisive period of his career. Next year's World Championships will be the final edition before the Los Angeles Olympics, making his decision in the coming months particularly important. Remaining at 86kg would preserve his Olympic ambitions, but he would have to overcome fierce domestic competition and prove that he can consistently challenge the division's international heavyweights.

Qassempour has repeatedly demonstrated his technical ability and remains capable of returning to the top level. But continuing without a clear plan could cost him some of the few opportunities left in his career.

For a wrestler who has already conquered the world twice, the choice is clear: pursue further success at 92kg or make one final effort to fulfil his Olympic dream at 86kg. The world titles are already in his collection. The Olympic medal remains the missing piece.

FIP Junior Asia Padel Cup 2026:

Iranian girls beat Australia to claim bronze

Sports Desk

Iranian girls defeated Australia to claim an impressive bronze medal at the FIP Junior Asia Padel Cup 2026 in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Saturday.

Competing in the under-14 age group, Yasamin Hassani and Armita Ezzatnejad gave the Iranian team an early advantage by thrashing the Australian pair of Evelyn Daisy Ferguson and Frankie Avalon Smith 2-0 (6-0, 6-1).

Iran coach Sahabeh Fard then fielded Romina Rafei and Bahar Haj-Mollaheydar for the second doubles contest of the day, with the duo also emerging victorious in straight sets (6-2, 6-1) against Ava Garner and Hope Johns to secure the bronze medal following Iran's semifinal defeat to Indonesia.

Also featuring Jana Safi, Delan Bitarafan, Helia Aqili, Nila Rahimi and Arghavan Amirkhanlou, the Iranian team opened its campaign with a victory over Australia before defeating the Philippines 3-0 to reach the semifinals.

Iran will seek further glory at the competition when its boys take on Kuwait in the final later on Saturday.



IRITF

2026 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final:

Iran confirms squad for season finale in Astana

Sports Desk

Iran will be represented by nine practitioners at the 2026 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final in Astana, Kazakhstan, after Radin Zeinali secured a late berth in the season-ending event.

The two-day showpiece, which forms part of the Olympic qualification pathway, will kick off on November 28, with competitors from around the world looking to strengthen their bids for a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

Eight Iranian athletes had previously secured their places based on the Olympic rankings, but the release of the final list of invited competitors by World Taekwondo confirmed Zeinali's inclusion in the men's -80kg category, taking Iran's delegation to nine.

The star-studded Iranian squad will feature six representatives in the men's divisions and three in the women's events.

Reigning Olympic champion Arian Salimi (+80kg) will be joined by world champion Abolfazl Zandi (-58kg), Asian champion Mahdi Haji-Mousaei (-68kg), Amir Sina Bakhtiari and Zeinali (-80kg), as well as Mohammad Hossein Yazdani (+80kg) in the men's competition.

In the women's divisions, Olympic silver medalist Nahid Kiani (-57kg), Saghar Moradi (-67kg), who won gold at September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, and two-time world junior champion Hana Zarrinkamar (+67kg) will represent the country.

South Korea will have the largest delegation with 11 athletes, followed by Spain with 10 and Iran with nine. Brazil and China will each field seven competitors, while Jordan and Uzbekistan will have six apiece. The United States, Croatia and Greece will each be represented by five athletes.



Asian Games gold medalist Saghar Moradi (L) will represent Iran in the women's -67kg weight class at the 2026 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final in Astana, Kazakhstan.
ISNA

Asian Women's Handball Championship:

Iran calls up 19 players for Almaty showpiece

Sports Desk

Iran's women's team began its final training camp on Saturday in Tehran for the upcoming Asian Handball Championship, with 19 players called up as part of preparations for the continental showpiece in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The 21st edition of the flagship continental event will kick off on November 23, with Iran drawn in Group A alongside Japan, China, Hong Kong, and Bangladesh.

Fatemeh Khalili, Elnaz Yarmohammadi, Zahra Afshari, Bahar Izadgashb, Hadiseh Norouzi, Aseman Badvi, Arezoo Kianiara, Fatemeh Merikh, Mehrban Badvi, Shahrzad Nasouhi, Mobina Hassannejad, Negar Zandeboodi, Saeideh Ghazanfari, Hanieh Karimi, Samin Karimi, Leila Hosseini, Elaheh Nikan, Elnaz Ghasemi and Maedeh Oshaghi have been named in the squad.

The Iranian team will open its campaign against Hong Kong on November 23 before facing 10-time silver medalist China the following day. It will then take on Bangladesh on November 25 and conclude its group-stage campaign against defending champion Japan on November 28.

The championship will also serve as the qualification event for the 28th IHF Women's Handball World Championship, with the top four teams securing direct qualification for the global tournament, scheduled to be held in Hungary from November 30 to December 19 next year.

Bushehr proposes sister-city partnership with South Korea's Jeju Island

Iranica Desk



chtn.ir

A proposal to establish a sister-city relationship between the southern Iranian port city of Bushehr and South Korea's Jeju Island was put forward by a representative of Bushehr Province's Ecotourism Community at the first Iran–South Korea Specialized Ecotourism Seminar.

Vahid Jamali, Deputy Director of Tourism at the Bushehr Province Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, announced the proposal, describing it as an opportunity to promote tourism diplomacy, showcase maritime culture and expand international cooperation, according to chtn.ir.

He said the inaugural seminar was held at the Gran Miras Rashidieh Hotel in Tehran, with the participation of the South Korean ambassador to Iran, officials from Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, representatives of professional tourism associations and ecotourism operators from both countries. The event provided a valuable opportunity to showcase Iran's diverse tourism and cultural attractions and strengthen international ties.

Jamali added that the seminar, which focused on sustainable tourism and cultural exchange, also saw the participation of Bushehr Province's Ecotourism Community.

Shayan Bahrami, head of the community and its representative at the event, introduced the province's cultural, historical and maritime heritage.

One of the key proposals put forward by Bahrami was the establishment of a sister-city partnership between Bushehr and Jeju Island. The initiative was proposed in view of the cultural, historical and livelihood-related similarities between the two regions, particularly their communities' longstanding ties to the sea.

Jamali noted that Jeju is internationally renowned for its maritime heritage and its women divers, while Bushehr Province also has a rich history of seafaring, diving and pearl fishing. He cited the historical tradition of diving and pearl harvesting on Kharg Island, as well as the traditional fishing activities of women on Jazireh-ye Shif (Shif Island), who are known for wearing distinctive local attire.

These shared maritime traditions, he said, could provide a strong foundation for cultural and tourism cooperation between the two destinations.

A sister-city agreement could pave the way for exchanges between tourism and ecotourism operators, the promotion of intangible maritime heritage, the organization of joint cultural events and the development of sustainable tourism.

Referring to the positive response from officials at the South Korean Embassy in Iran, Jamali said the proposed areas of cooperation between Bushehr and Jeju had attracted attention during the seminar. Embassy representatives, however, noted that advancing the initiative would require continued correspondence and follow-up by the relevant organizations and institutions.

He also highlighted the presentation of local handicrafts on the sidelines of the event. Bushehr's traditional crafts, including camel-wool textiles and handwoven waistcoats, were displayed in the seminar's exhibition section, showcasing the skills and artistic heritage of local artisans to participants and the South Korean ambassador.

Emphasizing the role of professional associations in developing the province's tourism sector, Jamali said the active participation of Bushehr Province's Ecotourism Community in international events demonstrated the potential of specialized organizations to contribute to tourism diplomacy and promote the province's cultural and indigenous heritage.

He expressed hope that, through the efforts of Bushehr Province's Ecotourism Community and cooperation among the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, Bushehr Municipality and the Islamic City Council, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the South Korean Embassy in Tehran, the sister-city proposal would move beyond discussion and develop into a practical framework for tourism cooperation, the promotion of maritime culture and stronger ties between the local communities of the two regions.

Sistan's living legacy of chivalry

Iranica Desk



mehrnews.com



The tradition of Pahlavani (chivalry and moral heroism) in Sistan and Baluchestan Province is more than a reminder of the region's celebrated wrestlers and strongmen. It is an integral part of the social identity of a people who have long regarded courage, generosity, loyalty, forgiveness and helping others as fundamental values. Its prestige, however, rests not on physical strength but on character and conduct, and on the way individuals define themselves through their relationships with others.

Yet, in today's world, as lifestyles evolve and cultural role models increasingly emerge through different channels, particularly social media, preserving and passing on these values to younger generations has become a growing challenge.

The main concern surrounding Sistan's Pahlavani tradition today is not simply keeping the names of historical figures alive or commemorating past achievements. Rather, it is the widening gap between younger generations and the code of conduct that once shaped everyday social interactions across the region, according to chtn.ir.

Unless young people establish a meaningful connection with their cultural roots, there is a risk that Javanmardi (the spirit of chivalry and manliness) will survive only in stories, traditional ceremonies and commemorative events, gradually disappearing from everyday life. Rediscovering local role models and adapting the values of Pahlavani to the needs and lifestyles of today's generation are therefore essential to preserving Sistan's cultural identity.

Ashkan Shahraki, a young man from Sistan, said the tradition of Pahlavani and Javanmardi has deep roots in the region's identity, but stressed that it must be brought beyond memories and accounts of the past and incorporated into the lives of young people today.

"When we talk about Pahlavani, we should not think only of physical strength, wrestling or muscular power. Being a Pahlavan means standing by others in difficult times, respecting their rights, helping those in need and demonstrating fairness and integrity in both words and actions," he said.

Shahraki noted that the people of Sistan have historically been known for their hospitality, sense of honor, solidarity and willingness to help one another, describing these qualities as an essential part of their collective identity.

"If these values remain alive in the behavior of the younger generation, the tradition of Pahlavani will continue to have a meaningful place in society," he added.

Referring to the growing distance between some young people and the region's cultural heritage, Shahraki said many may have heard the names of historical figures and legendary champions but lack a deeper understanding of their character, conduct and way of life.

"The problem is that local culture is sometimes brought up only on special occasions. Once the ceremonies are over, it is forgotten again," he said.

He added that young people today are increasingly exposed to role models promoted through social media, while their own history and culture contain many distinguished figures who could inspire them.

"If these personalities are introduced in simple language and through modern platforms, young people will develop a stronger connection with their local identity," he said.

Shahraki also highlighted the role of families and the education system in passing on the values of Javanmardi, arguing that young people cannot be expected to uphold principles they do not see practiced in their everyday surroundings.

Families, he said, should teach children respect, honesty, forgiveness and helping others from an early age, while schools should devote greater attention to the region's cultural heritage and historical figures alongside their academic curricula.

He further emphasized the role of the media in preserving local identity, saying that short films, engaging documentaries, accounts of veteran champions and effective use of social media could make Sistan's Pahlavani tradition more accessible and appealing to younger audiences.

"Young people should not simply hear the word Pahlavani; they should have opportunities to see what it means in practice," he said, adding that cultural and sporting events, introducing veteran figures and fostering interaction between older and younger generations could help achieve this goal.

Maryam Heydari, who works in cultural affairs in Nimruz, described Sistan's tradition of Pahlavani and Javanmardi as a valuable legacy that plays a vital role in shaping regional identity.

Passing it on to younger generations, she said, is essential to preserving cultural traditions and strengthening ethical values in society.

Heydari explained that Pahlavani and Javanmardi are among the most deeply rooted moral and social values of the people of Sistan, having helped shape the character and identity of the region's inhabitants throughout history.

The tradition, she stressed, goes far beyond physical strength and individual ability. It is founded on honor, honesty, loyalty, forgiveness, consideration for others and helping those in need.

"In the traditional Sistani understanding, a true Pahlavan is not simply someone with greater physical strength. A real champion is someone who observes the principles of chivalry in their conduct, stands against oppression and injustice, respects the rights of others and supports fellow human beings in difficult circumstances," she said.

"This is the meaning that must be properly explained to today's generation."

She noted that adolescents and young adults are growing up amid an overwhelming range of role models, content and cultural influences. Unless the region's valuable heritage is presented in engaging ways that reflect contemporary needs, she warned, younger generations could gradually lose their connection with their cultural roots and traditions.

Heydari said the Pahlavani tradition has considerable potential to promote the social and moral development of adolescents, as it encompasses respect for elders, support for the vulnerable, responsibility, anger management, keeping promises and fairness. These principles, she added, can help shape a healthy and responsible future generation.

Ultimately, Sistan's tradition of Pahlavani can remain a living part of the region's identity only if a meaningful connection is established between its proud past and the everyday lives of today's younger generation.

The threat to this cultural legacy stems not simply from generational change or the expansion of social media, but from the growing separation of the values of Javanmardi from everyday conduct and their confinement to historical accounts and occasional commemorative programs.

Preserving this cultural asset requires more than temporary initiatives and ceremonial slogans. It calls for sustained efforts by families, schools, the media and cultural organizations.

To safeguard its Pahlavani heritage, Sistan must move beyond celebrating the achievements of the past and create opportunities for these values to become part of contemporary life.

For Pahlavani remains alive only when it is reflected in people's actions and passed down from one generation to the next.

The champions of yesterday helped shape Sistan's history, but the survival of their code of honour now depends on the choices and conduct of today's generation.

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Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 84711560
Address: 208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran
Advertising Dept. Tel/Email: +98 21 88500601/irandaily@iranagahiha.com
Website: www.irandaily.ir/newspaper.irandaily.ir
Email: irandaily@icpi.ir

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Iranian students sweep gold medals at int'l astronomy olympiad

Social Desk

All six members of Iran' national B astronomy team won gold medals at the fifth Open World Astronomy Olympiad in Russia.
Parsia Hassanzadeh also taking first place in the theoretical section at the competition was held from November 6 to 14 in the Sirius Federal Territory, bringing together 70 students from 14 countries.
The Iranian gold medalists were Sarina Alampour, Parsia Hassanzadeh, Elshan Rouhani, Mohammadreza Mohammadi, Bardia Ghilavizadeh and Mehdi Aryafar, Mehr News Agency reported.
A total of 15 participants from Iran, Russia, Armenia and Peru won gold medals. Another 16 contestants received silver medals, while 12 won bronze.
Russia's Nikolai Gamynin was named the overall winner of the competition, after recording the strongest performances in the observational and speed sections.
The fifth edition of the olympiad featured four sections: theoretical, practical, observational and rapid-response tests.
Participants were assessed on their knowledge of astronomy and astrophysics, as well as their ability to analyze astronomical data, identify celestial objects and solve scientific problems under time constraints.
The event brought together young participants from 14 countries, providing an international setting for scientific competition and the exchange of experience.
Iran's results stood out for the consistency of the team's performance, with all six members securing the competition's top medal, while Hassanzadeh also claimed an individual first-place finish in the theoretical section.



IRNA

Private sector plans $5.6m Lake Urmia tourism investment



Tourists enjoy recreational activities on Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran in an undated photo
ALI AGHAYARI/MEHR NEWS AGENCY

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's West Azerbaijan province is planning a 15 trillion-rial ($5.6 million) private-sector investment to develop tourism infrastructure along the shores of Lake Urmia, northwestern Iran.
The investment aim to boost tourism, create jobs and strengthen the regional economy while protecting the fragile ecosystem, IRNA reported on Saturday.
Lake Urmia, one of Iran's most important inland bodies of water, lies in the country's northwest between West Azerbaijan and East Azerbaijan provinces.
Provincial Governor Reza Rahmani announced the plan on Saturday during a meeting with the director of the Lake Urmia Ports and Maritime Organization and a private investor.
"The proposed investment would fund the development of tourism facilities and services around the lake," he said.
Plans discussed at the meeting include building a standard-compliant pier, introducing safe and advanced vessels, providing maritime services and expanding recreational and tourism facilities.
Rahmani said supporting investment opportunities was among the province's priorities, citing West Azerbaijan's tourism potential.
"Developing the sector could improve local livelihoods and create employment opportunities for residents," he added.
He also stressed that tourism projects along the lake's shores must comply with environmental requirements, given the ecological importance of the area.
According to the governor, the project will be supported by Iran's Department of Environment and Ports and Maritime Organization, with all financial resources provided by the private sector.
The Urmia Lake has faced a prolonged decline in water levels in recent years, triggering environmental concerns and highlighting the challenges of balancing economic development with the protection of its vulnerable ecosystem.

Iran, Turkey collaborate on historical series about early Islam

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Turkey are joining forces to produce a 16-episode historical series about early Muslim figure Mus'ab ibn Umayr.
Most of the filming taking place in Iran and Turkish actors starring alongside Iranian production crews, IRNA reported on Saturday.
Titled 'Davet Musab', the series is directed by Turkish filmmaker Cem Akyoldaş and produced by Kemal Tekden in cooperation with Tekden Film.
It is being made for tabii, the digital platform operated by Turkey's state broadcaster, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT).
Filming began in Iran in September 2026 and is continuing at Noor Cinema City, near Qom in central Iran.
The complex was built for Iranian director Majid Majidi's film 'Muhammad: The Messenger of God' and includes sets recreating the cities of Mecca and Medina.
Turkish actors Furkan Palalı and Ekin Aksoy lead the cast, playing Mus'ab ibn Umayr and Hamne, respectively.
Other cast members include Emre Kıvılcım as Habbab, Ali Buhara Mete as Zayd ibn Harithah, Okan Şenozan as Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, Emre Başer as Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and Murat Danacı as Abdullah ibn Jahsh.
The series follows Mus'ab, who came from a wealthy family in Mecca but gave up his privileged life after embracing Islam and travelled to Medina to help spread the faith.
According to IRNA, an Iranian streaming platform is also involved in the production, alongside tabii and Tekden Film.
Most of the filming is taking place in Iran, with the remainder scheduled to be shot in Turkey. The series' release date has not been announced.



'The Daughter of Lady Fairy' wins Moscow screenplay award

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Alireza Motamedi won the best screenplay award at the second Open Eurasian Film Awards in Moscow on November 12 for 'The Daughter of Lady Fairy'.
the film competed with 40 other entries from 18 countries.
The Diamond Butterfly awards were launched on Mikhalkov's initiative in 2025. They are organized by the Eurasian Academy for Cinematographic Arts, with support from Russia's Ministry of Culture and the Russian Culture Foundation.
The event brings together films from different countries that focus on cultural and human values.
Keyvan Moghaddam, the film's production designer, was also nominated for best production design at the Moscow awards. The prize went to the team behind the Russian film 'August'.
Motamedi wrote and directed the film, which marks Motamedi's third feature after 'Reza' and 'Why Don't You Cry?' and continues the introspective storytelling of his earlier works.
As in his previous films, Motamedi directs and takes on the lead role. Soha Niasti, Marziyeh Boroumand and Sahra Asadollahi are the cast.
The film follows a young woman working as a sound designer on a film dubbing project who returns after years away to confront her former lover.
Her unexpected arrival stirs up old memories, forcing him to face unresolved emotions and painful truths about the past.



Iranian filmmaker Alireza Motamedi poses with his prize at the Open Eurasian Film Awards in Moscow, Russia, on November 12, 2026.
ILNA

Adding an international prize to the film's festival run in 2026, 'The Daughter of Lady Fairy' had previously competed in the international competition section of the 42nd Warsaw International Film Festival in Poland in October 2026.