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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks at a Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, on November 16, 2026.
mfa.ir

Upcoming trilateral meeting drives China's diplomatic push on Iran-US conflict

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

China, which has so far refrained from direct involvement in the Iran-US conflict, has taken a more active role in recent weeks, with several meetings held between Iranian and Chinese officials. Meanwhile, the leaders of China, the United States and Russia are expected to meet in Shenzhen this week, with the Iran conflict reportedly among the key topics on the agenda. Speaking to Iran Daily, Professor Hongda Fan, an expert on China-Middle East affairs, said the intensive diplomatic efforts to mediate the Iran-US conflict in recent weeks appear to be, at least in part, preparations for the trilateral meeting in Shenzhen. However, he cautioned that without compromises from both sides, peace would remain elusive.



Hongda Fan

IRAN DAILY: **How do you assess senior Iranian security official Ali Bagheri Kani's recent visit to Beijing and his talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, particularly at a time when the region is facing serious security challenges and diplomatic efforts to end the war remain uncertain? What were the main objectives of this meeting, and what political message was China seeking to convey by reaffirming its support for Iran's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity?**

FAN: In my view, Beijing is intensifying its efforts to mediate conflicts in the Middle East, and the reception of Ali Bagheri Kani is one such example. While explicitly supporting Iran's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity, Beijing has also clearly called for resolving conflicts through diplomatic means and preventing any further escalation of hostilities. This has been Beijing's consistent stance. Moving forward, any party that disregards diplomatic channels or instigates military strikes will face criticism from Beijing.

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Iran rules out IAEA access to nuclear sites until war ends



Members of the media and officials tour the water nuclear reactor at Arak, Iran, on December 23, 2019.
WANA

International Desk

Iran will not allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) access to its nuclear facilities until the war comes to an end, a diplomatic understanding is reached and the United States honors its commitments, Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi said.

Criticizing IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi's stance on attacks against Iran's nuclear facilities, Gharibabadi questioned why the head of the international watchdog had failed to take a position on the strikes.

"In similar cases, we have seen the agency use terms such as condemnation," Gharibabadi said, citing the case of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, where the IAEA director general had taken positions against Russia.

"But why did he not condemn the attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities?" he asked, stressing that the targeted sites had been under the agency's supervision and that, according to the IAEA itself, not the slightest deviation had been detected in their activities.

The Iranian official also questioned whether the United States intended to develop another weapon with greater power and new capabilities before targeting similar facilities or new nuclear sites in Iran. He said this should be the IAEA's objective. If that was not the case, the agency's director general should refrain, under the current circumstances, from seeking access to Iran's nuclear facilities and making political statements while claiming to lack information about the country's highly enriched nuclear material or the nuclear facilities that had come under attack.

Gharibabadi reiterated that Iran would not grant the IAEA access to its nuclear facilities until the differences are resolved.

Prior to the attacks, Iran's program demonstrated complete transparency: all obligated facilities were declared, and every targeted site was under agency supervision with regular inspector presence, he said, stressing that approximately 70 percent of the IAEA's global inspections were conducted in Iran.

Gharibabadi rejected decades-old claims by Washington and Israel of a military nuclear program.

The claim has never been substantiated. It was propagated by the Zionist regime, which is party to no treaties on biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons of mass destruction yet possesses a nuclear arsenal, and by the United States, which has a historical record of using such weapons against the people of Japan, he said.

Iran has no need to resort to 'terror' to defeat enemies: *Spox*

International Desk

The Foreign Ministry's spokesman categorically rejected allegations that Iran is planning "acts of terrorism" against either Western officials or ordinary citizens, saying the Islamic Republic does not need to resort to "terror."

In a post on X on Monday, Esmaeil Baqaei described the allegations, including the so-called "refrigerator cases" in France, as part of a coordinated disinformation campaign orchestrated by the Israeli regime to portray Iran as a "threat" to Western governments and ordinary citizens, Press TV reported.

The spokesman said the campaign was intended to influence American and European public opinion at a time when people were refusing to support their governments' aggressive policies.

He stressed that the objective was to manufacture fear and encourage public support for an escalation of aggression against Iran, while providing justification for reckless political and military actions under the pretext of protecting public safety.

Baqaei added that portraying US officials as potential assassination targets was also intended to "make the conflict personal for them."

Addressing the accusations against Tehran, Baqaei contrasted Iran's response to wholesale rounds of unprovoked US-Israeli military aggression with acts of "state terrorism" conducted by Washington and Tel Aviv.

He reminded how the United States and the Israeli regime engaged in "state terrorism in its most blatant form" through the assassination of Iranian officials and deadly attacks on Iranian ordinary civilians.

"Iran, however, has responded, and continues to respond, with resolute resistance and legitimate self-defense."

Emphasizing Tehran's rejection of terrorism and actions against civilians, Baqaei said, "It (Iran) has neither any need to resort to terror violence - like its enemies do - nor any reason to disrupt the daily lives of ordinary people - people who have, themselves, become victims of their own leaders' disastrous decisions."

The spokesman pointed to American officials' having retreated into military bunkers after spending days claiming "victory" in the war, describing their conduct as "a transparent attempt to elicit sympathy from a public already outraged by its leaders' lies and by the fact that the United States has effectively become an instrument for advancing Israel's priorities."

Baqaei concluded that media manipulation would not alleviate the growing fear and psychological distress among US officials.

TENDER NO.: 08-21-0340011
Second 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
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Araghchi: Region needs independent security framework, sustainable energy cooperation



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks during the 30th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Islamabad, Pakistan, on November 16, 2026.
IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTRY

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that the region requires an independent security framework and a sustainable energy mechanism to protect supply chains and build collective resilience against geopolitical shocks.

Addressing the 30th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Islamabad on Monday, Araghchi said the growing impact of US and Israeli aggression on the energy sector has made stronger cooperation an urgent strategic necessity. "Our region needs not only an independent security framework but also a reliable and sustainable regional energy mechanism to safeguard energy flows, ensure stable supplies, reduce external vulnerabilities and enhance collective resilience against geopolitical shocks and disruptions," he noted. Araghchi stressed that trade, transportation, and energy should serve as the three strategic pillars of ECO cooperation under current global and regional conditions.

"Strengthening connectivity, facilitating intra-regional trade and enhancing energy cooperation will reinforce our collective resilience, mitigate external vulnerabilities and foster a more integrated and self-reliant region," he said.

He also announced Iran's support for establishing a technical committee to revise the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), emphasizing that a modern, inclusive, and more effective trade agreement could expand regional commerce, strengthen economic resilience, and serve the interests of people across the region.

Turning to regional security, the Iranian foreign minister reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to international law, the UN Charter, and the peaceful settlement of disputes through diplomacy.

He said Iran has maintained its commitment to diplomatic engagement over the past two years, while condemning the United States for pursuing a different course through aggression, threats, targeted assassinations, economic pressure, and blockades, in violation of international law and the UN Charter.

Araghchi said insecurity in the Persian Gulf and developments surrounding the Strait of Hormuz stemmed from joint hostile policies and acts of aggression by the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran.

He stressed that Iran has consistently sought friendly and constructive relations with neighboring countries and has no inherent disputes with regional states.

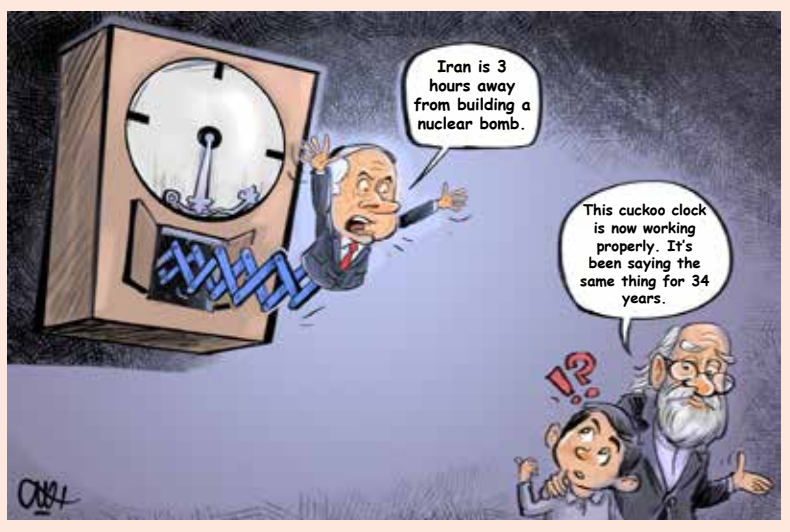
"However, one principle speaks loud enough: the territories, airspace and facilities of the regional countries must not be used as platforms for launching attacks against each other," he noted.

Araghchi also clarified that Iran's legitimate defensive measures were directed exclusively at the military targets and bases of aggressors and should not be interpreted as actions against the people or governments of neighboring countries.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Cement production rises 7% in first seven months

Exports to Afghanistan, northern routes up 15%



IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's cement production rose 7% in the first seven months of the current Iranian year, which began on March 21, reaching 40.4 million metric tons, despite a sharp decline in exports through southern borders, an industry association official said.

Ali Akbar Alvandian, secretary of the Cement Industry Employers Association, told ISNA that cement production increased from 37.9 million tons in the same period last year, driven by higher domestic demand.

Cement clinker production, however, fell 11% to 38.9 million tons from 43.8 million tons in the same period last year, he said.

On exports, Alvandian said shipments through Iran's southern borders fell 67% from a year earlier, as exports through southern ports and to Iraq were severely disrupted by economic conditions, fewer import permits issued by Iraq and conditions at southern border crossings.

Exports to Afghanistan and via Iran's northern routes, however, rose by about 15% year on year, offsetting part of the decline in clinker exports.

Overall, cement and clinker exports fell 29% compared with the same period last year, he said.

Iran has been under wartime conditions since US and Israeli attacks began in late February, in a 40-day conflict. Its southern ports have also faced a US naval blockade, as Washington seeks to bring Iran's trade and oil sales to zero to pressure Tehran into accepting its terms for peace.

Alvandian said improved coordination over electricity allocations and consumption had given producers more room to increase output. Production conditions improved in the Iranian month of Aban, which began on Oct. 23, allowing factories to prepare for the coming months, he added.

Regarding potential gas shortages in the final months of the year, Alvandian said a schedule and guidelines for gas restrictions and cutoffs had been issued. Gas consumption by cement producers had fallen to almost zero since last week, with gas still available only to white cement plants, which account for a small share of total industry output. The rest of the cement industry will use fuel oil, he said.

The association is working with the ministries of petroleum, energy and industry to coordinate production plans and limit disruptions and losses during the cold season, Alvandian said, adding that the aim was to keep winter restrictions less severe than the challenges faced during the previous summer.

He said the industry expected no problems supplying the country's domestic cement needs.

Road minister raises truck transit issues at Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan border

Economy Desk

Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq visited the Alat-Farap border crossing between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to review obstacles facing Iranian truck drivers and road transit with transport and customs officials from both countries, the ministry said.

Sadeq traveled by land into Turkmenistan on Sunday, at the end of her official visit to Uzbekistan, to follow up on transport and transit issues at the border, according to a statement from Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

During separate talks with transport and customs officials from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, she reviewed the latest status of road freight traffic, the movement of trucks across the border and obstacles affecting transit. She was also briefed on the concerns and demands of industry operators.

Sadeq also met with several Iranian truck drivers at the crossing and spoke with them directly to hear about the problems and difficulties they face while traveling through the border.

The visit was aimed at identifying border bottlenecks, following up on outstanding issues, facilitating the movement of Iranian road transport fleets and removing obstacles facing transit operators, the ministry said.



Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq visits the Alat-Farap border crossing between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan on November 15, 2026.

IRNA

Iran and Uzbekistan are also working to expand rail and road transport cooperation, improve transit flows and strengthen logistics and trade ties through regional corridors.

During a meeting with Uzbek Transport Minister Ilkhom Makhkamov in Tashkent on Thursday, Sadeq described bilateral cooperation in road, air and rail transport as positive. She proposed a trilateral railway meeting involving Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to improve coordination and accelerate rail cooperation among the three countries.

She also highlighted the two countries' potential in logistics and transit, describing Iran's northern and southern ports as valuable assets for expanding regional trade.

Iranian light, heavy crude prices surge

Iran reportedly exported 600,000 bpd to China in Sept. despite naval blockade



Iran's Reshadat oil rig in the Persian Gulf

Economy Desk

The prices of Iranian light and heavy crude rose, with light crude gaining 76 cents, or 0.84%, to $91.50 a barrel, while heavy crude increased by the same amount, or 0.86%, to $89.60 a barrel.

According to Mehr News Agency, citing OilPrice.com, both prices were reported with a four-day delay and refer to deliveries of Iranian crude to Northwest Europe.

Meanwhile, Iran exported about 600,000 barrels per day of oil to China in September 2026 despite a US naval blockade, Tasnim News Agency reported, citing the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES).

MEES estimates showed that exports fell from about 990,000 bpd in August and 1.75 million bpd in April 2026.

September's exports marked the lowest level since the beginning of 2024 and were nearly 48% below the approximately 1.15 million bpd shipped to China in the same month last year, according to the report.

Separately, Iran's daily crude oil production capacity increased by 8.3% over two years, reaching 3.715 million bpd in October 2026, up from 3.43 million bpd in September 2024, the official IRNA news agency reported in mid-October.

The increase amounted to 285,000 bpd over the period, while production capacity in October 2026 was 55,000 bpd higher than in the same month a year earlier, IRNA reported.

The Oil Ministry has focused on restoring existing capacity to operation, reviving underperforming wells, developing shared oilfields and strengthening processing and transportation infrastructure, according to IRNA.

The growth in production capacity comes despite the US administration's campaign to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero.

Despite decades of unilateral sanctions, financial blockades and security tensions linked to Washington, Iran has drawn on domestic expertise not only to sustain but also to significantly expand its hydrocarbon production capacity.

Elsewhere in the oil market, prices fell on Monday as expectations of a global supply surplus increased.

Shipments from the Middle East through the Strait of Hormuz have nearly returned to pre-war levels, while reduced activity at Chinese refineries in October has pointed to weaker crude oil demand, according to a Reuters report republished by Tasnim.

By 1114 GMT, Brent crude futures had fallen 52 cents, or 0.5%, to $95.32 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude had declined 27 cents, or 0.3%, to $88.29, Reuters reported.

Oil prices also settled lower on Friday as markets assessed signs of easing geopolitical risks stemming from the US-Israeli war against Iran, now in its ninth month. Brent and US crude fell 16% and 13%, respectively, last week. "For the first time since the US-Iran conflict began, traders are actively contemplating the possibility of excess supply rather than persistent tightness," said Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade.

The International Energy Agency forecast that global oil supply would average 105 million bpd in the fourth quarter, exceeding projected demand by 1.7 million bpd. The agency had previously forecast a supply deficit for the period.

Upcoming trilateral meeting ...

There are reports of a possible renewed Omani mediation effort

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between Iran and the United States, with China potentially playing a supporting role. How do you assess the prospects for such an initiative, and how actively is Beijing prepared to engage in diplomatic efforts to end the war and bring Tehran and Washington back to negotiations?

I firmly believe that China supports any party actively engaged in mediating conflicts. Given Oman's proven track record as a successful mediator and its discreet diplomatic approach, Beijing is strongly supporting Oman's diplomatic efforts. China's economic size and the nature of its cooperation with Middle Eastern countries make it undoubtedly one of the countries most eager to see the situation in the Persian Gulf return to normal. Beijing will spare no effort to promote an early end to the state of war in the region.

US President Donald Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin are expected to hold a trilateral meeting in Shenzhen. Could this gathering provide an important opportunity to address the war against Iran and its regional consequences? What role could China and Russia play in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict?

A meeting between the leaders of these three major powers would undoubtedly command global attention. The world today truly needs their cooperation. I believe that the ongoing war involving Iran, which has already had global repercussions, will certainly receive the attention of all three leaders. I would even argue that the intensive diplomatic mediation efforts surrounding the US-Iran conflict in recent weeks are also, at least in part, preparations for this trilateral meeting in Shenzhen. Given that neither the United States nor Iran can achieve a decisive victory over the other, it is time for both sides to make some concessions. Without mutual compromise, peace will remain elusive.

Iran's Parliament Speaker has described relations with China as a strategic priority, stressing the need for practical cooperation rather than formal agreements. How can Tehran and Beijing strengthen their partnership, particularly in economic and security affairs, under current regional and international conditions?

Indeed, I have consistently argued that the two nations should establish a more pragmatic form of cooperation, centered on concrete and actionable projects. Without tangible, pragmatic outcomes, even the most high-profile political declarations are meaningless. In my view, Beijing actively assisting Iran in bringing the war to an end—while ensuring that Iran's core interests remain uncompromised—would constitute a form of pragmatic cooperation. Following this, both sides must roll out a series of verifiable, substantive projects, including those in the economic sphere.

Don’t rebuild America’s Persian Gulf bases



By Emma Ashford
Senior fellow at the Stimson Center

By Will A. Smith
Research associate at the Stimson Center



OPINION



The collage of footage and images document Iran’s retaliatory missile and drone attacks against American and Israeli interests, air bases, and temporary shelters across the Middle East.
REUTERS

The war on Iran has been a wake-up call for US policymakers in many areas, from availability of US missile stocks to the plausibility of regime change in Iran. Perhaps the most shocking revelation has been the destruction wrought on America’s Persian Gulf bases, where Iranian attacks have pierced the notion of American military invulnerability. From Kuwait to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, once-bustling bases are now ghost towns, with overhead imagery showing empty runways and buildings, their personnel and equipment evacuated in the face of Iranian missile and drone attacks.

We do not yet have a full picture of the costs of this war, which is ongoing, though Moody’s estimates it may have cost the average American household as much as $2,000. But quite aside from the costs of munitions or operations, in the aftermath of the conflict, the Trump administration and Congress will be faced with a decision: whether to fund base reconstruction or attempt to pass such costs on to host nations in the Persian Gulf. They should do neither.

Instead, policymakers should take this opportunity to rethink America’s force posture and basing infrastructure in the Persian Gulf. At the most basic level, what America needs is military access to the region in a crisis. This is not necessarily the same as a large, permanent presence, and the latter carries significant costs that mere contingency access does not. As Kelly Grieco and Max Bremer put it in Foreign Policy, we should “think of access as buying options on the stock market: For a relatively small premium, Washington can preserve choices for a crisis without paying the political, economic, and military costs of maintaining forces at every deployed location in peacetime.”

As policymakers consider how best to adapt after the end of this war, they should prioritize access over presence, and bear in mind the evidence of the last nine months, which suggests that bases are not needed even to effectively wage war in the region. Because they are so close to Iran, personnel stationed at these bases run a significant risk of death and injury from missile and drone strikes. And US interests in the region remain relatively narrow; US defense requirements in the region could easily be met by a small selection of bases outside the Persian Gulf.

A basing posture built for another era

The United States has had a major military presence in the Persian Gulf since the 1980s, though the nature of that presence has fluctuated with changing requirements, from the naval convoys of the 1980s to dual containment in the 1990s and the War on Terror in the 2000s. For much of the last decade, this presence has looked similar: around 30-50,000 US troops, including a naval presence primarily located in Bahrain, air bases in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, and an Army presence predominantly in Kuwait. These bases have been used for everything from reconnaissance to air strikes against militant groups such as Daesh (ISIS), partner training and security assistance, and most recently, the war against Iran.

There has also been an active debate in recent years about the extent to which any of this US military presence in the Persian Gulf is strategically necessary. The need for troops in the region has declined substantially with the end of the War on Terror campaigns. Even mainstream analysts now tend to acknowledge that America’s Middle Eastern wars have often produced poor results, and American political opinion has turned decidedly against wars of regime change, humanitarian intervention, and democracy promotion. Yet a combination of inertia and repeated military flare-ups has kept the US presence in the Persian Gulf similar for much of the last decade.

The Trump administration’s choice to engage in war with Iran beginning in February 2026 has exposed how unsustainable America’s existing base structure in the Persian Gulf has become. The war has revealed four primary problems with that posture, each of which suggests that Washington should not return to the status quo in the aftermath of the Iran war. In ascending order of importance, these problems are: 1) the destruction wrought on bases and infrastructure by the war will be expensive and challenging to repair; 2) existing bases are increasingly vulnerable to new technologies that enable long-range and precision strikes; 3) attacks on these bases during the war have altered their benefits and costs for local partners, whose willingness to host them may decrease over time; and 4) the war itself has demonstrated that these bases are not necessary, even to wage war within the region itself.

Bill for rebuilding

Since the start of the American and Israeli war against Iran in February 2026, American bases in the Persian Gulf have suffered widespread destruction; Iran has hit at least 20 US military sites across the Middle East. These range from the US air base in Qatar (Al Udeid) — which suffered damage to its runways and communications infrastructure, and which found its Combined Air Operations Center unusable during the early days of the war — to a significant CIA installation in Saudi Arabia destroyed by drone attack.

As of May, Iran had damaged or destroyed an estimated 217 structures at US facilities across the region. And while imagery has been limited, meaning that open-source analysis is challenging, it is now well-documented that these strikes were not random. Instead, Iranian projectiles specifically targeted infrastructure and systems critical to sustaining US operations, including air defense and communications. These attacks also targeted equipment at these bases, with the Pentagon reporting $3.7 billion in equipment losses, including over 80 damaged or destroyed aircraft. In order to prevent further significant damage to equipment, many aircraft were removed from their host bases and sent to American bases in the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean.

Personnel at these bases were forced to repeatedly take shelter against incoming missile and drone barrages, while the threat of air attacks rendered many bases too dangerous to staff at normal levels. As with equipment, during the early months of the war, personnel often had to be relocated: Many were moved from bases to other sites in their host countries, including hotels, where they had to “work remotely”. The costs have been high: At least 21 service members have died during the conflict so far, and over 865 have been wounded in these attacks.

Damage to America’s main regional naval base, Naval Support Activity Bahrain, demonstrates the problem. This base was repeatedly targeted from the outset of the war; located less than 140 miles from Iranian territory, it was within easy range of both missiles and drones. News analysis suggests that strikes caused extensive damage to at least a dozen buildings, including the command headquarters, and to critical satellite communications terminals, forcing the relocation of nearly all personnel. Seven months later, servicemembers and their families relocated due to the danger have still not been permitted to return, with Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle saying in September that the Navy will not be “getting back in there anytime soon”.

> Iran’s attacks on US bases across the Persian Gulf have left Washington with a costly choice about what comes next. Congress and the Pentagon could spend billions rebuilding and hardening a regional basing network that proved dangerously vulnerable. Or they could take seriously one of the war’s clearest lessons: Even as many Persian Gulf bases suffered severe disruptions, the United States remained capable of conducting major military operations. Rather than rebuilding the old posture, or simply moving it elsewhere in the Middle East, the United States should adopt a smaller footprint built around access rather than permanent presence.



The photo shows damage done to the Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, from an Iranian retaliatory attack during the US-Israeli war of aggression in 2026.
ABC NEWS

Thus far, we do not have a good understanding of the full costs of base damage across the region. The Pentagon has pressured satellite firms to delay the release of high-resolution imagery and refused to make its damage estimates public or include them in its accounting of the war’s costs. After learning of the Pentagon’s reconstruction estimates in a classified briefing in October, five members of the Senate Armed Services Committee called on the department to make them public, writing that “disclosing these costs represents the bare minimum transparency DoD owes the public”. But with US officials reportedly estimating that rebuilding damaged bases could cost as much as $30 billion — with repairs to NSA Bahrain alone costing upwards of $400 million — the overall regional bill for damage will be significant.

Ongoing vulnerabilities

The extensive damage to US bases throughout this conflict is a reflection partly of their close proximity to Iran, but also of a shifting military balance in the region, and the growing salience of technology that allows for longer-range and precision strikes, even by weaker powers. In short: America’s basing architecture in the Persian Gulf was built for a substantially different military environment. During prior decades, the United States enjoyed almost overwhelming regional military superiority, particularly in the air, while Iran’s capabilities were far more limited and easier to defend against.

This balance has been changed by modern technology. In recent years, Iran has fielded increasingly capable missiles and innovative drones capable of striking targets accurately across the Persian Gulf. The United States may retain air superiority in its classic sense — that is to say, the Air Force has been able to operate effectively across Iran since the early days of the conflict. Despite this, both missiles and drones are still able to target US bases. Drones are particularly easy for Iranian forces to disperse, hide, and launch within their territory.

This is not to say that US air defenses are ineffective. American and allied defense systems intercepted more than 7,500 projectiles through the end of June. But the large number of low-cost projectiles produced by Iran almost inevitably means that some will get through. One estimate — that US and partner air defenses have missed up to 10% of incoming projectiles — shows how even a relatively small number of interception failures can produce significant damage.

One way to characterize this problem is cost disparity. Defending America’s regional bases is expensive; attacking is comparatively cheap. Missiles and drones can be intercepted by fighters, or by costly, scarce air defense interceptors. For instance, during an Iranian attack on Jordan in early September, the United States used up to 70 Patriot interceptors — each costing around $4 million — to defend against 20 Iranian ballistic missiles. The cost disparity is made worse by Iran’s large stockpile of cheap Shahed drones, which it uses in high-volume attacks meant to overwhelm air defenses.

Indeed, scale is perhaps the most significant problem. By August, the US military had reportedly expended around 80% of its THAAD inventory and around half of its Patriot interceptors, a number that will take around three years to backfill at pre-war production levels. With stockpiles running low, forces in the region have sometimes been forced to choose whether to use an interceptor or to absorb the damage on a case-by-case basis. Though the United States could undoubtedly mitigate some of this effect in the future through expensive base hardening, this cost asymmetry and the growing sophistication of Iran’s drone and missile systems make this an unpalatable option.

Allied risk-reward calculus

The war has highlighted another notable problem: the risks of hosting a US base for partner countries in the region. This is, in many ways, the opposite of what had long been assumed: that a US base would act as a deterrent to Iran and a defense for the host country. This impression has been bolstered by the fact that Iran has traditionally refrained from direct, large-scale attacks on its neighbors in the Persian Gulf, perceiving that the risks from doing so are higher than the benefits. Even when regional bases were used for more limited US strikes, Iran had largely avoided striking America’s regional partners.

Given the high stakes of this war, however, Tehran appears to have decided that restraint was no longer sufficient. During the first active phase of the war, Tehran struck at least eight countries in the region hosting US forces — the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council states, as well as Jordan and Iraq. Though the primary targets were the bases themselves, the Persian Gulf states also suffered attacks more broadly, including civilian infrastructure and energy production facilities.

These attacks have generated significant discussion within the region about the benefits and risks of hosting US bases. For instance, Emirati commentator Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, who is close to the UAE leadership, wrote: “It is time

to think about closing the American bases ... they are a burden and not a strategic asset." Hundreds of public figures in Jordan signed an open letter in late July calling for the withdrawal of US forces from their country. Thus far, there has been no overt indication that governments in the region seek to remove US forces from their countries or would be willing to abandon their security ties with the United States, but these debates pose several problems for the future of US basing in the region.

The first is related to access. Host countries may in the future demand greater say over the activities that are conducted from bases on their territory; they may reconsider whether they are willing to accept the risks posed by US military action. Many Persian Gulf states were opposed to this war, yet had to bear its risks nonetheless. Access and overflight restrictions are one way in which these states can make their voices heard in the future. Indeed, during the conflict itself, the Saudi government refused to grant airspace access rights to US forces to engage in the abortive Project Freedom, an effort to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz under US military protection.

A second problem is financial. Host governments in the Persian Gulf have long paid a significant share of the cost of building military infrastructure, along with maintenance and upkeep. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, for example, is a joint air base shared between American and Qatari forces and paid for in large part by the Qatari government. There have been open discussions in regional media about whether governments should be willing to pay the high costs of rebuilding bases after this conflict is done — or whether these costs should be passed on to the United States. One easy way for such states to get around the political difficulty of offending the United States by limiting base access would simply be to demur when asked to pay for repairs. Pentagon officials have said that decisions about which installations to rebuild will be determined by host governments' willingness to help pay.

Shifting strategic needs

Thus far, we have largely discussed the vulnerabilities revealed by the war. Yet the conflict has also revealed other strategic shifts. One such shift is that unlike other recent Middle East campaigns, much of this war was conducted without the use of Persian Gulf bases. Assets were often moved out of the region or elsewhere within it, and with long-range bombing and precision strikes remarkably effective on a tactical level even from a longer distance.

As one New York Times story described this dynamic: "Much of the land-based military is, in essence, fighting the war while working remotely, with the exception of fighter pilots and crews operating and maintaining warplanes and conducting strikes." Even air assets have typically been deployed from longer distances, meaning that the United States was able to continue major operations in the region even after personnel and equipment were dispersed in the early days of the war.

The case of Al Udeid in Qatar is again instructive here. The base hosts the US Air Force's Combined Air Operations Center, which was rendered inoperable by Iranian strikes early in the conflict. Yet the Air Force had anticipated this, moving management operations for the war to Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina, where many of the formerly deployed personnel had been shifted before the war began. Likewise, with America's naval base in Bahrain seriously damaged, the bulk of the Navy's logistics and supply functions were moved out of the Persian Gulf to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

Certainly, each of these shifts created some logistical and practical problems, such as the reported issues with supplying US aircraft carriers and other surface ships, some of which arose from the shift to Diego Garcia. These issues, however, were mostly created by the sudden shift of facilities during wartime, rather than any inherent problem with using these more distant facilities, and can likely be mitigated with proper planning. Whether these challenges are long-term problems for military effectiveness must be weighed against the significant vulnerabilities of Persian Gulf bases. The war, in short, offered a real-world test of the argument that large permanent US bases in the region are indispensable if the US needs to engage in conflict there.

Rebuilding in the Persian Gulf?

This lesson matters because Congress and the Pentagon are approaching an expensive, consequential decision about what happens next. Estimates of physical damage to US bases already run into the billions. CSIS puts the cost of repairing damaged bases and fixed infrastructure at up to $9.4 billion. Since that figure was published in June and is based only on publicly identifiable damage, it likely understates the real total.

These costs are on top of an already expensive war. In late October, the Pentagon estimated that the cost of the war was already over $47 billion, a number that will likely only grow as the war rumbles on. The war has also hit the US consumer economy hard, increasing inflation and energy prices, costing the average household several thousand dollars in extra expenses.

The Pentagon itself has not decided what it intends to rebuild. According to a recent Inspector General report, the Pentagon "did not include the cost of military construction for damaged infrastructure in its estimate because the DoW has not determined what its future posture will be in the region [and] how it will construct its bases." That uncertainty is therefore an opportunity.

In August, the Pentagon launched a review of the US presence in the Middle East, with a particular focus on whether to scale back the US footprint in the Persian Gulf. As a Washington Post report put it, the war has created a "once-in-a-generation" chance to rethink a basing structure that has otherwise persisted mostly out of inertia.



Smoke rises after Iran launched a missile attack targeting the headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet in Manama, Bahrain, on February 28, 2026.
AA

> If Congress were to decline to rebuild Persian Gulf bases, one option would be moving US forces westward within the region to Israel and Jordan. But simply relocating the Persian Gulf basing network a few hundred miles farther west or hardening existing facilities in place misses the larger lessons of the war and would do nothing to address the underlying problem of large, fixed installations sitting in Iran's backyard. For one thing, Iranian missile and drone capabilities continue to improve, just as they have over the last decade.

Washington should take full advantage of this opportunity. For its part, Congress should require a broader, formal reassessment of the regional posture before appropriating billions to rebuild a basing architecture whose risks and downsides the war has already made plain.

In-region relocation

If Congress were to decline to rebuild Persian Gulf bases, one option would be moving US forces westward within the region to Israel and Jordan, which are both farther from Iran and perceived as more supportive of US operations during the war. The Pentagon appears receptive to this idea, and on its face, the notion has some appeal. But simply relocating the Persian Gulf basing network a few hundred miles farther west or hardening existing facilities in place misses the larger lessons of the war and would do nothing to address the underlying problem of large, fixed installations sitting in Iran's backyard.

For one thing, there is little reason to assume that facilities that are comparatively safer today will remain so indefinitely. Iranian missile and drone capabilities continue to improve, just as they have over the last decade, and while the longer distance between these bases and Iran makes it easier to intercept incoming missiles and drones, it is not a guarantee. Even during this conflict, as the United States shifted more aircraft and personnel to Jordan, Iran increasingly targeted facilities within the country; three US servicemembers were killed there in July.

Basing in Israel also carries political problems. It would tie US force posture to a partner whose decisions Washington does not control, and whose conduct in the region has been increasingly destabilizing. Israel's declining popularity in the United States has become a hot button issue, particularly among younger voters incensed about the Israeli war in Gaza. Increasing the US footprint in that country would further entangle US forces with Israeli forces as they continue to pursue military action in Gaza — and would likely become a point of political contention in future elections, making it fundamentally unstable as a long-term option for US presence.

Rather than simply relocating bases within the region, Congress and the administration should instead interrogate the idea that the United States needs a large permanent footprint in the Middle East. The war with Iran has only strengthened existing arguments that large bases and forward presence are unnecessary for America's limited interests in the region. Washington's core regional interests are relatively narrow and do not require permanently stationing tens of thousands of troops across the Middle East.

For one thing, a large base network is not required to maintain a favorable regional balance of power. The Middle East is politically fragmented, and regional states have repeatedly shown that they will balance against one another. No state, inside the region or out, is positioned to dominate it. The same is true for the protection of energy flows. If a large permanent presence were the key to protecting energy flows, Washington's sprawling collection of bases should have prevented the most severe disruption to global energy markets in recent history. Ironically, US regional presence intended to protect the flow of oil lowered the barriers to a war that ended up disrupting it.

Counterterrorism is another weak justification for America's existing regional posture. The War on Terror should have put to rest the idea that large conventional deployments are an efficient way to deal with terrorist organizations. Where large deployments were used, such as in Afghanistan, they proved costly, politically corrosive, and, in some cases, counterproductive. Meanwhile, the threat posed by terror groups to the American homeland has fallen sharply. What threat remains can be managed through "over the horizon" strikes, cooperation with local partners, and smaller special operations raids when necessary.

A final point is worth emphasizing: A lighter US presence in the region would be less a departure from tradition than a return to it. During much of the Cold War — when preventing Soviet domination of the Middle East was arguably a more important US interest than anything at stake there today — the United States kept a comparatively light footprint. Washington relied heavily on regional states to balance one another and retained the ability to intervene when the balance broke down. Washington is well positioned to return to this kind of regional strategy.

Access, not garrisons

The key question for policymakers is thus what structure or system should replace the US bases damaged during the war with Iran. The United States may well need military access to the Middle East in the future (i.e., the ability to operate there when it chooses). Policymakers should thus focus on access, and not on presence — the maintenance of permanent bases in the region — when making decisions about the future of the US in the Persian Gulf. A focus on access over presence would suggest not rebuilding existing facilities and instead relocating necessary functions and units to logical alternative locations. Command and support functions should be a priority as they are both the easiest to move and among the most exposed. During the war, these functions quickly shifted to Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina and to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, respectively. Such moves should be permanent. Functions that can be performed from South Carolina or the Indian Ocean do not require US forces to be concentrated mere miles from Iranian territory.

Extra-regional facilities can also absorb most of the necessary remaining military functions. Diego Garcia, Djibouti, and existing bases in Europe can provide effective locations for intelligence, sustainment, and long-range strike capabilities, all while sitting outside the reach of most Iranian systems. Although the war in Iran has been a strategic failure, the military campaign was tactically successful, despite the need to use extra-regional bases to host forces involved in Operation Epic Fury. US forces flew 5,000 sorties from European bases in the war's first wave of fighting, with Europe serving as "the launch platform and sustainment backbone" of the war effort, according to the Pentagon's Inspector General. Even if US forces in Europe were to be dramatically downsized as part of the administration's NATO 3.0 push, some air facilities in Western Europe would likely remain to fulfill such needs. And the need for even extra-regional bases would be dramatically lessened if future administrations finally swear off America's addiction to Middle Eastern regime-change wars.

This then leaves the question of what should be done with existing Persian Gulf facilities. For the most part, this should be decided on a case-by-case basis, with an eye to damage suffered during the war. The naval facilities at NSA Bahrain could be replaced or significantly downsized rather than rebuilt in their previous form or "revamped," as the Pentagon is considering. If it is retained at all, Bahrain should serve as a modest port facility for sustaining naval forces, rather than the region's principal naval hub.

Similar logic applies to air bases. There is some merit to sustaining a transit hub in the Persian Gulf that can offer peacetime use, contingency access, and prepositioning, rather than permanent combat capability. If Washington wishes, a smaller facility in Qatar or the UAE could fulfill this role. For the Army, the most obvious candidates for closure are its facilities in Kuwait, largely holdovers from the Iraq wars, and among the sites Iran hit hardest. There is no real benefit to sustaining even a smaller base in this case.

For the United States, a posture built on access rather than presence would preserve military flexibility, allowing the United States to surge forces when needed without keeping them permanently exposed when they are not. It would be strategically sound, leaving Iran fewer American targets and reducing the risk of US forces becoming tripwires. And in a resource-constrained environment, it could free up billions in reconstruction spending for more pressing challenges.

It is cliché to note that crises often offer opportunities. Yet the damage done to America's bases during the war with Iran this year does offer an opportunity for policymakers to rethink US posture in the Middle East from first principles, rather than falling back on our existing network of bases due largely to inertia.

The article was first published by the Stimson Center.

2026 Summer Youth Olympics:

Dakar delivers damning verdict on youth development in Iranian sport



NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Sports Desk

Iran wrapped up the fourth edition of the Youth Olympic Games in Dakar with a disappointing performance, finishing 38th in the medal table with just eight medals – one gold, four silver and three bronze – in a result that raises serious questions about the country's youth development system and its ability to produce future champions.

Benyamin Soltanian saved the day on the final day of Iran's action at the multi-sport showpiece, claiming gold in the men's +73kg taekwondo event on Thursday.

Asal Goltappeh, meanwhile, claimed silver in the women's 63kg category after losing to Germany's Luna Fellinger in the final.

The first of Iran's four silver medals came in swimming, where Parsa Shahshahani clocked 2:02.74 to finish runner-up to New Zealand's Ariel Muchirahondo in the men's 200m backstroke final.

A gold medalist at July's Asian Cadet Judo Championships, Sobhan Hakimi also settled for silver in the men's -81kg category after falling to Slovenia's Maks Cebulj in the final.

In beach wrestling, meanwhile, Iran's Amirali Domirkolaei suffered a 4-0 defeat to Venezuela's Wilfredo Grabiel Rodriguez Gonzalez in the men's 60kg final.

Iran also collected a beach wrestling bronze through Reza Jalalian in the men's 80kg class, while Arash Pahali won bronze in men's wushu, finishing third in the changquan combined event in taolu.

The country's other women's medal came in futsal, where Iran bounced back from a semifinal defeat to Venezuela to beat Italy 5-2 and claim a consolation bronze.

The outcome marked a significant decline from Iran's previous appearance at the event and continued a downward trend in the country's overall standing at the global youth competition.

Resuming after a four-year delay, Dakar 2026 marked the first time the Youth Olympic Games had been staged on African soil.

Iran's result was a far cry from the country's previous campaign in Buenos Aires in 2018, when Iran enjoyed its most successful outing in the history of the competition, collecting seven gold, three silver and four bronze medals to finish seventh in the standings.

Eight years later, Iran's gold medal tally had fallen from seven to just one, while its position in the medal table dropped by 31 places.

However, the decline is not limited to a comparison with the impressive 2018 campaign.

Iran finished 26th at the inaugural Youth Olympics in Singapore in 2010 with two gold, two silver and one bronze medal, before claiming three gold and three bronze medals to place 24th in Nanjing, China, four years later.

The 38th-place finish in Dakar therefore represents the country's worst performance across its four appearances at the event.

With 29 athletes competing in 14 disciplines, Iran's delegation was expected to showcase some of the country's emerging sporting talent. Yet the medal haul fell well short of expectations, particularly given the country's previous record at the competition.

While results at international events are influenced by several factors, including the strength of the field, the participating nations and athletes' individual circumstances, the considerable gap between Iran's performances across the four editions cannot be overlooked.

Shortcomings in talent development

The Youth Olympics are about more than medals. The event provides an important platform for assessing the effectiveness of talent identification systems, discovering emerging athletes and evaluating national federations' long-term plans for developing future champions.

In that regard, Iran's performance in Dakar should be viewed as more than a disappointing position in the medal table. It offers a worrying indication of the state of the country's talent development system and raises a number of important questions.

What has gone wrong with Iran's efforts to develop the next generation of athletes? Have national federations been effective in identifying and nurturing young talent? Were preparations adequate for the level of international competition, and, perhaps most importantly, was there a sustainable strategy in place to build on the success achieved in Buenos Aires?

These are questions that Iranian sports authorities and national federations must address if the country is to reverse the downward trend.

It would be unfair to place the responsibility for the disappointing campaign entirely on the young athletes who competed in Dakar and gave their best. They may, in fact, have had the least influence over the factors behind the overall result.

Much of the responsibility should instead be sought in the performance of the country's sporting administration, national federations, talent identification structures and long-term development programs.

Warning signs must not be ignored

Although the Dakar Games have come to an end, Iran's performance should mark the beginning of a serious review of its youth sports development policies.

The athletes competing at youth level today are expected to carry the country's medal hopes at future Asian Games, world championships and Olympic Games. If signs of decline are already evident at this crucial stage of their development, the country's sporting authorities cannot afford to ignore them.

The fall from seventh in Buenos Aires to 38th in Dakar, coupled with the reduction in gold medals from seven to one, is a record that demands attention.

Dakar should serve as a serious wake-up call for Iranian sports officials – a warning about a generation of athletes whose potential must be identified, supported and developed today if they are to deliver success on the biggest stages tomorrow.

Open SCO Cup:

Parhizgar wins gold in men's judo as Iran bags three medals

Sports Desk

Elyas Parhizgar got Iran off the mark at the Open SCO Cup in Moscow by claiming gold in the men's judo competition on Sunday.

A winner of four gold medals at this season's IJF Asian Open, Parhizgar defeated a Russian judoka in the semifinals before overcoming a Tajik opponent to claim the top prize in the -81kg division.

Amir-Abbas Movahed added a second judo medal to Iran's haul later in the day by claiming bronze in the men's +100kg class.

Elsewhere at the multi-sport event, Mobina Alinasab bagged a bronze medal in the women's rapid chess competition.

The Iranian woman grandmaster collected seven points to finish behind Belarus' Aliaksandra Tarasenka, who also scored seven points but edged Alinasab into runner-up spot on a superior tiebreak score.

Tarasenka's compatriot Varvara Poliakova tallied 7.5 points after nine rounds to win the gold medal.

International master Anousha Mahdian was the other Iranian player in the women's rapid competition but missed out on the podium, finishing fourth with 6.5 points. International masters Reza Mahdavi and Arash Daghli, meanwhile, represented the country in the men's rapid event, finishing fourth and seventh with six and four points, respectively.

Bringing together more than 2,000 athletes from Shanghai Cooperation Organisation member states and invited teams, the Open SCO Cup will run until next Monday in the Russian capital, with around 100 sets of medals up for grabs.

The competition program features 11 sports: table tennis, trampoline gymnastics, sambo, sport climbing, artistic gymnastics, weightlifting, fencing, rhythmic gymnastics, chess, judo and wushu.

Iran is being represented by a 70-member delegation competing in sport climbing, judo, weightlifting, artistic gymnastics, chess and table tennis.



Iranian judoka Elyas Parhizgar won men's -81kg gold medal at the Open SCO Cup in Moscow, Russia.
IJF

Mozaffar eyes fresh faces as Iran continues women's futsal rebuild

Sports Desk

Iran women's futsal head coach Shahrzad Mozaffar says the national team will continue its youth-oriented rebuilding process, with the door remaining open to talented newcomers who could earn call-ups to future training camps.

The Iranian coach made the remarks after her team won the title at a friendly tournament in China, also featuring the host nation and Hong Kong, last week.



FFIRI

Mozaffar's side defeated Hong Kong 6-0 and 9-1, either side of a 3-1 victory over China, before falling 2-1 in a second match against the hosts but still managing to lift the trophy on goal difference.

Speaking to Mehr News Agency, Mozaffar said the event came at an important stage for a team that has undergone significant changes since last year's Women's Futsal World Cup.

"Only five players from our 14-member World Cup squad remain in the team. Naturally, bringing so many new players together and developing an understanding among them takes time. We needed to put them to a serious test in actual match conditions," she said.

"Iranian women's futsal has made considerable progress in recent years and is now one of Asia's leading powers. Playing in another country and facing foreign opponents was particularly important from a mental and psychological perspective, especially for players making their first international appearances," she added.

Mozaffar also addressed Iran's first-ever defeat to China, attributing the result largely to physical exhaustion and a demanding travel and match schedule.

Several factors contributed to the loss, she said, with the players struggling to recover after a hectic domestic and international schedule that saw them play five matches in the space of nine days.

The coach stressed that results were not her main priority in China, describing the tournament as an opportunity to assess the team at the beginning of a new rebuilding process.

"Personally, the results were not the main concern for me. What mattered was testing the team at the start of a new journey. Considering the extensive changes, the limited time the players had spent together and the difficult travel and match conditions, I believe the team passed the test," she said.

"I am very satisfied with the players' performances, their attitude and conduct, as well as the unity and positive atmosphere within the squad.

"When you make such extensive changes and bring in so many young players, you cannot expect immediate results. They need time to develop, build cohesion and gain confidence. I hope this process will eventually produce positive results at major competitions such as the Asian Cup and the World Cup," she added.

The tournament was part of Iran's preparations for the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games, which were originally scheduled to start on December 11 in Riyadh but were postponed until late March due to security concerns in the region.

Mozaffar played down the impact of the postponement of the multi-sport event, explaining that with the domestic league continuing until March, there would be little room for extended national team training camps.

Mozaffar further indicated that several players have caught the coaching staff's attention through their performances in the Iranian league and could be added to the national team squad by mid-season.

"The changes we have made so far are only the beginning, and the process will continue. The doors of the national team remain open to talented players," she said.

Falak-ol-Aflak Castle reopens to visitors

Iranica Desk

The historic Falak-ol-Aflak Castle Complex and Lorestan's Museum of Anthropology have reopened to the public and tourists following repairs to damage sustained during the recent war.

The complex was struck in a missile attack by the US and Israel on March 8, 2026. Several parts of the site, including historic buildings and its archaeological and anthropology museums, were damaged, according to chtn.ir

Seyyed Amin Qasemi, head of Lorestan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, announced the reopening, which was attended by Saeed Pourali, the provincial deputy governor for political and security affairs, and Ehsan Karamzadeh, deputy governor for development coordination.

Qasemi said the reopening would allow the public, cultural heritage enthusiasts and tourists to visit the historic castle and the Museum of Anthropology once again.

Restoration and repair work began shortly after the damage occurred and continued even during the final days of the war, he added.



IRNA



IRNA

Emergency restoration begins at Haftshuyeh Mosque

Iranica Desk

The first phase of an emergency restoration and conservation project has begun at the historic Haftshuyeh Mosque in Isfahan Province.

Seyyed Rouhollah Seyedalasgari, deputy head of Isfahan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, told IRNA that the mosque is a valuable historical monument dating back to the 13th century CE, with considerable architectural significance.

He said the mosque had suffered deterioration over the centuries, with parts of its main dome chamber, Ivans and prayer halls collapsing. Despite some limited restoration work carried out in recent decades, the monument has long suffered from neglect and still requires substantial conservation efforts.

Highlighting the challenges facing the site the official said its most pressing concern was the condition of its magnificent mihrab (prayer niche). A two-phase restoration plan has been drawn up, with the initial phase focusing on emergency conservation measures.

The main objective of the first phase, he said, is to protect the mosque's distinctive mihrab by installing a canopy and protective covering to shield it from weather-related damage.

Located in the village of Haftshuyeh, the mosque is listed as a national heritage site in Iran. Dating back to the Seljuk period, much of the structure has fallen into ruin, with its dome and walls having collapsed and sustained extensive damage.

Reading Room

Iran played key role in shaping Islamic civilization: *Khatami*

Iranica Desk

Former Iranian reformist president Seyyed Mohammad Khatami sent a message to a two-day conference held at Ardakan University on November 15-16 in honor of Reza Davari Ardakani, one of Iran's most prominent contemporary philosophers.

Reflecting on Davari's intellectual and moral stature, Khatami writes: "To speak of Professor Davari is to speak of knowledge and virtue, both intellectual and moral."

This esteemed man has spent his noble life in pursuit of truth (which is exceedingly difficult to attain). His heart has beaten in harmony with the pain and understanding of a human being who, through most periods of history, has been in bondage to his own carnal desires, or to the ambitions of tyrannical powers, or to both. He has sought the liberation of this distinguished creation of God from these chains (which, of course, must be removed by the human being himself). For this reason, he has continually warned and reminded humanity, and has never refrained from showing the way. Throughout his life, and particularly during the later stage of his distinguished life, the issues concerning Iran and the Iranian people have been of greater concern to him, according to IRNA.

Modern civilization is an astonishing phenomenon, and it has brought about extraordinary and immense achievements for humanity. It has freed human lives from numerous hardships, deprivations, and sources of dissatisfaction, although these achievements have not been distributed fairly and justly among humanity, and parts of the world have consequently suffered even greater hardships.

This great and astonishing phenomenon, however, has also given rise to new crises and new forms of suffering. Some of these are known, while others, although they are felt or perceived intuitively, have not yet been properly understood or defined.

Modern knowledge and its mighty offspring, technology, which was supposed to provide on earth, and for the human being (who has been placed in God's position), the promised paradise of religions, have, in certain respects, created for humanity a hell just as burning as the one described by the ancients.

What was supposed to be a tool at the disposal and in the service of human beings, intended to improve life and make it easier and more pleasurable, has, in a sense, taken possession of the human being's soul and world. A clear example of this is what we see these days in the form of the powerful, unchained monster (yet devoid of feeling, emotion, and so on) known as "artificial intelligence," which could become the source of a future for humanity far more terrifying than the present situation. This is something that has even made the creators of this phenomenon themselves concerned.

What has subjected us, as a part of the world outside the sphere of Western civilization, to an intensified crisis, in addition to what has briefly been mentioned, is the absence of thought, confusion in thinking, and delusions entertained by those who claim to have remedies for these illnesses and aspire to a better future. This is a great affliction whose severity has been increased by foreign domination and the insatiable expansionism of hegemonic powers, which are engaged in plundering our material and spiritual wealth.

"We have, so to speak, been thrust into modernity, which is, in a sense, the very spirit of modern civilization. There is no escaping it, nor is there any alternative to it, for life has become impossible without accepting many of the conditions imposed by modern civilization."

Modern civilization and modernity, however, like every other human experience, are not the end of history. The effects and signs of postmodernity have clearly become apparent. The criticisms and objections raised within the West itself, which are more fundamental than those made by non-Western peoples against this civilization and its foundations, as well as the deconstructions that have taken place and continue to take place, all point to the eventual end of this era. And although



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there are speculations about the future, no one truly knows what postmodernity is, or where and how it will emerge.

Taking into consideration what history teaches us, one can venture to make the following statement: given its potential capacities and resources, significant parts of the non-modern world could play a major role in this historical transformation, provided that:

1. They emerge from alienation, self-loss, and feelings of inferiority; free themselves from thoughtlessness and confusion in thinking; and
2. They come to know the West, and the foundations and structures of existing civilization, more thoroughly and impartially; and
3. They learn lessons from history.

For us Iranians, who have created one of the oldest civilizations, if not the oldest, and who have also played an exceptional role in the creation and expansion of the civilization known as Islamic civilization; and who possess roots in a strong and deeply established tradition, grounded in an Islamic-Iranian foundation (from which there is, in any case, no escape), and who, fortunately, have not yet become entirely severed from it: can we Iranians find a path toward a better future?

If the answer to this question is affirmative, we must accept the conditions without which the answer would necessarily be negative. The most important of these conditions is this: We must possess the capacity and the courage to exercise ijtihad within our own tradition (a tradition that, even if it does indeed have a sacred foundation and origin, nevertheless...). Whatever takes root in the human mind and becomes part of human life is human, not sacred. Rigidity in adhering to outward forms, and neglecting the underlying substance as it fades into the background in favor of the outer shell and appearance, are themselves major obstacles to ijtihad.

Furthermore, we must free ourselves from the chains of two emotional factors in our relationship with the West: fascination and hatred, both of which are obstacles to understanding. Only then can we acquire, in addition to knowledge and understanding, the capacity to exercise ijtihad with regard to it.

In that case, we can be hopeful about the future.

I have said it many times, and I say it again: Tradition is not to be rejected, but critically examined; the West and modernity are not to be rejected, but critically examined.

Liberation from this unfortunate situation, which is possible through the grace and benevolence of the Almighty, undoubtedly does not mean a return to pre-modernity, for such a thing is impossible and an unattainable wish. Unfortunately, in many positions and statements, we clearly or implicitly witness a regressive movement toward pre-modernity and calls for such a return. The movement, however, must be toward postmodernity.

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Over $32m approved for restoration of Iran's war-damaged heritage

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has approved $32.7 million to repair 149 historic buildings damaged in the 40-day war, Culture Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri said on Monday.

Tehran and Isfahan accounting for nearly two-thirds of the affected sites damaged during the war that began in late February 2026.

The damage has affected some of Iran's best-known heritage landmarks. Damage to Tehran's Golestan Palace and historic sites in Isfahan, including Chehel Sotoun Palace and the Jameh Mosque.

Reports have also documented damage to historic architectural features and decorative elements.

"The government has initially allocated $3.7 million to launch restoration work, with the remaining funds to be released gradually," he said.

Tehran accounts for the largest number of damaged sites, with 63 buildings affected. Isfahan, in central Iran, has 33, while western Kurdestan province, including the area around Sanandaj, has about 12, Salehi-Amiri said.

The restoration budget was initially estimated at 75 trillion rials, or about $27.9 million, based on 2025 costs, he explained.

It was revised to 88 trillion rials, or about $32.7 million, to reflect rising expenses this year, Salehi-Amiri added.

"The funding was approved by the national reconstruction committee, chaired by the first vice president, following a nationwide assessment of war damage," he said.

Restoration priorities will be set by experts according to the extent of damage, the severity of destruction and each building's historical and architectural significance.

The ministry will also provide regular updates on the work, Salehi-Amiri said.

Salehi-Amiri described the reconstruction effort as a national responsibility to protect Iran's historical and cultural legacy.

The dollar conversions are based on an exchange rate of 2,690,000 rials per U.S. dollar.



Damage caused by US and Israeli strikes on Iran is seen at the Qajar-era Golestan Palace in Tehran, Iran, March 3, 2026.
ISNA

Pezeshkian says tackling corruption key to equitable resource distribution

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that fighting corruption, smuggling and economic abuses was essential to ensuring an equitable distribution of public resources.

Speaking at a meeting on tax affairs on November 15, Pezeshkian said that better access to citizens' financial data would help identify people in need and expand support for them.

The government needed accurate, verifiable information to identify vulnerable people, he added.

"Our goal today is to identify people in need in society and provide them with more assistance," he said.

He called on government agencies to share relevant data with the National Tax Administration.

Linking national identification numbers, postal codes and financial and economic records, he said, would make activities easier to monitor and investigate.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian
ISNA

Pezeshkian said tax authorities were regarded worldwide as among the strongest institutions for combating financial violations.

According to the law, individuals must declare their property, real estate and other assets to the tax administration. Relevant agencies must also cooperate to prevent unauthorized construction, property disputes, preferential treatment, smuggling and corruption.

Pezeshkian criticized mismanagement and poor enforcement of laws, saying people who lived honestly were dissatisfied with economic abuses, preferential treatment and corruption.

He said the government was responsible for resolving public problems, safeguarding people's security, health and livelihoods, and protecting their rights in the distribution of public resources.

Tehran university seeks China studies center to deepen academic ties

Arts & Culture Desk

The University of Tehran has proposed hosting a branch of the Global Center for China Studies in Iran, as the two countries seek to expand academic cooperation.

University President Mohammad Hossein Omid made the proposal to boost cooperation through joint research, faculty and student exchanges, and language programs.

He attended the 24th China International Talent Exchange Conference in Shanghai on November 11 and 12 as the only invited speaker from Iran.

The gathering brought together university presidents and academic figures from 42 countries to discuss cooperation among Global South nations, cultural and scientific exchanges, China studies and mutual understanding between Eastern and Western civilizations.

Omid highlighted the historical role of the Silk Road in connecting Iran and China and called for that shared heritage to underpin modern academic cooperation.

He proposed joint programs in linguistics, international relations, engineering, technology, environmental studies and water resource management.



A file photo shows the Shanghai skyline at night.
planetofhotel.com

At Fudan University in Shanghai, Omid met President Jin Li for the first official meeting between the universities' leaders since they signed a cooperation agreement last year.

They discussed faculty and student exchanges, joint research, summer programs for Iranian students and a doctoral scholarship involving Fudan, Shanghai Jiao Tong and Tongji universities.

The University of Tehran has identified faculty members interested in joint projects, while Fudan is expected to nominate researchers. Omid invited Li to visit Iran.

At Beijing Language and Culture University, Omid discussed Chinese language training, graduate admissions and a proposed China studies center in Tehran.

The university offered to host Tehran faculty at its campuses in Hainan and Xiong'an to teach courses in English on Iranian culture and history, West Asian history and regional studies.

The sides also discussed exchanging Persian and Chinese academic books, supporting Iranian studies centers in China and creating a library section for works donated by the University of Tehran.

Iran, Oman push for closer cooperation on drug control

Social Desk

Iran and Oman should step up cooperation on drug prevention, treatment and trafficking, including intelligence-sharing on maritime smuggling, Iran's anti-narcotics chief said on Sunday.

Hossein Zolfaqari, the president's representative and secretary-general of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters, made the remarks during a meeting with Oman's ambassador to Tehran, Ya'arub bin Qahtan Al Busaidi. He described ties with Oman as strategic and said closer cooperation was essential to tackling a challenge shared by countries worldwide.

Zolfaqari praised Oman's role in promoting regional security and said Iran was ready to share information and experience on drug enforcement, prevention and treatment.

He proposed joint meetings and working groups to speed up practical cooperation under previous agreements. Referring to a law Oman passed in 2026 on combating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, Zolfaqari said Iran also had several initiatives underway. The 69-article law, divided into nine chapters, covers the production, import, export, transportation and trade of narcotics, as well as regulation, medical use and penalties.

Iranian authorities seized more than 150 metric tons of drugs nationwide in the first six months of 2026, he said.

He described prevention as the most important part of tackling addiction and said Iran had drawn up a new plan to strengthen it. The plan includes classifying people with addiction and developing different treatment protocols. He also cited new measures to reduce harm and said Iran was reviewing its anti-narcotics law and related policies.

Zolfaqari said maritime drug trafficking was a shared concern and called for greater information-sharing between the two countries.

He also pointed to more than 1,400 types of new psychoactive substances, known as NPS, as another area for joint action. Al Busaidi stressed the importance of raising awareness about synthetic drugs, their different types and ways to combat them.



TINNAKORN JORRUANG/ GETTY IMAGES

He said the deep historical ties between Iran and Oman would withstand any regional turmoil.