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China's open, inclusive economy continues to create global opportunities



By Cong Peiwu
Ambassador of China to Iran

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Recently, the world's eyes have been on China and Shenzhen, where the 33rd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting was successfully held. At the meeting, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward a series of Chinese proposals on building an Asia-Pacific community and promoting shared prosperity in the region, laying out a clear list of opportunities. His proposals charted the right course and injected strong momentum into peace, development, cooperation and win-win outcomes in the Asia-Pacific and the wider world.

The most significant outcome of this year's APEC China Year was the adoption of the ambitious, pragmatic and comprehensive APEC Leaders' Shenzhen Outlook, which charts a new blueprint for Asia-Pacific cooperation. President Xi put forward four proposals for building an Asia-Pacific community in the new circumstances: solidarity and mutual assistance, openness and integration, enterprise and innovation, and inclusive development. He also proposed an overarching framework of "four pillars and eight key areas" for the Asia-Pacific community, comprising four pillars—economy and trade, connectivity, innovation, and development—and eight key areas: the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), physical connectivity, institutional connectivity, people-to-people connectivity, the digital economy, emerging technologies, capacity building, and sustainable growth. These proposals underscore China's firm commitment to openness, inclusiveness and shared development, and offer Chinese insights and solutions for advancing shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific and addressing challenges in global economic governance.

The APEC China Year coincides with the opening year of China's 15th Five-Year Plan. At the APEC CEO Summit, President Xi Jinping made clear that China's 15th Five-Year Plan is not only a blueprint for the country's own development, but also a list of opportunities for promoting economic growth in the Asia-Pacific and the wider world. In this opening year, China's economy has delivered an impressive report card: GDP grew 4.6 percent year on year in the first three quarters, with an increase in economic output of 5.7 trillion yuan—the largest for the same period in the past five years. Total goods trade grew 18.8 percent year on year, reaching a record high for the same period. China's vast and open market, immense development potential and mutually reinforcing environment for cooperation will continue to serve as one of the world's strongest, most stable and most reliable engines of economic growth.

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Tehran, Baghdad discuss border security, bilateral ties

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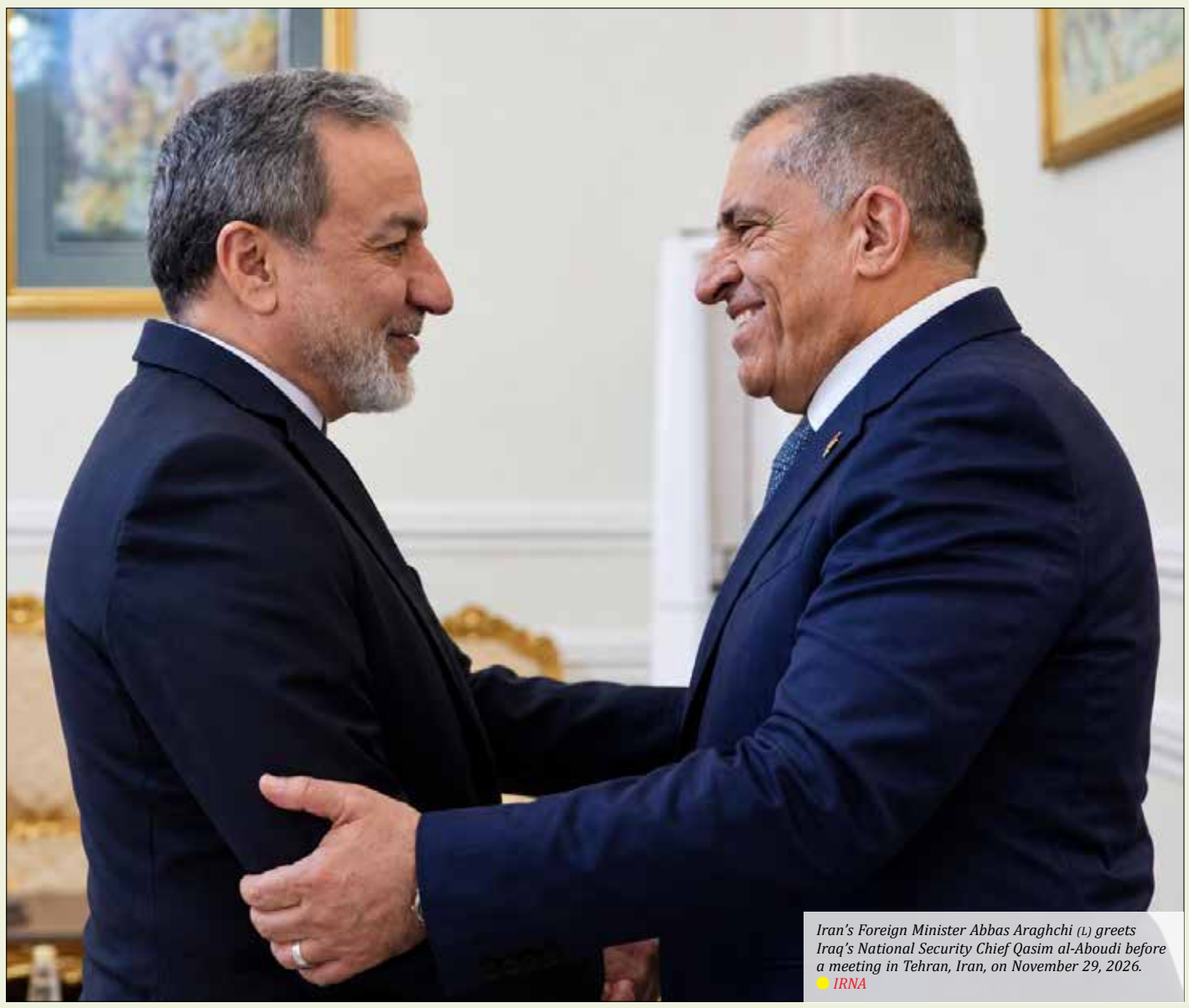

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) greets Iraq's National Security Chief Qasim al-Aboudi before a meeting in Tehran, Iran, on November 29, 2026.
IRNA



OPINION

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President says Tehran will pursue talks but will not bow to pressure



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) speaks during a meeting with the country's trade guilds and businessmen in Tehran on November 29, 2026.
president.ir

International Desk

Iran is pursuing diplomatic efforts and hopes negotiations to end the ongoing war will succeed, President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday, adding that Tehran would not bow to aggression or coercion and would stand firm against attempts to force it into submission.

"We are trying to pursue the path of negotiations rationally, but we are not going to bow our heads in the face of aggression and whatever wrongdoing our enemies commit. We will not accept humiliation and will stand against force and bullying," Pezeshkian said.

Speaking at a meeting with the country's trade guilds and businessmen, Pezeshkian said managing energy and conserving consumption are of great importance at the current situation.

He accused Iran's enemies of seeking to stoke public discontent and create unrest in the country, saying all Iranians had a responsibility to prevent those efforts from succeeding.

"If we join hands, we can overcome the crisis that has been created, and the country's problems can be resolved through unity, cohesion and solidarity," he said.

He called on Iranians to work together to counter those efforts, saying the enemy is seeking to force the Iranian people into submission through air, sea and land blockades.

"But we can overcome this crisis through cooperation and solidarity," he said.

Pezeshkian reiterated that his government is engaged in diplomatic efforts and hoped diplomacy would bear fruit, while insisting that Iran would not yield to pressure.

He also said the aggressors have faced considerable difficulties during the US-Israeli war against Iran, adding that the results of the elections held in the United States and Israel had demonstrated this.

Hostile drone hits Iranian fishing boat off Persian Gulf coast

Two more tankers hit mines in Strait of Hormuz

International Desk



REUTERS

A hostile drone struck an Iranian fishing boat off the coastal county of Sirik in Hormozgan Province, leaving one person missing and two others requiring hospital treatment.

Ahmad Nafisi, deputy governor of Hormozgan, reported on Sunday that the incident occurred at approximately 3:30 a.m. local time.

The fishing boat belonged to a resident of Sirik and carried three people when the drone struck it, Nafisi explained.

Two of the three occupants were subsequently found and transferred to Sirik County Hospital to receive medical treatment; however, the fate of the third passenger remains unknown, prompting search teams to continue operations to locate the missing individual.

The latest incident follows several reported attacks on civilian sites and fishing vessels in Hormozgan, including a US strike on a wedding gathering in Kuhestak, Sirik County, on September 1.

At least four people, including a four-year-old child, were killed and more than 60 others were wounded when a missile struck a residential home during the celebration.

Meanwhile, two other oil tankers suffered explosions and caught fire after hitting naval mines while attempting to navigate an unauthorized southern route through the Strait of Hormuz, according to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy.

The IRGC Navy said the incidents occurred in the early hours of Sunday after the vessels ignored maritime regulations and warnings and attempted to pass through a "fabricated" southern route.

One of the vessels was a supertanker carrying more than two million barrels of crude oil, the statement said, adding that it hit a naval mine and exploded off the northern coast of Khasab.

The second tanker struck a mine and caught fire while leaving the strait in its eastern section, it further said.

The IRGC Navy also warned tanker owners and shipping companies against risking their remaining vessels and assets by relying on false claims and promises by US Central Command (CENTCOM) commanders.

In recent weeks, Iranian naval forces have reported several incidents involving oil tankers that allegedly entered restricted areas after switching off their navigation and identification systems.

Iran has imposed restrictions on maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz in response to the US-Israeli aggression against the country, insisting that the security of the vital waterway cannot be separated from respect for Iran's sovereignty and legitimate demands.

The Iranian Army's Air Defense Force also shot down a hostile reconnaissance drone over the Strait of Hormuz, above the waters of the Persian Gulf.

In a statement on Saturday, the Army's public relations office said the drone was detected and destroyed by domestically developed air defense systems operating under the country's integrated air defense network.

It added that the drone belonged to an "invading" enemy and was flying over the Persian Gulf when it was intercepted.

Tehran, Baghdad discuss border security, bilateral ties

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and visiting Iraq's National Security Chief Qasim al-Aboudi discussed strengthening bilateral ties and border security following Baghdad's move to close several border crossings with Iran.

Iraqi national security adviser's media office said in a statement on Sunday that the two sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and expand cooperation across various fields in pursuit of the common interests of the two neighboring nations, the statement said.

The talks also covered border crossings, border control and plans drawn up by Ali al-Zaidi, Iraq's prime minister, to deploy Iraqi forces along the borders to contain security threats.

The two sides also discussed the handling of Iranian opposition groups operating inside Iraqi territory, as well as unofficial border crossings outside the control of Iraq's federal government.

The meeting came as Tehran and Baghdad sought to maintain diplomatic contacts and address security concerns along their shared border.

Both sides underscored the need to maintain communication and sustain relations between Tehran and Baghdad, the statement said.

The Iranian side also voiced Tehran's support for measures taken by Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi to combat corruption and strengthen security and stability.

Al-Aboudi, who arrived in Tehran on Saturday, also met with Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, on Saturday evening. During the meeting, Iran's top security official said that economic relations between the two neighbors should not be undermined by foreign interference.

"An independent, powerful and developed Iraq can serve as one of the pillars of a new security order in the region," Rezaee said during the meeting.

The remarks came amid reports that Iraq's increasing restrictions on the flow of trade and passengers through border crossings with Iran are the result of US pressure on Baghdad to reduce its economic exchanges with its eastern neighbor.

Parliament passes bill to reform Intelligence Ministry



ICANA

National Desk

Iran's Parliament passed a bill on Sunday making amendment to a law requiring intelligence minister to have religious education at the level of ijtihad.

The bill, which still needs final approval, eases a requirement in place for more than four decades that candidates have advanced qualifications in Islamic law.

The post of intelligence minister has not been permanently filled since the previous minister was assassinated during the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

Esmail Khatib, a 65-year-old cleric who had held the position since 2021, was killed in March during the most intense phase of the aggression.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on Sunday urged the government to appoint a permanent new minister "without delay" once the legislation receives final approval, citing the "current circumstances" as grounds for the urgency. Under the amendment, candidates must have attained "the level of ijtihad or hold a master's degree, alongside intelligence experience and at least 10 years in middle or senior management," according to ISNA news agency.

The previous law, in place since 1983, required the minister to have religious education at the level of ijtihad, without giving an alternative.

The bill still needs approval from the Guardian Council.

The lawmakers also approved a draft submitted to the parliament to establish two new organizations within the Intelligence Ministry.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Building materials exports to Eurasia jumps 30%, trade official says

Economy Desk


IRNA

Iran's exports of building and construction products to member states of the Eurasian Economic Union have surged by about 30% following the implementation of a free trade agreement, a deputy head of the country's Trade Promotion Organization said on Sunday.

Amir Roshan-Bakhsh Qanbari said the products included copper and polyethylene pipes, taps, fittings and other plumbing equipment, although he did not specify the period covered by the growth figure or provide the value of exports to the five-member bloc.

"Iran exported about $74 million worth of copper pipes, $70 million of polyethylene pipes, $97 million of taps and fittings, and $30 million of reinforced pipes and hoses last year," he said, according to IRNA.

Other exports included $6 million of brass pipes, $26 million of certain industrial pipes, $37 million of related products and fittings, and $14 million of flexible pipes and products.

The figures cover exports of the products concerned and do not indicate how much was shipped to Eurasian markets. The free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union, comprising Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, took effect on May 15, 2025. It removed tariffs on most goods traded between the two sides.

Trade between Iran and the bloc increased by 22% in the first year of the agreement. That broader growth figure covers trade in both directions and should not be taken as the growth rate for Iranian building materials exports.

Qanbari said the agreement had helped create opportunities for Iranian manufacturers, adding that the bloc's geographical proximity and logistical links made it a potential market for building materials, plumbing equipment and technical and engineering services.

He said discussions with Russian and Belarusian counterparts had included cooperation in supplying goods, carrying out projects and contracting work.

"Iranian manufacturers and suppliers needed to take a more active part in business meetings and develop a better understanding of local markets," he added.

Russia was among the markets being targeted by Iranian exporters, Qanbari said, referring to talks with the Russian Builders Union and other commercial representatives on expanding sales of Iranian building products and cooperation in supplying and implementing projects.

He also cited a recent Iranian delegation's visit to Belarus, where building materials and plumbing products were among the subjects discussed.

"Meeting local standards would be essential for Iranian companies seeking to expand their presence in those markets," he said.

Qanbari described building, kitchen and plumbing products as sectors with significant export potential and said expanding their overseas sales could help reduce Iran's reliance on exports of raw and semi-processed commodities.

Iran, Belarus set to ease vehicle approval barriers in EAEU market

Economy Desk


IRNA

Iran and Belarus are seeking to expand cooperation on vehicle testing and type approval, as Tehran looks to address technical barriers facing its automotive manufacturers in the Eurasian market.

Mahmoudreza Taheri, deputy for conformity assessment at Iran's National Standards Organisation, said on Sunday that officials from the two countries had discussed vehicle testing, type approval, production conformity assessment, laboratory cooperation and the transfer of technical expertise, IRNA reported.

Taheri made the remarks during a meeting with Belarusian Ambassador Dmitry Koltsov in Tehran.

He said Iranian testing bodies, including the Iranian Standards and Quality Inspection Company (ISQI) and AQS, had capabilities in technical inspections, fuel consumption and emissions tests, as well as crash tests.

The talks follow an October 2 memorandum of understanding between Iran's Iranian Standards and Quality Inspection Company (ISQI) and Belarusian testing center Centromash, which focused on vehicle testing, safety standards and research and development.

A report by Centromash said the October meeting also brought together representatives of Russian and Belarusian automakers and Iranian commercial vehicle manufacturers. Participants discussed obstacles facing manufacturers seeking vehicle type approval in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) market.

The EAEU, which includes Belarus, applies common technical requirements for the safety of wheeled vehicles and their components.

Iran's free trade agreement with the bloc took effect in May 2025.

The agreement provides a framework for considering the acceptance of conformity assessment results from the other side, subject to technical requirements and possible separate arrangements. It does not, however, establish automatic mutual recognition of all test results.

ECONOMIC LENS

Energy security, its impact on global economic dynamics



By Mohammadreza Hosseini Aliabad
Researcher in int'l economics

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

Energy has always been one of the fundamental pillars of national economic power. However, in today's world, its significance extends far beyond supplying fuel for industries, transportation, and everyday activities. Reliable access to energy resources, the ability to transport them, and the capacity to manage energy costs have become decisive factors in economic competitiveness and countries' positions within the international system. Consequently, energy security is no longer merely a specialized issue concerning the oil and gas sectors; it has evolved into a major component of global economic stability and development. Recent developments have demonstrated that disruptions in energy supplies, even when confined to a particular geographical region, can have far-reaching consequences for global markets. Rising oil and gas prices, increased transportation costs, higher industrial production expenses, and ultimately mounting inflationary pressures can trigger a chain of economic repercussions across countries. This reality highlights the extent to which modern economies depend on an interconnected and complex network of energy production, transportation, and consumption.

One of the most important dimensions of energy security is the mutual dependence between energy producers and consumers. Countries with substantial oil and gas reserves possess considerable potential to influence international markets. Meanwhile, industrialized nations and energy-importing economies are constantly seeking to secure reliable and affordable access to these resources. This interdependence has made energy relations an integral part of international economic affairs. Under such circumstances, any changes in transportation routes, export policies, or production levels in supplying countries can influence economic decisions across different parts of the world.

Furthermore, energy security is not limited to the volume of underground reserves or production capacity. Transportation infrastructure, pipelines, export terminals, ports, electricity networks, and even energy storage technologies play decisive roles in ensuring a stable supply. A country may possess abundant energy resources, but without adequate infrastructure and sufficient investment, it may be unable to utilize this potential effectively. For this reason, investment in energy infrastructure and the modernization of transmission networks have become major priorities in economic policymaking across many countries.

Alongside oil and natural gas, developments in renewable energy have also transformed the concept of energy security. The expansion of solar, wind, and other clean energy technologies has created new opportunities to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Nevertheless, the energy transition does not mean the end of the importance of conventional energy sources. For years to come, the global economy will continue to rely on a combination of energy resources, and countries' success in this transition will depend on their ability to strike a balance between security of supply, economic affordability, and environmental considerations.

Another important point is that the transition toward clean energy is creating new forms of dependency. Access to critical minerals, battery technology, power generation equipment, and the supply chains for solar panels and wind turbines has now become part of the broader economic competition among nations. Therefore, future energy security will not be concerned solely with oil and gas; countries' ability to access technology, raw materials, and the technical expertise required for energy production will become increasingly important.

In this context, developing economies face even greater challenges. Rising energy import costs can limit the financial resources available for infrastructure development, education, and public services. On the other hand, fluctuations in energy prices do not always represent an opportunity for exporting countries. Excessive dependence on natural resource exports for national revenues and public budgets makes their economies vulnerable to price shocks. Economic diversification and the efficient allocation of energy revenues are therefore among the most important strategies for reducing such vulnerabilities.

For Iran, energy security is significant from two perspectives. First, the country possesses extensive oil and natural gas resources, which can provide a foundation for expanding economic cooperation and strengthening its presence in regional markets. Second, there is an urgent need to improve consumption management, develop infrastructure, and invest in renewable energy. Transforming energy resources into a sustainable economic advantage requires a perspective that goes beyond the export of raw materials and gives serious attention to value chains, technology, productivity, and investment. Ultimately, energy security should be regarded as one of the fundamental pillars of global economic stability. Sustaining economic growth requires energy that is reliable, accessible, and affordable. Countries capable of establishing a balance between resource diversification, infrastructure development, technological advancement, and consumption management will enjoy a more stable position in the future global economy. The reality is that, in today's global economic landscape, power does not belong exclusively to countries with greater natural resources; rather, those that can transform resources and technology into economic security and sustainable development will be better positioned to succeed.

China's open, inclusive ...

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As the 15th Five-Year Plan advances steadily, China will continue to pursue high-quality development and shape "China Opportunity 2.0" through new quality productive forces. This will bring the world not only market dividends, but also innovation dividends, opening up new horizons for industrial upgrading, innovative applications and green development. In the first three quarters, new growth drivers—including advanced manufacturing, the digital and intelligent economy, and modern services—contributed more than 40 percent to economic growth. The value added of large-scale equipment manufacturing and high-tech manufacturing grew 10.2 percent and 14.3 percent year on year, respectively. Frontier technologies, including large AI models, are advancing rapidly. China accounted for more than 90 percent of global humanoid robot shipments, maintained its position as the world's largest producer and seller of new energy vehicles, and accelerated development in fields such as innovative drugs. "China Opportunity 2.0" will offer countries around the world broad-based innovation empowerment and high-return investment opportunities, while providing powerful impetus for the reshaping of global industrial chains.

At a time when unilateralism and protectionism are putting the global trading system under strain and economic globalization is facing headwinds, President Xi Jinping stressed at the APEC CEO Summit the need to firmly uphold the WTO-centered, rules-based multilateral trading system. China is accelerating efforts to develop a vast, open market and expand imports of high-quality goods and services. It has successfully hosted the China International Import Expo (CIIE) for nine consecutive years and organized nearly 100 events under the "Export to China" initiative. China will continue to host such events, providing efficient channels for quality products from around the world to enter the Chinese market. The continued expansion of imports will not only generate additional growth for global trade, but also contribute to building an open world economy through Chinese modernization. China has been the world's second-largest import market for 17 consecutive years and is a major export destination for nearly 80 countries. In the first three quarters, China's merchandise imports grew by 22.3 percent year on year, while exports rose by 16.4 percent, with import growth outpacing export growth by 5.9 percentage points. The outlook for China's imports remains promising.

Recently, Iran participated in the 9th CIIE in Shanghai, where its distinctive products were warmly received by Chinese consumers. Iran set up its national pavilion, modeled on the Gate of All Nations of the ancient Persian Empire, reflecting the country's rich historical and cultural heritage. It also organized Iranian companies to participate in the business exhibition, showcasing products and technologies from traditional sectors to cutting-edge fields such as nanotechnology. During the expo, China and Iran also held an investment and trade forum to explore ways to expand channels for Iranian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to export to China and discuss cooperation in technology and investment. The event served as a bridge for further deepening economic and trade cooperation between China and Iran.

The stronger the headwinds, the greater the resolve. No matter how the international landscape may evolve, China will continue to expand high-standard opening up and remain steadfast in promoting the high-quality development of the Belt and Road cooperation, creating favorable conditions for mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation. China stands ready to work with Iran and other countries to harness the power of innovation for growth and pursue shared prosperity through cooperation. Together, we can turn the opportunities outlined in China's 15th Five-Year Plan into a concrete agenda for joint development, enabling "China Opportunity 2.0" to deliver greater benefits to the people of China and Iran and the wider world.

Transshipment crackdowns won't fix US-China trade imbalance



By Hugh Grant-Chapman
Fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies

OPINION

US-China trade relations continue to enjoy a fragile détente, but recent dialogues between Washington and Beijing have not resolved underlying tensions. One point of friction is the White House's condemnation of Chinese "transshipment" of trade goods, articulated most clearly in its August 2026 report The Great Transshipment Scam. The report critiques a wide range of trade practices that it argues constitute a coordinated strategy to illegally avoid US tariffs imposed on Chinese goods. In doing so, it sets the stage for future actions toward China and other commercial partners.

The "transshipment scam" report reflects the Trump administration's continued dissatisfaction with the United States' and China's respective roles in the global trade landscape. Despite the flurry of US actions against China since early 2025, Beijing's export-oriented economic growth model continues to perpetuate global trade imbalances, stoking political backlash in Washington, Brussels, and other capitals around the world. Moreover, the overarching US trade balance has not durably shrunk, and concerns of threatened US industrial competitiveness vis-à-vis China remain as strong as ever. US-China relations are likely to remain strained as long as these factors persist. The White House muddies the policy debates surrounding these issues, however, by blaming them all on transshipment. The most novel contribution made by the report is an attempt to stretch the definition of transshipment beyond its traditional definition — i.e., the rerouting of unmodified goods through intermediate countries — to include substantive overseas manufacturing using Chinese-origin inputs. The analysis below examines the extent to which transshipment is taking place, both in the traditional sense and under the White House's expanded definition, and unpacks potential policy options for addressing these respective phenomena.



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Empirical evidence on rerouting Chinese-origin products

A core aspect of the White House report's argument is that Chinese-origin products are continuing to flow into the United States even though direct bilateral trade has shrunk. This allegedly takes place through more than 40 economies that reroute intermediate or final Chinese goods from China to the United States to benefit from lower tariff rates. CSIS's own analysis shows that some of these economies have indeed experienced disproportionate growth in imports from China and in exports to the United States since 2024, a signal that these countries may be serving as "connectors" of US and Chinese economic activity (see Figure 1). These countries, which fall into the top-right quadrant of Figure 1 below, are thus sometimes referred to as connector economies.

The first part of the White House's claim has strong empirical support. A 2026 Peterson Institute for International Economics policy brief examines the share of US import value that originated in China, either through direct imports from China or from Chinese upstream inputs embedded in products imported from elsewhere — a measure known as "value added." It finds that Chinese value added flowing into the United States has grown since 2018 even as US direct imports from China have fallen (see Figure 2), meaning that Chinese value added increasingly enters the United States via third countries. The Peterson paper and other analyses identify Mexico and Vietnam as two prominent conduits linking US and Chinese supply chains, providing a pathway for 23 percent and 15 percent of indirect Chinese value added entering the United States in 2024, respectively.

The key question is how this value added reaches the United States. A factory in Mexico exporting specialized products using Chinese inputs may simply reflect an efficient supply chain responding to comparative advantages. This is a wholly different phenomenon than a logistics company importing products from China and directly re-exporting them without modification (i.e., the traditional definition of transshipment). Legal and policy implications are determined by how Chinese goods pass through connector economies, and specifically whether or not they have been substantially transformed along the way.

> Despite the flurry of US actions against China since early 2025, Beijing's export-oriented economic growth model continues to perpetuate global trade imbalances, stoking political backlash in Washington, Brussels, and other capitals around the world. Moreover, the overarching US trade balance has not durably shrunk. The White House muddies the policy debates surrounding these issues, however, by blaming them all on transshipment.

One way to assess the predominance of rerouting versus substantial transformation is investigating whether the six-digit Harmonized System (HS-6) code — the international standard taxonomy for classifying traded goods — changes for a certain good between its import from China and its export to the United States. If a country's imports from China and exports to the United States are both growing, and a growing share of its US-bound exports match its Chinese imports, transshipment may be occurring. On the other hand, a flat or declining share of overlapping trade suggests transshipment is not growing as a share of that country's total trade activity.

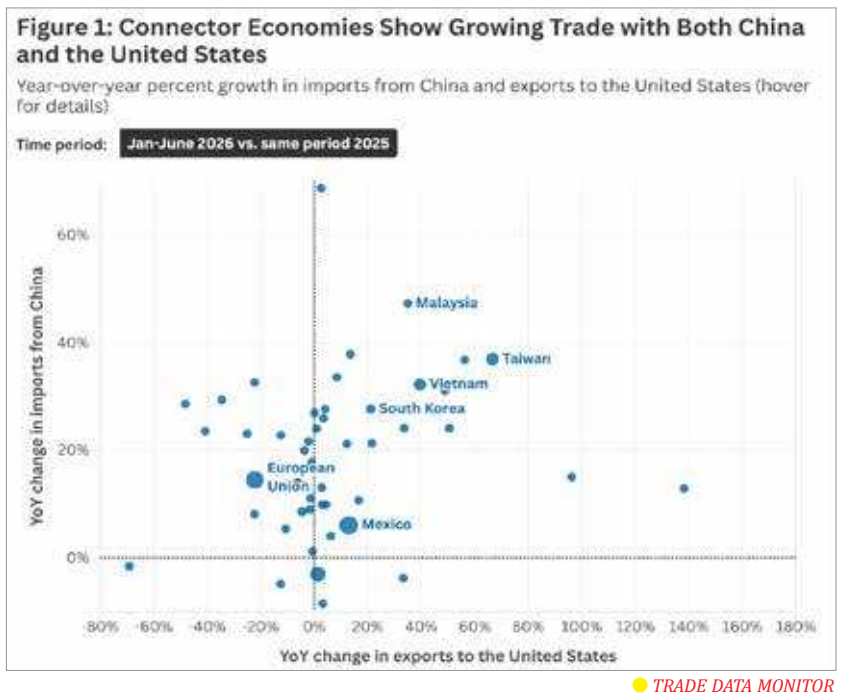
Building on prior research, CSIS analysis shows that for many economies singled out in the White House report, the overlap in imports from China and exports to the United States has not meaningfully grown. Figure 3 shows the percentage-point difference in overlapping Chinese imports and US-bound exports by identical HS-6 product code from 2024 to 2026, measured with the Finger-Kreinin Export Similarity Index. This analysis challenges the view that transshipment is the dominant way that Chinese-origin products end up in the United States. Some economies, such as Laos and Cambodia, do show a growing trade overlap, but several other economies show the opposite trend.

Mexico, Canada, and several Southeast Asian economies have particular scrutiny for their potential role in transshipment networks, and it is worth examining them more closely to assess these critiques. Of this group, US-bound exports from Cambodia and Laos, and to a lesser extent from Singapore and Indonesia, increasingly overlap with the product categories these countries import from China (see Figure 4). Particular areas of overlapping growth in these countries include photovoltaic cells and steel products — both of which have been identified by Commerce Department duty circumvention investigations.

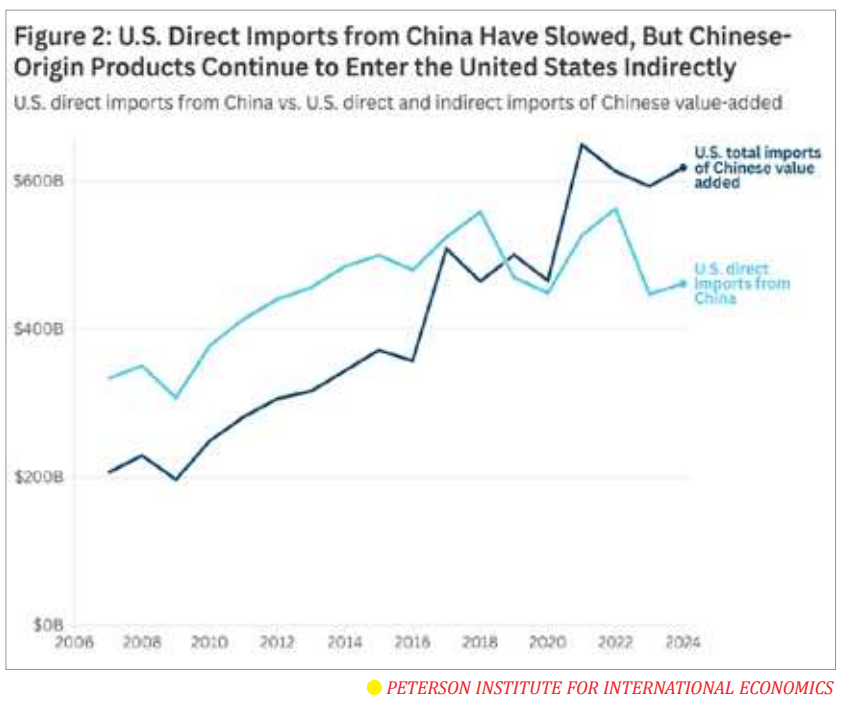
More surprising, Malaysia, Mexico, Thailand, and Vietnam show no overall rise in their share of overlapping US and Chinese trade; Malaysia and Thailand even show a decline. The divergence appears to be driven largely by specialization within electronics supply chains, in which these countries import simple electronics components from China and export advanced electronics to the United States. Some transshipment is still occurring in these economies — as illustrated by the investigations cited above — but it does not appear to be growing as a share of these countries' trade.

Overlapping HS-6 baskets provide clues to where transshipment might be occurring, but identifying illegal or problematic activity requires more granular analysis. Many HS-6 codes cover broad baskets of goods, and products can often be substantially transformed without changing HS-6 codes. Conversely, different HS-6 codes might be used for the same product in different contexts or by different countries. Also, analysis of government-reported trade statistics cannot account for instances of misreported value, classification, or origin — which recent research suggests have spiked since new tariffs were levied on China in early 2025. Products as diverse as tungsten carbide, quartz, plastic bags, and batteries have all been found by investigations to have been involved in illicit rerouting schemes.

These examples are plainly fraudulent, but transshipment itself is not inherently illegal or undesirable from



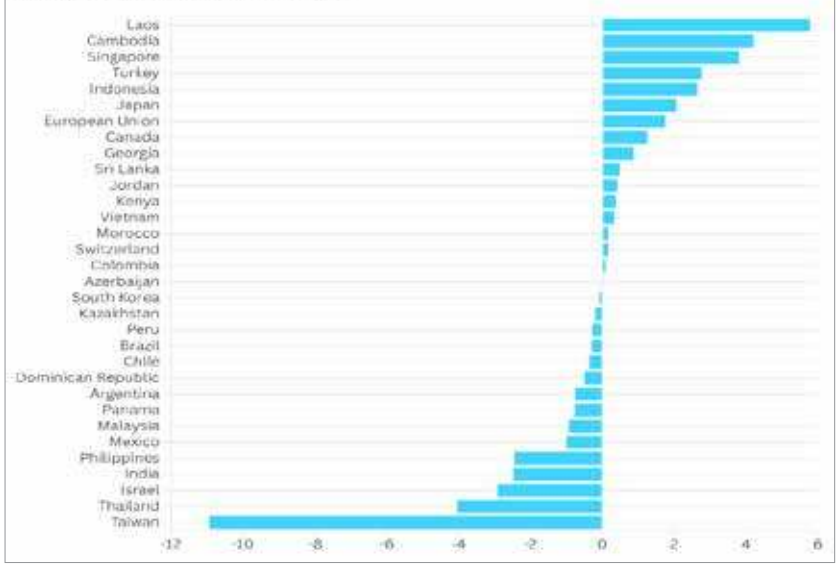
TRADE DATA MONITOR



PETERSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS

Figure 3: Some But Not All Scrutinized Countries Show Growing Overlap in U.S. and Chinese Trade

Percentage point change in overlap between baskets of imports from China and exports to the United States, year-ending June 2026 vs. June 2024. Negative or near-zero values are evidence against rising transshipment.



Note: Evaluates basket of overlaps in HS chapters 01–97, excluding chapter 27 (oil, gas, and coal).
● *TRADE DATA MONITOR*

Figure 4: Most Connector Economies Do Not Appear to Be Conducting Mass Rerouting—But Some Do

Percent of overlap between HS6 goods basket imported from China and goods basket exported to the United States, select economies (upward trend after 2025 indicates potential transshipment activity)



a policy perspective. Companies route goods through third countries for several legitimate reasons, including port access, logistics synergies, and inventory storage. Problematic behavior, by contrast, involves concealing or misrepresenting a product's true origin to evade regulation or obtain a lower tariff rate. Even then, trade practices may be undesirable from a policy perspective without necessarily being prohibited under current trade law. By branding all such undesirable activity as illegal, the White House report conflates entirely legitimate business actions with criminal behavior.

The evidence above suggests that transshipment activity as conventionally defined explains only a subset of Chinese-origin value added flowing into the United States. The remainder is likely explained by routing through more substantial transformation steps in a multistage supply chain. International Monetary Fund research illustrates how such trade reallocation can be driven by Chinese businesses investing abroad, foreign firms relocating from China overseas, and local firms in connector economies turning Chinese inputs into products for the US market. Other research reinforces this finding. A 2026 Federal Reserve study, for instance, found that Chinese production in Mexico accounted for about 14 points of Mexico's export gains after the 2018–19 tariffs, while direct transshipment accounted for less than 1 point.

Why have tariffs failed to reduce US imports of Chinese value added?

US tariffs and trade actions from 2025 onward have shifted supply chain contours but have not reduced underlying US-Chinese trade imbalances. Transshipment fraud explains part of this phenomenon but overlooks more fundamental macroeconomic determinants of the lopsided trade relationship. China's economic model accounts for much of the macroeconomic situation. As China's domestic economic performance continues to underwhelm, its leaders have remained committed to an export-oriented growth strategy that props up supply-side economic activity. An undervalued real exchange rate, tepid consumer spending, and entrenched state support for key technology sectors all contribute to China's widening trade surplus. Given these factors, blocked exports to the United States are unsurprisingly being diverted to other markets rather than absorbed domestically or curtailed by contracted production. Data from 2025 shows that China's total exports rose 5.5 percent even as its exports to the United States fell about 20 percent, with many displaced exports shifting to the European Union. Inverse factors contribute to the persistent US trade deficit. US domestic investment has risen on the back of a surge in AI infrastructure spending even as US household savings remain low and the public-sector fiscal deficit widens. This mismatch pulls capital in from overseas to finance the investment, widening net capital inflows and conversely depressing the trade balance. AI spending in particular has pushed imports higher, both from China directly — which dominates global manufacturing of key inputs such as electrical transformers and optical transceivers — and from connector economies that rely on Chinese supply chains for high-tech goods.

These macroeconomic fundamentals force the United States into the position of net importer and China into the position of net exporter, fueling imbalances in their bilateral relations. Such factors have not changed since Washington hiked trade barriers against Beijing in 2025. What has changed is the emergence of sizable tariff differentials — in other words, differences between US tariffs on Chinese products and those applied to other countries.

Historically, World Trade Organization most-favored-nation rates provided a broad ceiling to tariff rates that prevented the emergence of major tariff differentials. Now, many connector economies enjoy an average statutory tariff rate 10 to 20 percentage points lower than China's or more. This creates a powerful incentive for companies to relocate operations to lower-rate jurisdictions, even in instances when such shifts may not make much economic sense otherwise. Operating footprint changes in response to tariff differentials do not imply the existence of any central plan from the Chinese government to circumvent tariffs; such outcomes arise through decentralized profit-maximizing market logic, as several economists predicted shortly after earlier tariff announcements.

Implications for US policy

Curtailing the supply chain shifts described above puts the White House in the unenviable position of steering commercial activity against market incentives. The White House report concludes that countervailing market forces necessitate stronger statist intervention and a more extensive apparatus for policing trade activity, which it conceives of as an "AI Detective Border". The exact mechanisms of this new system remain unclear, but it will necessitate more government spending on customs enforcement, higher compliance costs for companies, and stronger demands for monitoring and policing from Washington's trading partners.

Yet this emphasis on compliance elides the more fundamental policy question of what should qualify as legitimate manufacturing operations in connector countries. Much of the White House's critique falls on supply chain behavior that is permissible under current trade agreements — e.g., "component integration," which US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has often ruled constitutes substantial transformation. Moreover, the standards the White House report uses to critique alleged transshipment activity, including share of Chinese value in inputs and the presence of Chinese ownership or financing, have not historically been used to determine origin under substantial transformation rules. Enforcement action alone will have a limited effect on shaping supply chain behavior unless these policy questions are resolved.

Because rules of origin chiefly govern tariff applicability under trade agreements, changing them will likely involve trade talks with US commercial partners. This is no small feat. Rules of origin are complex legal standards that often are painstakingly negotiated product by product within a given trade agreement. The White House evidently anticipated such an undertaking when it included placeholder clauses in all 10 of the agreements on reciprocal trade finalized so far, which state that "if benefits of this Agreement are accruing substantially to third countries or third-country nationals, a Party may establish rules of origin necessary to achieve the Parties' intention for this Agreement" (or some variant of that language). As of early October 2026, there has been little motion on revisiting these clauses, but history suggests that the product of ongoing US-Mexico-Canada Agreement negotiations may provide a template for updated rules of origin that can be applied to certain goods under other trade agreements.

New demands on connector economies may not be limited to updated rules of origin. One way Washington could advance its CBP upgrading efforts is to call for its trading partners to collect and share more customs data. CBP has already taken steps to require more data sharing from companies themselves, per an advance notice of proposed rulemaking to implement Executive Order 14411, and government-to-government sharing would be an obvious extension of this approach. Washington may also push its trading partners to increase enforcement of transshipment fraud laws. Such efforts are already underway in many connector economies, but more state capacity could be warranted — particularly if new rules of origin require greater on-site scrutiny of manufacturing operations. Both measures would be costly to governments and industry actors in connector economies, and both may face political headwinds. Washington should be sensitive to these constraints when considering how to incentivize cooperation.

Though connector economies are the most likely target for US pressure to stop transshipment activity, the White House may also engage Beijing directly. China's own economic imbalances incentivize transshipment by pressuring Chinese exporters with thin profit margins to eke out overseas sales wherever possible — even when such activity may require falsifying customs information. One concrete measure to curb transshipment incentives would be to reduce refunds for China's value-added tax (VAT) on exported goods. Earlier in 2026, China's State Taxation Administration moved to reduce the previous 9 percent VAT refund offered on exported goods, particularly batteries and solar panels. This action could be expanded to other goods that are aggravating US transshipment concerns.

Agreeing with trade partners on substantive policy changes is challenging. Yet without these changes, efforts to achieve a more balanced economic relationship with China will fall short of their goals. The White House report misdiagnoses the challenges plaguing the US-China trade relationship, and its recommended enforcement actions are misaligned to resolve unintended consequences of US tariff differentials. A sustainable path forward involves more rigorous analysis of global trade patterns, reappraisal of the market-distorting effects of US tariff differentials, and frank dialogue with trade partners and industry leaders about the utility and feasibility of new trade rules.

> Now, many connector economies enjoy an average statutory tariff rate 10 to 20 percentage points lower than China's or more. This creates a powerful incentive for companies to relocate operations to lower-rate jurisdictions, even in instances when such shifts may not make much economic sense otherwise. Operating footprint changes in response to tariff differentials do not imply the existence of any central plan from the Chinese government to circumvent tariffs. Curtailing the supply chain shifts described above puts the White House in the unenviable position of steering commercial activity against market incentives.



● *MOHD RASFAN/AFP*

The article was first published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup:

Naderi hails 'deserved' title as Iran completes historic three-peat

Sports Desk

Head coach Ali Naderi said a record-extending fifth title at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup was nothing more than his team deserved after Iran came from behind to beat Japan 3-1 in Saturday's final in Phang Nga, Thailand.

Ali Mirshekari's 17th-minute strike canceled out Yohei Otsuki's first period opener for Japan, before Mahdi Shirmohammadi and Movahed Mohammadpour added two late goals in the third period as Iran became the first team to lift the trophy at the flagship continental showpiece on three successive occasions.

The result also marked a seventh final defeat for three-time champion Japan in 12 editions, three of which have come against Saturday's opponent.

Naderi, who was part of the squad when Iran won its maiden title in 2013, was pleased to see months of hard work and preparation pay off with the latest triumph.

"We organized a beach soccer Premier League in our country, held training camps and played friendly matches before this tournament," he said. "I believe our team delivered its best performance and we deserved to become champions."

"We were caught by surprise in the first period because Japan performed differently from what we had expected. They have improved considerably.

"However, we have many experienced players, and we tried to adapt to the situation as quickly as possible, adjust our approach, impose ourselves on the game and turn the result around."

Naderi was also full of praise for his players for their resolute mindset and determination during 11 days of action in Phang Nga.

"We played very well throughout the tournament, and this is due to the players fighting with all their hearts for their country and performing to 100 percent of their ability," said the Iranian, whose team scored 42 goals and conceded eight in a five-game perfect run to the title.

Having settled for a third-place finish last year, Japan started on the front foot at Ban Nam Khem Beach Arena, with Yuki Kibune hitting the crossbar before Otsuki got his team off the mark in the third minute,



directing Ryota Morioka's pass beyond an out-of-position Seyyed Mohammad Dastan.

Kibune headed Shirmohammadi's attempt off the line in the ninth minute as the Central Asian side began to find its rhythm, with Reza Dayeri blasting the ball over moments later and Mohammadpour going off target in the 11th minute with a thunderous free-kick.

Japan then slowed the tempo by holding on to the ball, with Takuya Akaguma closing the first period by sending his acrobatic effort wide of the left post.

Mohammadali Mokhtari's overhead kick bounced off the left post a minute into the restart, with the striker hitting the opposite post with his next attempt before Iran was awarded a penalty. Mirshekari slammed home the rebound after Takeru Furusato saved his spot-kick.

Furusato acquitted himself well with a stunning save from Dayeri in the 27th minute and then blocked an attempt from Dastan, but was beaten by a powerful goal kick from his Iranian counterpart, which Shirmohammadi diverted into the net with the slightest of touches.

Mohammadpour dashed any hopes of a Japan comeback in the 34th minute with an overhead kick that whizzed past Furusato into the top-right corner.

"At the beginning of the second period, Iran had a lot of possession, and we were unable to attack them," Japan head coach Teruki Tabata said.

"Ultimately, it came down to their accuracy and the quality of their play, which made it difficult for us to catch up with them.

Iranian players and coaching staff celebrate lifting the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup trophy in Phang Nga, Thailand, on November 28, 2026.
FFIRI

"We are still grateful for the opportunity to play against such a great team."

Mohammadpour and Dastan, meanwhile, capped off their campaign by collecting two of the three individual awards.

Mohammadpour was crowned the Most Valuable Player, while Dastan picked up the Best Goalkeeper award.

Mohammadpour scored in the group-stage victories over Afghanistan, Vietnam and Lebanon, as the Central Asian side coasted through Group B with maximum points.

"I am very happy, but I must say that this award belongs to all the players and the technical staff," said Mohammadpour. "It is not just for me; it belongs to all my teammates.

"It was the result of teamwork and our collective effort. Without working together as a team and following the coach's instructions, I would not have been able to receive this individual award. I am very happy, and I dedicate this achievement to all the people of Iran. It is not just for me."

Presidential praise

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa applauded Iran's continued supremacy on the continent, writing in a message: "Iran have once again shown why they remain the undisputed pacesetters of Asian beach soccer. Capturing three consecutive titles and five overall is an extraordinary feat that speaks volumes about the depth of talent, professionalism, and enduring commitment of the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI).

"On behalf of the entire Asian football family, I warmly congratulate Team Melli on another memorable triumph, and I also commend Japan for pushing them to the very limit in a gripping final. Together with third-placed Oman, both finalists have earned the honour of carrying Asia's hopes onto the global stage at the 2027 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup."

Earlier in the day, two-time champion and 2025 runner-up Oman defeated Lebanon 8-6 to claim a fourth third-place finish in the history of the competition.

World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final:

Zeinali strikes gold, Iran bags three medals on Day 1



Iran's Radin Zeinali (R) consoles Kazakhstan's Batyrkhan Toleugali after his victory in the men's -80kg final at the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final in Astana, Kazakhstan, on November 28, 2026.
WORLD TAEKWONDO

Sports Desk

The first day of the World Taekwondo Grand Prix Final saw Iranians collect one gold and two bronze medals at the Zhaksylyk Ushkempirov Martial Arts Palace in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Saturday.

Radin Zeinali spearheaded the medal haul by claiming the top prize in the men's -80kg competition, in which his compatriot Amir-Sina Bakhtiari settled for bronze, while teenage sensation Hana Zarrinkamar also finished her campaign with a bronze in the women's +67kg category.

An U21 world champion last year, Zeinali opened his campaign with a 2-1 victory over Spain's Juan Antonio Milan Canovas – a gold medalist at June's Grand Prix season opener in Rome – before defeating Croatia's Oscar Kovacic in straight rounds to set up an all-Iranian last-four clash with Bakhtiari.

A 2-1 victory sent Zeinali into the final, where he overcame the host country's Batyrkhan Toleugali 2-1 to win the title.

Bakhtiari, meanwhile, having beaten Serbia's Stefan Takov and American world No. 3 CJ Nickolas on his way to the semifinals, defeated Georgia's Zurab Kintsurashvili in straight rounds to finish with the bronze medal, adding to his -74kg title at May's Asian Championships in Ulaanbaatar.

Reigning two-time world junior champion Zarrinkamar continued her impressive breakthrough at senior level with a bronze medal in the +67kg weight class.

Zarrinkamar overcame China's Xu Lei in her opening bout, followed by a 2-0 quarterfinal victory over South Korea's Song Da-bin, before suffering a 2-1 loss to world No. 1 Anastasiia Kosmycheva of Russia. She bounced back with a 2-0 win over Uzbekistan's Svetlana Saidova in the bronze-medal bout, securing her fifth international medal of the season after winning titles at the World Junior Championships, Chuncheon Korea Open and WT President's Cup, as well as silver at August's Women's Open Championships.

The opening day of the G10 tournament, which offers valuable Olympic qualification points, was, however, one to forget for two Iranian hopefuls, Nahid Kiani and Mahdi Hajimousaei.

Having suffered a last-eight exit at the Paris Grand Prix in October, Olympic silver medalist and Asian champion Kiani endured another disappointing campaign in this year's series, falling in straight rounds (17-8, 7-6) to world No. 2 Fadia Khirfan of Jordan in her opening bout in the women's -57kg division.

World silver medalist Hajimousaei, meanwhile, crashed out in the men's -68kg quarterfinals in controversial fashion.

The Iranian defeated South Korea's Moon Jin-ho, the world No. 1, 2-0 in his opening bout but fell to Spain's Adrian Vicente Yunta in his second outing, with the Iranian Taekwondo Federation blaming "a technical malfunction with the Spaniard's electronic scoring protector" for preventing Hajimousaei's kicks from registering.

Asian Women's Handball Championship:

World berth up for grabs as Iran faces Kazakhstan in quarters

Sports Desk

A place at next year's World Championship will be on the line when Iran and host Kazakhstan square off in the quarterfinals of the Asian Women's Handball Championship in Almaty today.

The Iranian women fell to a 25-16 defeat against defending champion Japan on Saturday, suffering their second loss in four group-stage games and finishing third behind Japan and China in the Group A standings.

Iran had opened its campaign with a commanding 33-16 victory over Hong Kong before losing 34-32 to 10-time silver medalist China. The team then bounced back to rout Thailand 23-15, securing a place in the knockout stage with one game to spare in the group phase.

Having twice denied Iran the bronze medal, in the 2021 and 2024 editions, Kazakhstan, meanwhile, finished runner-up to South Korea – the most decorated team in the competition with 16 titles and silver medalist in the previous edition – in the group standings, thanks to three wins in four outings.

The host team claimed three successive victories over Australia (37-18), India (33-27) and Uzbekistan (32-29) before losing 34-20 to South Korea in Saturday's top-spot decider.

The four semifinalists will secure direct qualification for the global showpiece, which is scheduled to be held in Hungary from November 30 to December 19 next year.



IRIHF

Miqan Wetland welcomes thousands of migratory birds





visitiran.ir

Iranica Desk

With flocks of migratory birds arriving, Miqan Wetland in Arak has once again become one of the most important wildlife stopover sites on Iran's central plateau. Spanning approximately 25,000 hectares and located 15 kilometers northeast of Arak, the natural habitat hosts thousands of birds but continues to face challenges, including fragmented management, water allocation shortages and competing land uses.

Scientific surveys have identified 150 bird species belonging to 13 orders and 38 families in the Miqan No-Hunting Zone. Of these, 77 are waterbirds and waders, while 73 are terrestrial species. The records show that 60 species are resident, while the remaining 90 are migratory, partially migratory or passage visitors, according to Mehr News Agency.

Bird populations at the wetland fluctuate depending on the season and climatic conditions. In one census, more than 20,000 resident and migratory birds were recorded. Last week, another 6,000 birds of various species arrived at Miqan. Historical records have also documented approximately 11,000 common cranes, 10,000 Eurasian teals and 5,000 flamingos. These figures reflect the wetland's ecological capacity rather than a permanent bird population.

The autumn migration season usually begins in the second half of September, with November and December offering better opportunities for birdwatching. However, higher temperatures this year delayed the migration, and the arrival of large flocks only intensified last week.

Yet the spectacular sight of thousands of birds flying over Miqan also highlights a worrying reality. While the wetland is a remarkable natural habitat, it is struggling with drought and water shortages on the one hand, and fragmented management, mining activities and concerns over water quality on the other. Under these circumstances, Miqan's future depends not only on the arrival and numbers of migratory birds but, more importantly, on coordinated management and serious conservation efforts.

The Director-General of the Markazi Province's Department of Environment, Amir Ansari, said that more than 20,000 resident and migratory birds had been recorded in the Miqan No-Hunting Zone. He said securing the wetland's environmental water allocation was the department's top priority this year.

Ansari said expert assessments indicated that Miqan was currently in a favorable ecological condition, adding that bird populations at the site had shown a significant increase in recent years.

He said the latest census had recorded more than 20,000 birds of various resident and migratory species in the protected zone.

Referring to successive droughts and declining water inflows, Ansari explained that the annual flow rate of incoming treated wastewater was approximately equivalent to the wetland's water requirements and could help meet part of its needs during dry periods.

He warned that if the wetland bed dried out, winds could activate dust sources in the area, potentially affecting public health.

Ansari identified the discharge of industrial waste and wastewater as among the most significant environmental threats to the wetland, stressing that maintaining the quality of incoming water and securing its environmental water allocation were essential to protecting the valuable ecosystem.

Describing the provision of the wetland's environmental water allocation as a strategic and legal obligation, he said declining rainfall should not be used as an excuse to disregard nature's rights.

"Even under drought conditions, securing the environmental water allocation must remain a priority," he said.

Ansari added that the department would continue to pursue the issue and make use of all available legal mechanisms to secure the wetland's water rights.

Meanwhile, Mostafa Marzban, Deputy Director-General of the Markazi Province Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said the number of organized-tour visitors to Miqan Wetland had fallen from 2,000 in 2024 to 300 last year. So far this year, only 50 people have visited the wetland as part of organized tourist groups. Marzban said visitor numbers were specifically recorded for organized tours, but no accurate figures were available for individuals and families visiting the wetland independently.

He stressed that the figures referred exclusively to organized tours and should not be considered the total number of visitors to the site. Foreign tourists also visited the area last year, but their numbers have declined this year due to wartime conditions. He identified the recent war, avian influenza and high summer temperatures as among the factors affecting visitor numbers.

Referring to the limited facilities available at the tourism destination, Marzban said Miqan was generally unsuitable for visitors during the summer because of the intense heat. Visitor numbers typically begin to rise as cooler weather sets in.

He described Miqan Wetland as one of the province's major natural tourism attractions, adding that improved weather conditions would create opportunities to attract more visitors and organize additional tours.

Marzban also stressed that more comprehensive recording of visitor numbers, including independent visits, would provide a clearer picture of the wetland's tourism potential and help improve

Baluch culture celebrates warmth, respect beyond simple greeting





IRNA

Iranica Desk

Across the vast expanse of Sistan and Balucehstan Province, where the grandeur of the desert meets the freshness of lush valleys and the roaring waters of the Oman Sea, and where the wind carries stories of an extraordinary heritage through the passage of time, warmth and cordiality are far more than passing words. They are deeply rooted traditions, woven into the very fabric of everyday life.

In authentic Baluch culture, an embrace is not merely a gesture of comfort, reassurance or affection; it is also an expression of etiquette and respect. Wash Atak (also written as Vash Atak) is a traditional ritual in which warmth and mutual respect come together. Embracing someone three times represents three reaffirmations of human connection, three expressions of respect for the dignity of another person, and a powerful reminder that in this land, a guest or visitor is cherished as someone dear to the heart.

Understanding the people of Balucehstan requires an appreciation of their distinctive customs, many of which are deeply rooted in longstanding traditions. One of the most remarkable expressions of this cultural heritage is Wash Atak, a gesture in which heartfelt warmth and profound respect blend with remarkable grace.

At the very first moment of meeting, before everyday conversations begin, people warmly embrace one another and exchange greetings by saying "Wash Atak", expressing their heartfelt welcome. This longstanding custom reflects a cultural belief that closeness between hearts takes precedence over any conversation.

Wash Atak represents the highest expression of welcome and respect towards another person. To convey a similar meaning, one might compare it to addressing someone as "Hazrat," a more elevated form of respect than the ordinary honorific "Agha." These encounters are sometimes accompanied by lengthy conversations, and even after the initial exchange of greetings has ended, both parties continue asking about each other's well-being.

This tradition becomes particularly prominent during national and religious celebrations, including the joyous occasions of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. Following Eid prayers, and during family and social gatherings, people embrace one another, exchange holiday greetings and seek mutual forgiveness, putting aside any grievances or misunderstandings that may have arisen.

This custom is not limited to men. Baluch women also observe their own distinctive forms of greeting when meeting relatives and welcoming guests. However, greeting practices are not uniform throughout Balucehstan. Each area has its own characteristics, shaped by local dialects, traditions and social relationships.

In the Zarabad region and parts of the Makoran coastline, greetings are also accompanied by lengthy conversations and inquiries about everyday life. Hosts and guests discuss the well-being of family members and relatives, agricultural conditions, planting and harvesting seasons, rainfall, weather and local developments.

Hospitality in Baluch culture also places great emphasis on welcoming and serving guests. In many homes, the first offering to a visitor is a glass of water, a custom that carries particular significance given the heat and climatic conditions prevailing across much of Balucehstan. Upon a guest's arrival, the host makes every effort to offer water and suitable refreshments, helping the visitor recover from the fatigue of the journey.

In Baluch culture, a guest holds a position far beyond that of an ordinary visitor. Showing respect to guests is considered one of the deeply rooted values of family and community life. Hosts generally strive to offer the best facilities and food available to them, regarding a guest's presence as an opportunity to express affection and uphold their dignity.

In some families, this belief is so deeply ingrained that even under difficult economic circumstances, they make every possible effort to provide hospitality to their guests. Respect for guests, keeping one's word, preserving the dignity of others and offering support to anyone who seeks shelter in one's home are among the values that have been passed down from generation to generation in many Baluch families.

Speaking to the IRNA, Kheyronnesa Amiri, Head of the Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts for Chabahar and Dashtiari, said that the Wash Atak ritual had been officially inscribed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List as one of the valuable expressions of Baluch culture and social customs.

Describing Wash Atak as a deeply rooted tradition and an important symbol of hospitality, warmth, mutual respect and social bonds within Baluch society, Amiri said: "Wash Atak is one of the longstanding and valuable traditions of the Baluch people. It holds a special place in social interactions, family gatherings and community encounters, and is recognized as an integral part of the cultural identity of Baluch people."

She added that the ritual had been registered as part of the intangible heritage of the Baluch people and that various articles had been published highlighting its cultural significance and its place in the customs and traditions of local communities.

Amiri further noted that the registration of indigenous rituals and traditions on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List was an important step towards identifying, introducing and safeguarding the cultural assets of local communities. Such efforts, she said, could encourage younger generations to pay greater attention to their cultural values and the traditions of their ancestors.

Referring to the rich cultural heritage of Balucehstan and the diversity of customs and social traditions among the Baluch people, Amiri said that many of these practices were shaped by the region's historical experiences and the traditional way of life of its people. Preserving these traditions and passing them on to future generations, she stressed, was of great importance.

She concluded by emphasizing that cultural heritage was not limited to historical monuments and buildings. Rituals, traditions, ways of life, social etiquette and other cultural practices passed down through generations also constitute an essential part of the historical and social identity of every region.

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Iranian director and photographer Asghar Besharati
IRNA

Qeshm filmmaker wins joint jury award at French festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Asghar Besharati's 'Thirst' (Soif) has won a joint jury award at the second Un Brin de Court International Very Short Film Festival in Vichy, France.

The film shared the honor with Argentine film 'Fierté', directed by Camila Scaglia. The award came in the festival's Resistance category, which highlights films exploring resilience, perseverance and the human experience of overcoming hardship.

'Thirst' portrays the act of giving water to birds as an expression of gratitude to nature, reflecting a local tradition on Qeshm Island in the Persian Gulf off southern Iran, through which people give thanks for the gifts of the natural world.

The festival ran from November 15 to 22 in Vichy and other locations across Allier, a department in central France. It featured two competitive categories, open theme and resistance, for films lasting between one and three minutes.

The award adds to Besharati's international festival record. His film won the Grand Prix and the Extra Court award at the 17th French Mobile Film Festival in 2021m which focuses on one-minute films made with mobile phones.

Besharati has also earned recognition for other works. His film 'The Painter of Fish' won two audience awards at the 2022 edition of Filminute, the international one-minute film festival.

Besharati, who is based on Qeshm Island, began working in photography and filmmaking in 2007. The Vichy award is the latest international recognition reported for 'Thirst'.

Iran's solar plan targets jobs for people with disabilities

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iran's Welfare Organization plans to create income opportunities for more than 25,000 people with disabilities through a 105-megawatt solar power project, part of a broader push to shift from welfare payments toward sustainable employment, its head said on Saturday.

Javad Hosseini said the organization had created 136,000 jobs for its target groups over the past two years, 65% more than the total number generated throughout its previous years of operation.

He announced the plans at a news conference marking Disability Week in Iran, observed from November 30 to December 6.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities falls on December 3. The United Nations General Assembly established the annual observance in 1992.

The organization serves more than seven million people, including people with disabilities, older adults, street children, children in residential care, vulnerable women and other groups needing social support.



Iran plans to create income opportunities for people with disabilities through a 105-megawatt solar power project.



Javad Hosseini

Hosseini said the organization was moving away from reliance on regular financial assistance and focusing instead on economic empowerment and independence.

"Its approach includes identifying people's abilities, providing education and vocational training, creating jobs, helping businesses reach markets and offering continued support," he added.

He said individual businesses were less likely to survive without sustained assistance. The organization is therefore seeking to expand cooperative, corporate and collective business models.

Under the solar initiative, each five megawatts of installed capacity could involve about 1,000 people. The full 105-megawatt project is expected to benefit more than 25,000 people with disabilities through income-generating opportunities.

Hosseini said the organization was also negotiating with major e-commerce companies to expand online employment. Digital, green and care-related jobs are among its priorities, reflecting changing preferences among younger generations and shifts in the labor market.

The organization has allocated 13 trillion rials) $4.3 million (, this year to its Employment Support and Guarantee Fund. The fund will provide loans and bank guarantees, support technology-based businesses and develop platforms connecting employers with job seekers.

"Welfare payments and allowances for beneficiaries had risen by 158% under the current administration," Hosseini said.

About 275,000 people with severe or very severe disabilities are currently covered by Article 27 of Iran's Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Hosseini said that number was expected to reach 300,000 by the end of the year.

On housing, he said 25,000 homes had been provided to beneficiaries last year in cooperation with the Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation.

The organization is also working to secure housing for about 44 families with more than five members with disabilities and special circumstances.

"Insurance coverage for rehabilitation services has expanded from 11 to about 60 services," he said.

More than 21,000 school students receive free educational services through the organization, while 19,000 university students receive its support. Hosseini said more than 50 of the school students had achieved one-, two- or three-digit rankings in this year's nationwide university entrance examinations.

"The organization has also designated 19 cities as age-friendly and enrolled 51,000 older women living alone in an empowerment program. It has established 900 gathering places and centers for older people to meet and socialize," Hosseini added.

Tehran to expand libraries for mothers, children

Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran plans to expand libraries serving mothers and children across the Iranian capital, with several districts under consideration as the city seeks to widen access to cultural services.

Mohammad-Baqer Alami, head of the Tehran Municipality's Cultural and Artistic Organization, said Tehran currently has three specialized libraries for children and teenagers.

Aftabgardan Children's Library serves areas 10 and 11 in western and southwestern Tehran. Parto Library is located in Area 22 in the west and northwest of the capital and was damaged during 40-day war that began in late February 2026, Alami said.

A third specialized library operates in Area 8 in northeastern Tehran.

The organization is planning to expand libraries dedicated to mothers and children, with areas 17 and 18 in southwestern Tehran and Area 20 in the south among the districts being considered, Alami said.

He stressed that the initiative would not be confined to southern Tehran, saying cultural services should be accessible to residents across the city.

The announcement comes



ahead of with the birth anniversary of Lady Fatima (PBUH), the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which marks Iran's National Mother's Day that falls on November 30 this year.

The occasion highlights the importance of cultural spaces where mothers and children can read and take part in activities together, although Alami did not directly link the plan to the holiday.

Dedicated libraries can provide children with access to age-appropriate reading and cultural activities while giving mothers opportunities to share these experiences with them.

Alami gave no details on the number of libraries planned, the timeline for expansion or the budget.

The proposal concerns mother-and-child libraries and is separate from the three specialized children's and teenagers' libraries already operating in Tehran.

Shared heritage drives push for closer Central Asian ties

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is seeking to expand cultural and tourism cooperation with Central Asian countries through joint travel initiatives, direct flights and stronger people-to-people ties, Heritage Minister Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri said.

In an article reflecting on his recent visit to Uzbekistan and participation in the International Conference on Sustainable and Resilient Tourism in Tashkent, Salehi-Amiri called for a shift in Iran's regional policy toward greater emphasis on shared history and cultural heritage.

He said Iran's relations with Central Asian and Caucasus countries over the past four decades had focused largely on political and economic ties, leaving significant cultural opportunities underused.

Disputes between governments had sometimes overshadowed prospects for cooperation, he added, identifying cultural diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges as missing elements in regional relations.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted the historical links between Iran and Uzbekistan, pointing to Bukhara in southwestern Uzbekistan, Samarkand in the country's central-east and Khiva in the west as important centers of shared heritage.

He said modern political borders did not necessarily reflect historical cultural boundaries.

He described tourism as a means of building trust, connecting societies and promoting regional understanding, beyond its role in generating jobs and foreign currency.

During talks with Uzbek and Tajik tourism officials, Iran discussed linking travel agencies, developing joint tour packages, increasing direct flights and setting measurable targets for tourist exchanges.

The discussions also included reciprocal visits by 20 media figures and influencers from each country to promote their cultural and tourism attractions.

Another proposal would create a tourism corridor linking Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan with Merv in eastern Turkmenistan, Sarakhs and Mashhad in northeastern Iran, following the historic Silk Road.

Reflecting on the Tashkent summit and talks with regional officials and the UN World Tourism Organization secretary-general, Salehi-Amiri said Iran's experience in tourism infrastructure, continued investment and industry resilience could provide a basis for regional cooperation.

He argued that the future of regional ties should be measured not only by political and economic indicators but also by cultural exchanges, mutual understanding and the ability to turn shared heritage into lasting social and economic opportunities.