

WHY ARE IRANIANS PROTESTING? IRAN CRISIS EXPLAINED

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Context:

- **Demonstrations broke out in Iran on December 28** and have spread nationwide as protesters vent their increasing discontent over the Islamic Republic's faltering economy and the collapse of its currency.
- **Many people have been killed and thousands arrested** as the daily protests have grown and the government seeks to **contain them**.

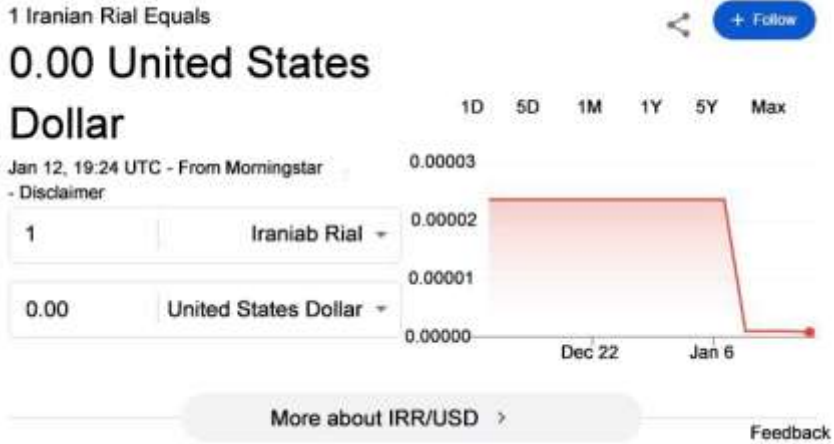





1. When did the protests begin in Iran?

- On **28 December, 2025** shopkeepers took to the **streets of Tehran** to express their anger at another sharp fall in the **value of the Iranian currency, the rial, against the US dollar** on the open market.
- The rial has sunk to a record low over the past year and **inflation has soared to 40%**, which has resulted in **crippling price rises for everyday items like cooking oil and meat**. Sanctions over **Iran's nuclear programme** have **squeezed an economy** also weakened by government mismanagement and corruption.
- **University students soon joined the protests** and the demonstrations began spreading to other cities. **There were wider calls for political change, with crowds frequently heard chanting slogans** against the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
- According to the **US-based Iranian Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA)**, protests have been **confirmed in 187 cities and towns in all 31 of Iran's provinces** since the start of the unrest.

2. How protests in Iran unfolded and grew?



Date	Event
December, 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protests break out in two major markets in downtown Tehran, after the Iranian rial plunged to 1.42 million to the U.S. dollar, a new record low, compounding inflationary pressure and pushing up the prices of food and other daily necessities.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government had raised prices for nationally subsidized gasoline in early December, increasing discontent.
December, 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Bank head Mohammad Reza Farzin resigns as the protests in Tehran spread to other cities. Police fire tear gas to disperse protesters in the capital.
January, 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. President Donald Trump raises the stakes, writing on his Truth Social platform that if Iran “violently kills peaceful protesters,” the United States “will come to their rescue.” The warning, only months after American forces bombed Iranian nuclear sites, includes the assertion, without elaboration, that: “We are locked and loaded and ready to go.”

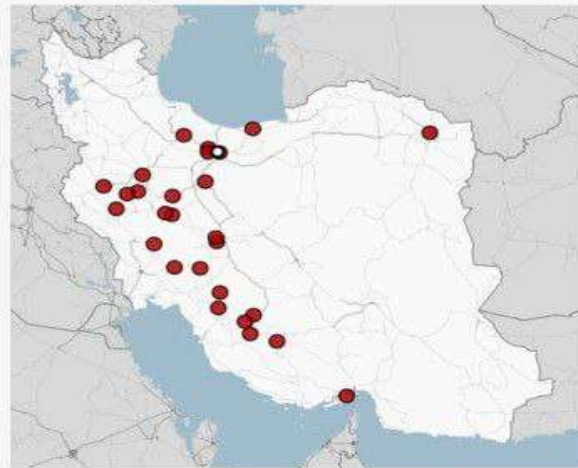
	<div style="text-align: center;">  <div> Donald J. Trump   </div> <p>@realDonaldTrump</p> </div> <p>If Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue. We are locked and loaded and ready to go. Thank you for your attention to this matter! President DONALD J. TRUMP</p>
January, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says "rioters must be put in their place," in what is seen as a green light for security forces to begin more aggressively putting down the demonstrations. Protests expand to more than 170 locations in 25 provinces, with at least 15 people killed and 580 arrested, HRANA reports.
January, 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following a call from Iran's exiled crown prince, a mass of people shout from their windows and take to the streets in an overnight protest. The government responds by blocking the internet and international telephone calls, in a bid to cut off the country of 85 million from outside influence.
January, 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trump says that Iran proposed negotiations after his threat to strike the Islamic Republic over its bloody crackdown targeting demonstrators there. Activists say the death toll in protests has risen to at least 544.
January, 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iran holds pro-government demonstrations that draw tens of thousands of people to the streets as the death toll rises to at least 646.

Verified locations of protests since 28 December 2025

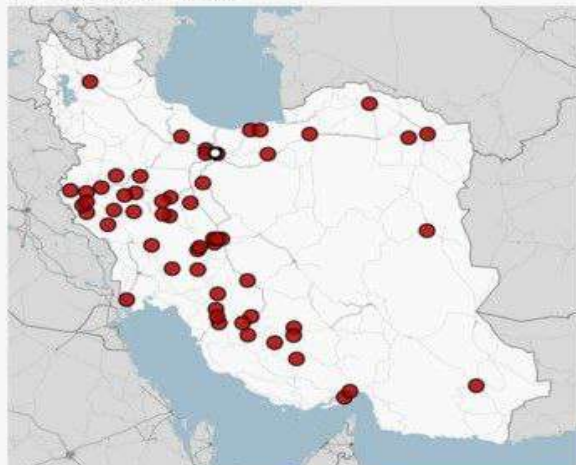
28 December 2025



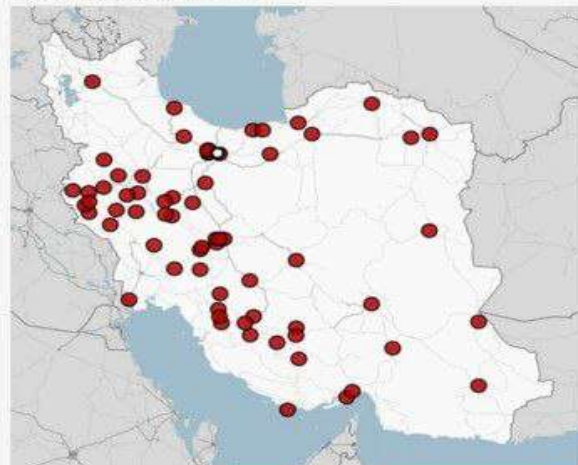
2 January 2026



7 January 2026



11 January 2026



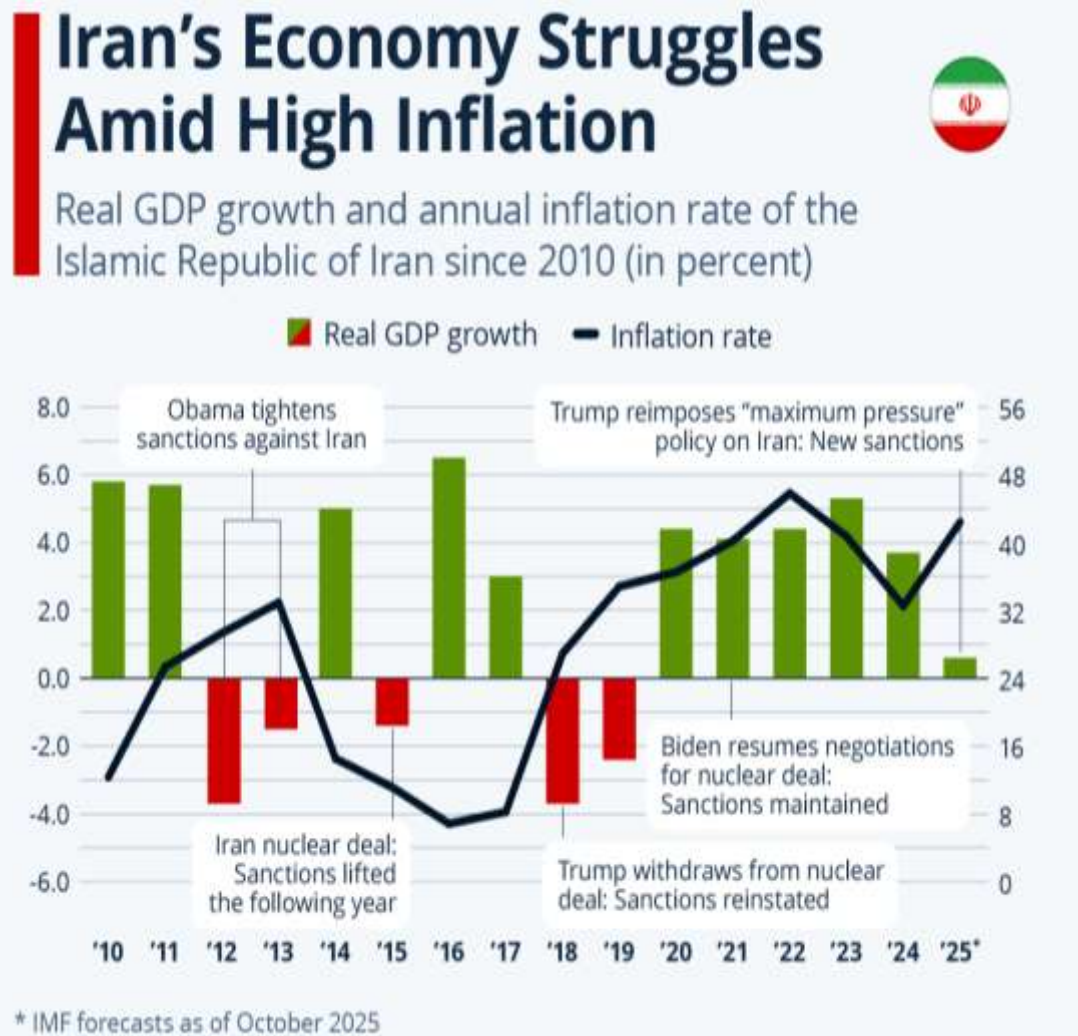
Note: Locations are only shown if the BBC has verified video footage

3. Enlist key reasons for recent Iran protest?

- The latest nationwide protests in Iran erupted on **28 December 2025** when market traders and shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar walked out and shut their businesses.

Reasons	Description
Immediate trigger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A steep crash in the Iranian currency (rial) to record lows. Skyrocketing inflation: Basic necessities like food and fuel became unaffordable.

- Soaring prices for groceries, medicine and utilities, squeezing ordinary households.



Currency collapses

- Because of the **government's mismanagement and sanctions** the domestic currency, **Iranian rial**, has **crashed 80% against the US dollar in last one year**. Currently, the exchange rate stood at **\$1 = 1.47 million rial**.
- According to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, the **nation's economy will only expand at the meagre rate of 0.6% in 2025**.
- The metric had fallen to **3.7% in 2024** from **5.3% in 2023**.

IRAN'S GDP HAS FALLEN MASSIVELY IN LAST 2 YRS



Year	GDP Rate (%)
2025	0.60%
2024	3.70%
2023	5.30%
2022	4.40%
2021	4.10%
2020	4.40%

Source-IMF

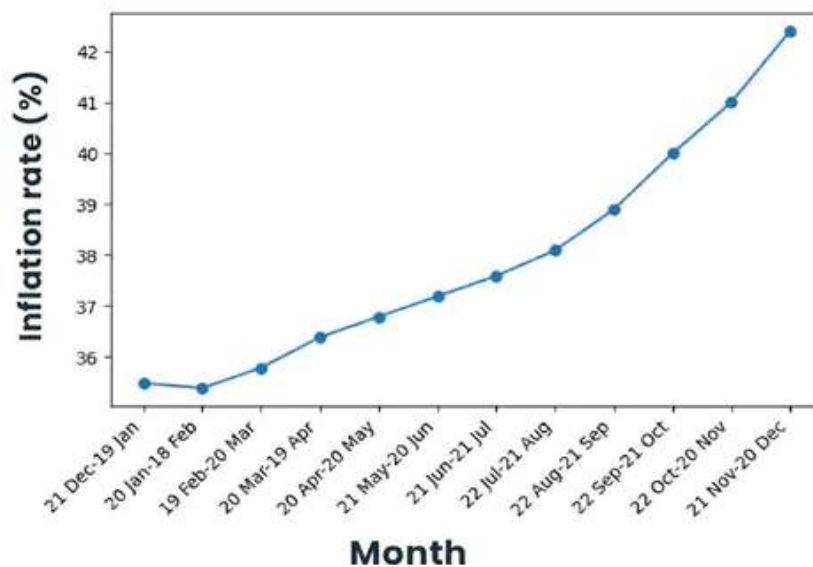
Food inflation


- The prices of everyday goods **significantly impact people's lives.**
- These directly **impact middle man's pockets.**
- **Iranian rice prices have seen substantial increases. In December 2025, Iranian rice cost about \$5.23 per kilogram, a 164% increase** compared to the previous year.

SKYROCKETING PRICES OF FOOD ITEMS IN IRAN!

Food Items	Price In Dollar	Price In Rupees
Rice	\$5.23/kg	₹470/kg
Lemons	\$3.56/kg	₹320/kg
Milk	\$0.63/litre	₹56/litre
Eggs	\$1.09/dozen	₹98/dozen
Tomatoes	\$0.27/ 1lb	₹50/kg
Potatoes	\$0.24/ 1lb	₹47/kg

Iran Inflation Trend Last 12 Months



<p>Long-running economic distress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil export sanctions and loss of revenue, especially after nuclear-related sanctions came back into force in 2025. • Chronic inflation and currency depreciation over years, eroding savings and incomes. • Domestic mismanagement and corruption blamed for widening inequality and diminishing public trust. 														
<p>Rising unemployment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And with falling GDP and rising inflation, how could the country be left behind in mismanagement of employment. • According to IMF, the unemployment rate rose to 9.20% in 2025 from 7.55% in 2024. • In pre-Covid era, it had galloped to more than 12%. <div data-bbox="574 795 1333 1961"> <p style="text-align: center;">IRAN'S UNEMPLOYMENT TRAJECTORY – LAST 6 YRS</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="605 1423 1302 1902"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th><th>Unemployment Rate (%)</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2025</td><td>9.20%</td></tr> <tr> <td>2024</td><td>7.55%</td></tr> <tr> <td>2023</td><td>8.07%</td></tr> <tr> <td>2022</td><td>9.00%</td></tr> <tr> <td>2021</td><td>9.18%</td></tr> <tr> <td>2020</td><td>9.60%</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Source-IMF</i></p> </div>	Year	Unemployment Rate (%)	2025	9.20%	2024	7.55%	2023	8.07%	2022	9.00%	2021	9.18%	2020	9.60%
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2020	9.60%														

4. How are the protests in Iran different this time?

- The fact that the **recent protests began with the bazaaris** - a **powerful force for change in Iran's history** and **one seen as loyal to the regime** - is notable.
- The **enduring alliance between the bazaaris and the clergy in Iran** had the **shopkeepers play a crucial role as kingmaker across Iran's history**.
- It was their support to those very clergymen that eventually helped the **Islamic Revolution of 1979 succeed**, giving the **rebels a financial backbone that led to the fall of the shah**, or monarch.
- For more than **100 years of Iranian history**, **bazaaris have been key actors in all of Iran's major political movements**.
- Their role as a major political force has since become more symbolic, but the **impact of fluctuations in currency on their business** is what led them to **spark the protests** that have since turned deadly.
- This **round of protests feels different from prior ones** because of a **sense of frustration and exhaustion** among people in Iran.

5. How has the Iranian government responded?

- Shortly after protests began, **Iran's president Mr Pezeshkian** said he had asked the **interior minister** to listen to the **"legitimate demands" of the protesters**.
- However, in a brief address aired by state television on 9 January, **Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** signalled that his government would **crack down on protesters**.
- He said protesters were **"ruining their own streets to make the president of another country happy"** - referring to **Mr Trump** and warned that **Tehran would not tolerate** people acting as **"mercenaries for foreigners"**.
- In previous comments, **Mr Khamenei** sought to differentiate **between protesters and rioters**, saying the latter should be **"should be put in their place"**.
- **Authorities** have also sought to **differentiate between economic protesters** and those **calling for regime change**, branding the **latter as "rioters"** and **foreign backed "mercenaries"** while pledging a tougher crackdown against them.

- Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei separately vowed that punishment for protesters *"will be decisive, maximum and without any legal leniency"*.

6. How is the US involved?

- On 2 January, 2026 Mr Trump warned that if Tehran **"violently kills peaceful protesters,"** the US **"will come to their rescue"**.
- **"We are locked and loaded and ready to go"**, the president wrote on Truth Social, without specifying what actions he was considering.
- In a further tightening on Iran, **Mr Trump said a 25% tariff would be implemented on any country** "doing business with the Islamic Republic of Iran" - a group that could include **Brazil, China, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Russia.**
- Mr Trump initially told reporters on 11 January that his **administration was in talks to set up a meeting with Tehran**, but later said he had **"cancelled all meetings"** the crackdown on demonstrator had stopped.
- Iran's foreign minister, **Abbas Araghchi**, said that protests have **"turned violent and bloody to give an excuse"** for **Mr Trump** to intervene.

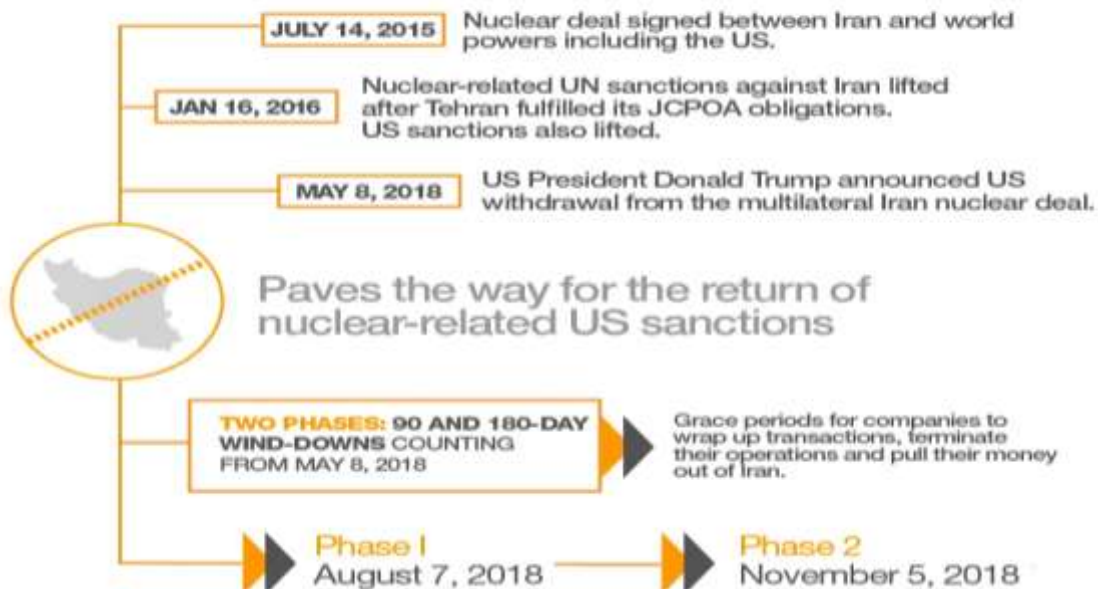


US options	Description
Military Options Briefed to the White House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to The New York Times, President Trump has been briefed on a range of potential military responses. These reportedly include precision strikes aimed at non-military infrastructure linked to Iran's internal security forces, rather than a full-scale invasion or direct ground deployment.
Airstrike Scenarios Under Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Wall Street Journal has reported that U.S. defense planners are examining the possibility of airstrikes on major Iranian military bases. While no decision has been finalised, the discussions reflect a more assertive posture in Washington as the crisis in Iran escalates.
Israel on High Alert Amid Rising Tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Israel has reportedly heightened its security readiness in response to the evolving situation. According to Reuters, Israeli security officials have held high-level consultations, indicating preparedness for potential regional repercussions if the United States were to take military action against Iran.
Exiled Crown Prince Issues Call to Protesters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding to the political uncertainty, exiled former Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi has urged demonstrators to intensify their protests. In a message posted on X, he stated, "You are not alone... the entire world is with your national revolution." His remarks have renewed speculation about a possible political role should the current leadership be weakened.

7. Highlight the history of sanctions on Iran?



US SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN Withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal



US SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN

First phase

Starting August 7, Iran stands to lose the following business transactions because of the re-imposition of US sanctions.



\$39.5 bn

230 AEROPLANES

\$20bn contract to sell **110 Boeing planes** to Iran Air and Aseman Airlines cancelled.

\$19bn contract to sell **100 Airbus planes** to Iran cancelled; **only 3 planes** delivered to Iran Air.

\$536 million contract to sell **20 ATR planes** to Iran Air cancelled; **13 planes** delivered as of August 5.



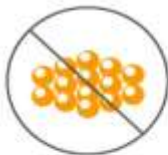
\$424 m

5,400 TONNES OF CARPETS EXPORTED

Fiscal year 2017

Iran's hand-woven carpet industry **controls 30 percent** of the **global market** and **employs an estimated 2 million** Iranians.

The **US** is the **biggest market** for Iranian carpets.



\$1.37 m

557KG CAVIAR

First shipment of caviar to the US in **25 years**, weighing **10kg** and worth **\$13,000**, took place after sanctions were lifted in 2016-2017.



\$852 m

96,000 TONNES OF PISTACHIO EXPORT

March 2017 to December 2017

US and Iran are the **main competitors in pistachio production with 85 percent** of the annual world market.

China is the **biggest buyer** of Iranian pistachios in 2016.



64.5 tonnes

GOLD

Fiscal year 2017

Trading of gold and other precious metals with Iran is prohibited. In the past, gold was used as payment to buy Iranian oil to circumvent banking sanctions.



1.6 million

CARS SOLD IN IRAN

Fiscal year 2017

Iran was the **12th-biggest car market in 2017** and had **18 percent growth** in sales.

French company, PSA, maker of Peugeot, said it will stop its operation in Iran. PSA controls an estimated 34 percent of Iran's automotive market.


Questions for Debate:


- *Were international sanctions on Iran justified by nuclear non-proliferation concerns?*
- *Have sanctions harmed ordinary Iranian citizens more than political elites?*
- *Do sanctions on Iran affect peace and stability in the Middle East more than they affect Iran itself?*

8. Mention some of Iran's past protests?

- Iran has a long history of popular protests over a variety of issues, and saw its last shah toppled in 1979 by an Islamic revolution that brought the incumbent theocratic establishment to power.

- Here's a **look at previous nationwide** and some smaller protests after the revolution and **how they were handled to offer** a fuller picture of what is transpiring now.

Protests	Description
1979 Iranian protests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 1979 Iranian protests were part of a major nationwide uprising that overthrew the monarchy of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and led to the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The movement began as early as January 1978 with increasing demonstrations across cities, involving workers, students, clerics, and many ordinary citizens dissatisfied with political repression, corruption, economic hardship, and the Shah's ties to the West.
Early post-revolution protests (1979 to late 1990s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's protests started less than two weeks after the revolution, with thousands marching in Tehran to oppose Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's decree mandating the hijab, or Islamic headscarf covering. The decree followed a ban on alcohol; the separation of men and women in universities, schools, pools and beaches; and limitations on broadcasting music from radio and television.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The alarmed women were met with threats as well as pro-state mobs who attacked them with sticks and stones.
Student and reformist protests (1999-2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In July 1999, Tehran was rocked by massive student-led protests triggered by the closure of a reformist newspaper by hardliners. The media censorship outraged students who supported President Mohammad Khatami's alleged liberalisation and reforms agenda and his "dialogue among civilisations" discourse to boost international ties. By the time the protests were quelled by security forces days later, multiple students were dead, dozens injured, and hundreds jailed. The judiciary decided none of the security forces involved in the violence would be imprisoned. The issue also received international attention, with a picture of a student holding up the bloodied shirt of his friend going viral. 
Green Movement (2009-2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the June 12 presidential election, when the hugely divisive Ahmadinejad was re-elected to form a second government, Iran saw by far its largest protests, which also grabbed international attention. Millions of Iranians took to the streets in Tehran and major cities across the country after the authorities insisted Ahmadinejad won in a landslide.



- But after weeks of demonstrations, **Basij militias** and **police increasingly attacked rallies** with **batons, tear gas** and eventually **live ammunition**.
- **Dozens were confirmed killed by human rights** monitors, but the authorities refused to announce official death tolls.
- The **death of one young woman, Neda Agha-Soltan**, shook the nation and turned her into an international symbol.
- **The 26-year-old philosophy student** was **filmed bleeding** on the pavement in **Tehran after being shot in the chest while protesting**, with blood pouring out of her mouth and nose.

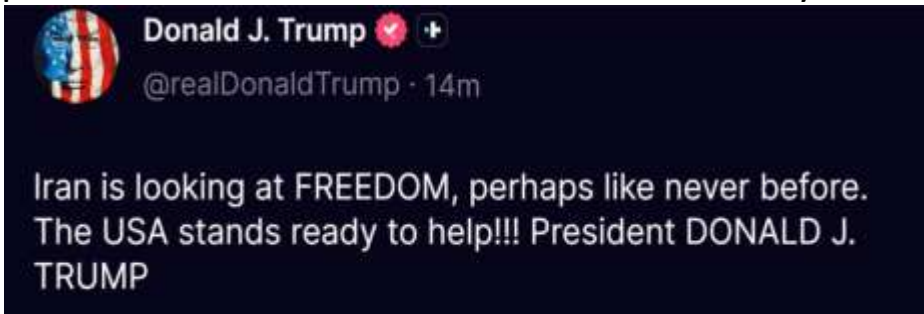
Mahsa Amini uprising (2022-2023)

- Millions across **Iran once more expressed their anger** and desire for change across the country after **22-year-old Mahsa Amini died** in police custody after **being arrested for alleged noncompliance** with **mandatory hijab rules**.
- She was taken by **police while walking out of a metro station** on vacation with **her family in Tehran**, and **died after collapsing at a “re-education centre”** tasked with making women understand how they must dress to avoid being punished by the state.



- Outraged **Iranians** protested for months in streets and **universities**, predominantly around the **issue of women's rights** but also about **broader topics** such as **extremely limited personal, social, internet and press freedoms**, as well as deteriorating economic conditions.

9. How the world is reacting towards Iran's protest?

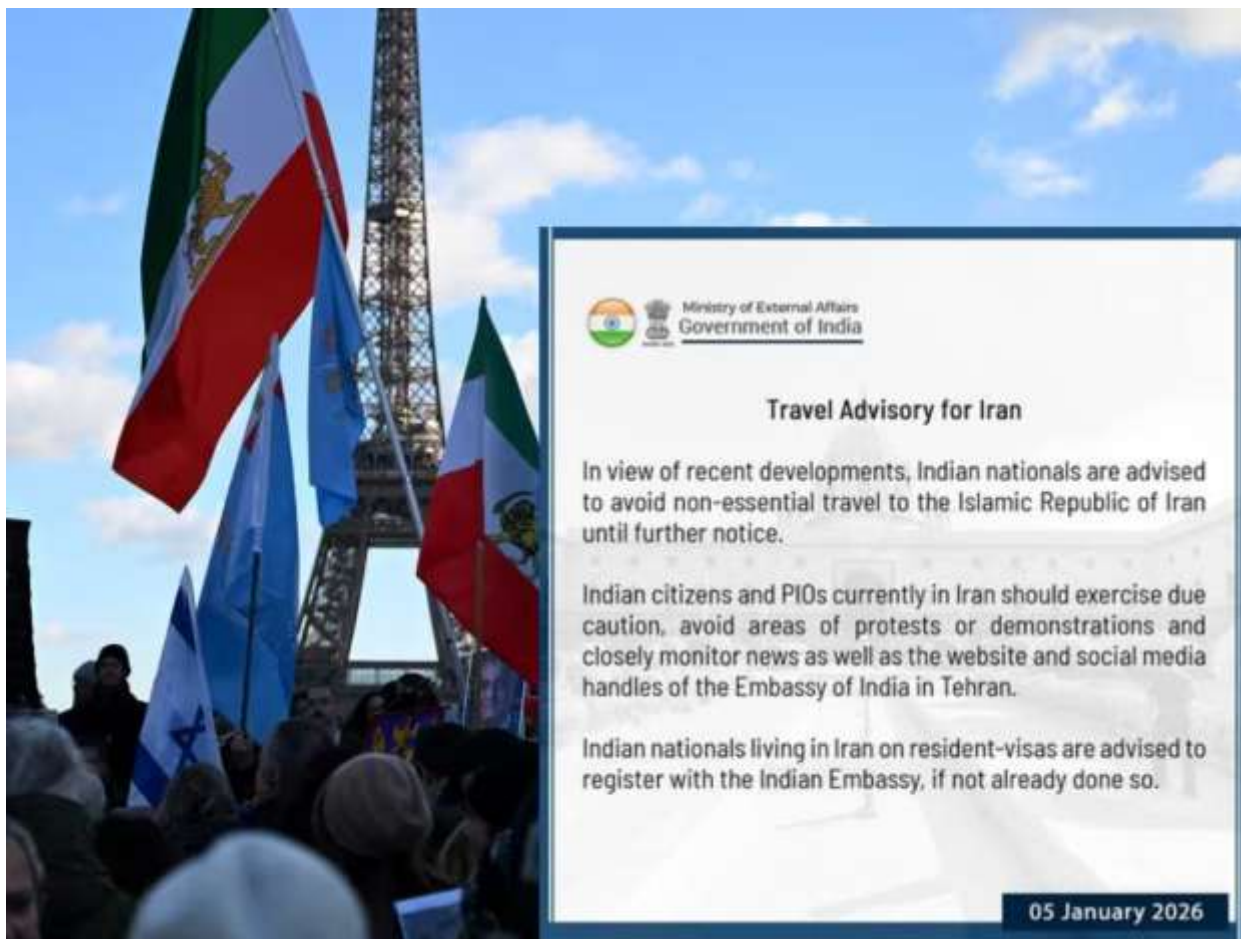
Countries	Reaction
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President Donald Trump has warned Iran's leaders against using lethal force against demonstrators and has repeatedly said the US is considering military action. • "The military is looking at it, and we're looking at some very strong options. We'll make a determination," Trump told reporters on board Air Force One late on Sunday. 
Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran's most hostile regional foe, Israel, has strongly backed the demonstrators, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commending the "tremendous heroism of the citizens of Iran" during a cabinet meeting.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Israeli army has separately said the protests are internal but that the army is “equipped to respond with power if need be”.
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU foreign affairs chief, Kaja Kallas, said the 27-member bloc was “discussing putting additional sanctions”, after it signalled its readiness to impose further measures on Monday. Kallas told reporters that the EU already has sweeping sanctions in place on Iran and are discussing putting additional sanctions.
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> China’s government has taken a line closer to Iran’s, expressing its opposition to external “interference in other countries’ internal affairs”, with a Foreign Ministry spokesperson adding that “the sovereignty and security of all nations should be fully protected by international law.”
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sergei Shoigu, secretary of Russia’s Security Council and former defence minister, speaking about the protests following a call with Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran’s National Security Council, “condemned” what he said was “the latest attempt by foreign forces to interfere in Iran’s internal affairs”.
United Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says he is “shocked” by reports of violence against protesters in Iran and called on the government to show restraint. “All Iranians must be able to express their grievances peacefully and without fear,” he added.

Questions for Debate:

- Should international concern over Iran’s protests override the principle of state sovereignty?***
- Is the United States genuinely supporting democracy in Iran or pursuing strategic interests?***
- Is there a double standard in how the international community responds to protests in different countries?***

10. How India reacted to Iran's protest?



- **India** on **January 5, 2026** advised its citizens **to avoid non-essential travel to Iran**, citing **“recent developments”** as protests over economic and political grievances spread across the country.
- The **advisory urged Indians** already in **Iran to steer clear of demonstrations** and register with the embassy in Tehran.
- The MEA's guidance is clear:
 - **Avoid all areas where protests or demonstrations are occurring.**
 - **Closely follow local news and updates from the Indian Embassy in Tehran.**
 - **Ensure registration with the embassy if living in Iran on a resident visa.**

11. Why don't the protests have clear leaders?

- **Iran** currently lacks a **uniform opposition group** which could form a **government**, **Shahram Akbarzadeh**, a **professor in Middle East and Central Asian politics** at **Australia's Deakin University**, **told Al Jazeera**.

- **Opposition groups in Iran and outside are disjointed** and have different aims. Some have **clear leaders** while others do not. **No individual inside Iran**, however, **has emerged as a clear opposition leader** in the ongoing protest movement.
- A possible reason for this is that **opposition members are fearful of reprisals if they have identifiable leaders**.
- In line with other **protest movements around the world**, protesters inside Iran increasingly rely on **networked organising**.
- **Iranian government has actively and effectively suppressed any attempt for organised opposition** at home over the **past decades** and arrested and silenced its leaders resulting protests are **left contingent on ad hoc individual or collective decisions** of the protesters.

12. Mention Iran's main opposition groups?

IRAN

What are Iran's main opposition groups?

Iran's establishment is facing mounting pressure from a fragmented opposition movement split between activists inside the country and exiled leaders abroad.



Reza Pahlavi

The monarchists

Reza Pahlavi, 65, is the eldest son of the late Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was deposed in the 1979 revolution. He is based in the US.



Maryam Rajavi

People's Mojahedin Organization

Maryam Rajavi leads the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), an Iranian opposition group based in exile. The group opposes Iran's clerical leadership but is widely rejected inside Iran.




Secular Democratic Republic in Iran

Opposition groups based outside Iran formed the Solidarity for a Secular Democratic Republic in Iran (Hamgami) coalition in 2023, calling for separation of religion and state, free elections, and an independent judiciary and media.



Kurdish and Baloch minorities

Major protests in Iran have often been strongest in Kurdish and Balochi areas, but neither region has a unified opposition movement.

Opposition groups	Description
<p>Reza Pahlavi and the monarchists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reza Pahlavi 65, is the son of the deposed shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and the heir of the former Pahlavi monarchy. • After Mohammad Mosaddegh, Iran's prime minister who was democratically elected in 1951, nationalised the British-controlled oil industry in Iran, he was overthrown in a 1953 coup backed by the United States and UK to reverse that move and secure Western oil interests. <h2 style="text-align: center;">Reza Pahlavi</h2> <div style="text-align: center;">  <div style="position: absolute; right: 0; top: 0;"> <p>Birth: 31 October 1960, Tehran</p> <p>Exiled Crown Prince of Iran</p> <p>Considered the heir to the Pahlavi dynasty</p> </div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Son of Iran's last Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and Empress Farah Pahlavi • 1979: His father was removed from power in the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the monarchy ended • Went to live in America in exile • Demands that Iran become a secular democratic country <p style="text-align: center; color: purple;">Three books he has written</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Iran: L'Aube d'un Nouveau Jour</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Winds of Change: The Future of Democracy in Iran</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Guzashteh va Ayandeh</p> </div> </div>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A repressive royal rule was reinstated until 1979 when the last shah fled the country as the Iranian Revolution took hold. He died in Egypt in 1980. • Living in exile in the US, his son now leads a prominent monarchist movement known as the Iran National Council but claims not to be insisting on a return to a monarchy. Instead, he says he advocates for a secular, democratic system to be decided by a referendum. 
Maryam Rajavi and the People's Mujahideen Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mujahideen was a powerful leftist group that carried out bombing campaigns against the shah's government and US targets in the 1970s but eventually fell out with other groups. • It is often known by its Persian name, the Mujahideen-e Khalq Organisation, or by the acronyms MEK or MKO. • Many Iranians, including sworn enemies of the Islamic Republic, say they cannot forgive the group for siding with Iraq against Iran during the 1980-1988 war. • The group was the first to publicly reveal in 2002 that Iran had a secret uranium-enrichment programme.
Secular Democratic Republic in Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of groups based outside Iran and calling for a democratic republic joined together in 2023 to form the Solidarity for a Secular Democratic Republic in Iran (Hamgami) political coalition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It gained some popularity among the Iranian diaspora in the wake of the 2022 protests over the killing of Mahsa Amini, 22, who died in police custody after being arrested by Iran's so-called morality police for not wearing her hijab correctly. • The coalition advocates for the separation of religion and state, free elections and the establishment of an independent judiciary and media.
Kurdish and Baluch minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran is predominantly Shia Muslim, making up about 90 percent of the population, while Sunni Muslims and other Muslim sects account for roughly 9 percent. • Iran's mostly Sunni Muslim Kurdish and Baluch minorities have often clashed with the Persian-speaking, Shia Muslim government in Tehran. • Several Kurdish groups have long opposed the government in western Iran, where they form a majority, and there have been periods of active rebellion against government forces in those areas.

13. What is the process of choosing a new Supreme Leader in Iran?

- There are **only two countries in the world** with a **theocracy** where supreme religious authority rules: **Iran and Vatican City**.
- Just as the **Pope holds the most powerful position in Vatican City**, the **Rahbar is the supreme leader in Iran**.
- **Rahbar is a Persian word meaning guide or leader**.
- Iran's system of governance is even **more complex than that of the Vatican**.
- On one side, the **Rahbar controls the government**; on the other, there is an **elected government**.
- **Khamenei has been Iran's Rahbar (Supreme Leader) for 36 years**.

'Assembly of Experts' consisting 88 clerics selects the Supreme leader



Rahbar

The commanders of all armed forces, the final authority on foreign policy and all national matters. The Supreme Leader takes the final decision, while appointments to key posts are limited to senior clerics who have reached the highest religious rank.

Assembly of Experts



A body of 88 clerics and scholars. Members are elected by Iranian citizens every 8 years. Their role is to oversee the work of the Supreme Leader and they have the authority to dismiss him if he fails to fulfil his duties properly.

President

Iran's second most powerful position. Has the authority to implement the Constitution and influence foreign policy, but all final decisions are taken by the Supreme Leader. Elections are held every 4 years. Candidates require approval from 12 Islamic jurists and the Guardian Council.



Guardian Council



Consists of 6 Islamic jurists and 6 judges. Members are appointed every 6 years by the Supreme Leader. The Council has the power to reject laws passed by Parliament.

Majlis

General elections are held every 4 years to elect 290 members. Parliament has the authority to draft laws, approve the annual budget, and initiate impeachment proceedings against the President and ministers.













14. Mention about Iran's oil industry?

- Iran is one of the **top global producers of oil and gas** and holds the **world's second largest proven natural gas reserves** and the **third-largest crude oil reserves**, according to the **United States Energy Information Administration**.
- With about **157 billion barrels of proven crude oil**, Iran holds about a quarter (24 percent) of the **Middle East's** and **12 percent** of the world's proven oil reserves.

ENERGY

The top 10 oil producers

The United States is the world's largest oil producer, followed by Saudi Arabia and then Russia.

		Country	Million barrels per day	Share of world total
1		United States	21.91	22%
2		Saudi Arabia	11.13	11%
3		Russia	10.75	11%
4		Canada	5.76	6%
5		China	5.26	5%
6		Iraq	4.42	4%
7		Brazil	4.28	4%
8		United Arab Emirates	4.16	4%
9		Iran	3.99	4%
10		Kuwait	2.91	3%

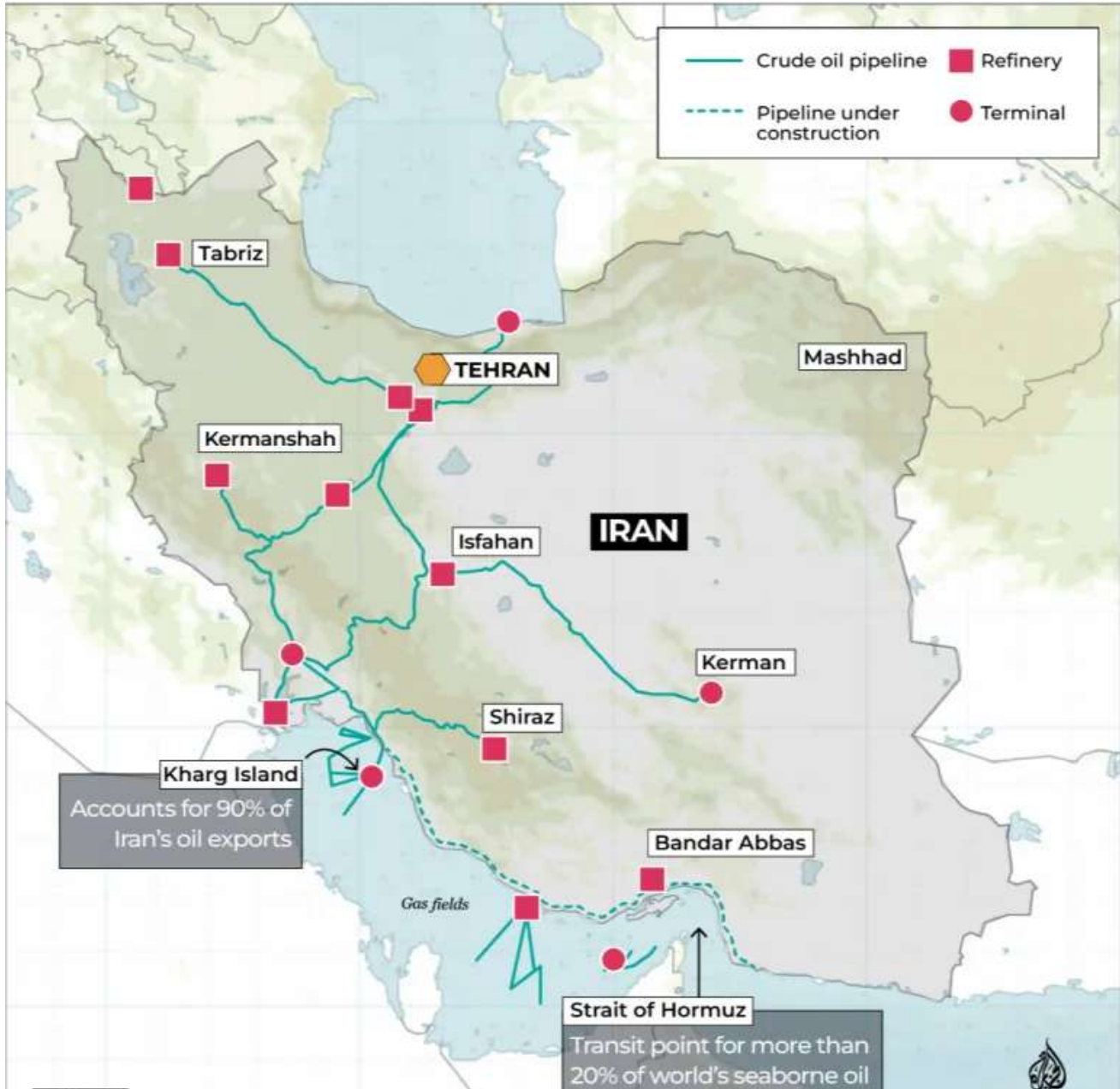
15. Where are Iran's oil facilities located?

- Iran's oil facilities are spread across several regions, mainly in the south and west of the country.
- These include onshore oilfields, offshore platforms, refineries, export terminals and pipelines.
- Nearly all of Iran's crude oil flows through Kharg Island, the country's main export terminal, which handles close to 1.5 million barrels per day.
- More than 20 percent of the world's seaborne oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow maritime chokepoint between Iran and Oman.

MIDDLE EAST

Iran's oil facilities

Iran is the ninth-largest oil producer in the world, with the vast majority of its crude exports flowing through Kharg Island and exiting via the Strait of Hormuz.



16. How big is Iran's gas industry?











- Iran has the world's second largest proven natural gas reserves after Russia.
- They are estimated at **1,200 trillion cubic feet** (34 trillion cubic metres), which accounts for **16 percent of global reserves** and **45 percent of OPEC's total**.

- Iran is the third highest producer of natural gas behind the US and Russia with production reaching **9,361 billion cubic feet** (265 billion cubic metres) in 2023, accounting for at least **6 percent** of global production.

ENERGY

The top 10 producers of natural gas

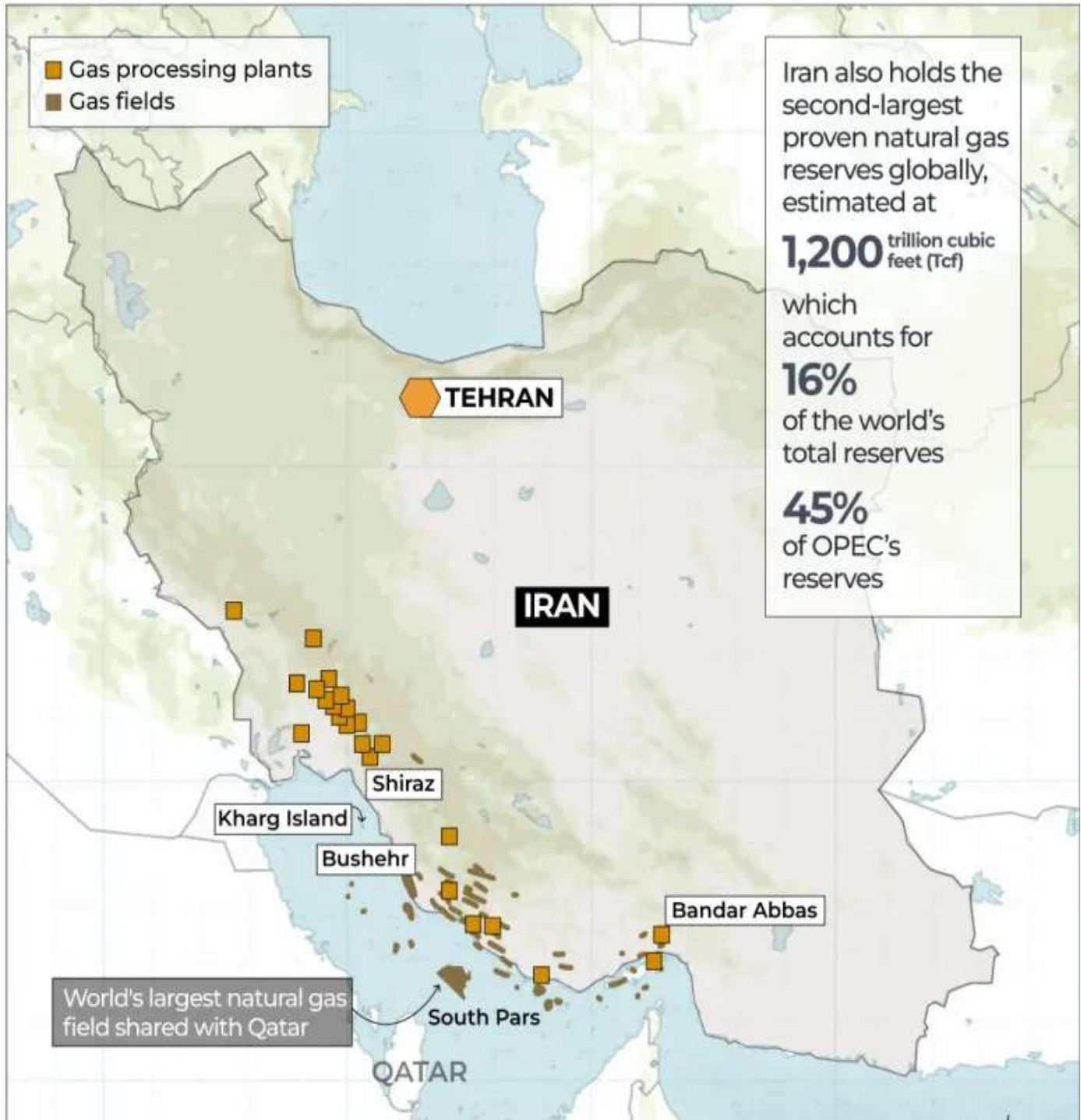
The United States is the world's largest natural gas producer, followed by Russia and then Iran.

		Country	Dry natural gas production (billion cubic feet)	Share of world total
1		United States	37,803	26%
2		Russia	21,664	15%
3		Iran	9,361	6%
4		China	8,454	6%
5		Canada	6,855	5%
6		Qatar	6,067	4%
7		Australia	5,343	4%
8		Norway	4,296	3%
9		Saudi Arabia	4,281	3%
10		Algeria	3,704	3%

MIDDLE EAST

Iran's gas facilities

Iran's gas facilities are concentrated primarily in the south of the country, especially along the Gulf, with major gas fields and processing plants.



17. Mention about key trading partners of Iran?

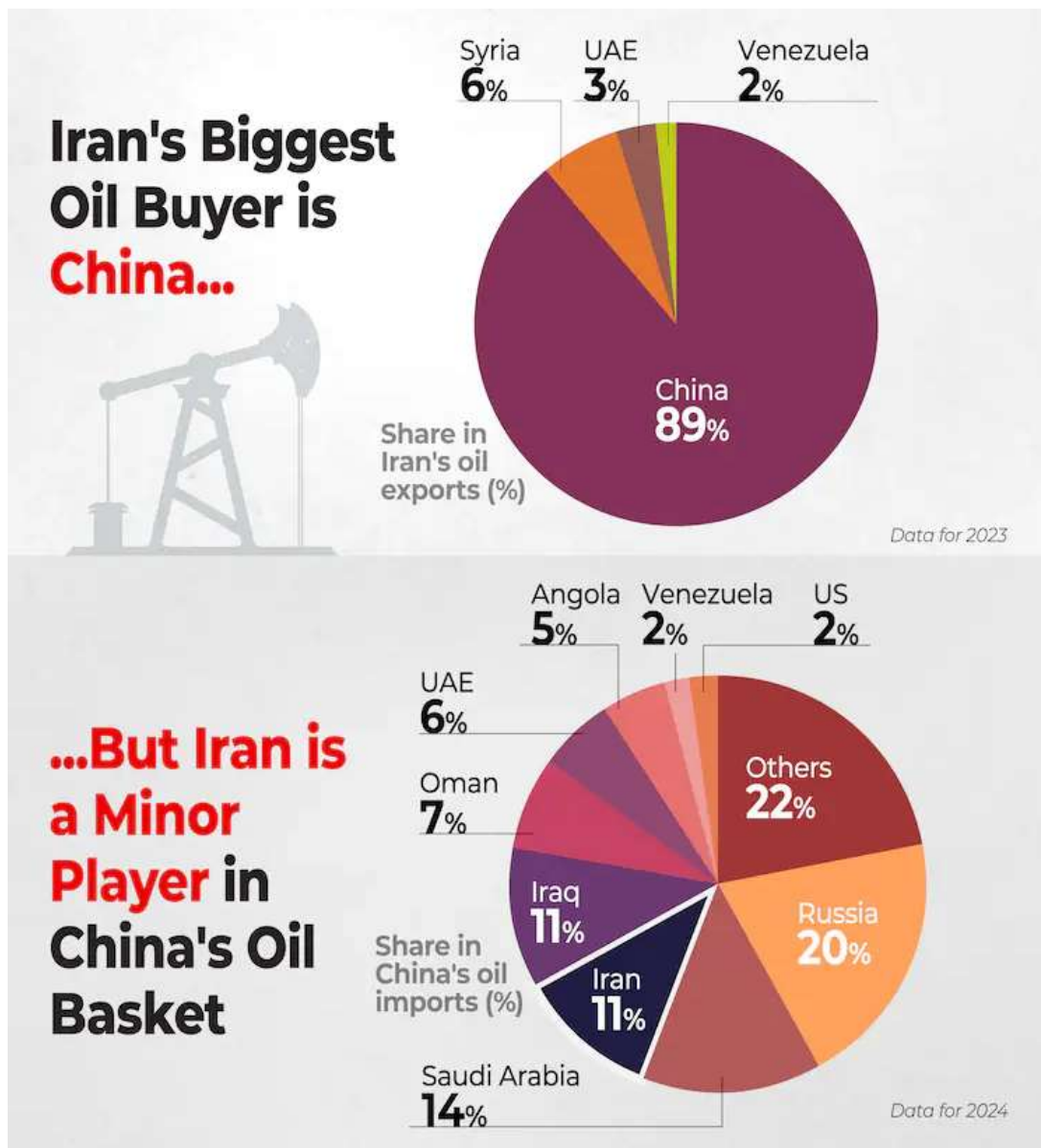


18. What is the status of Iranian oil Industry?

- According to the Iran export data and Iran oil export data, the total value of Iran oil exports reached \$43 billion in 2024, a 2% increase from the previous year.



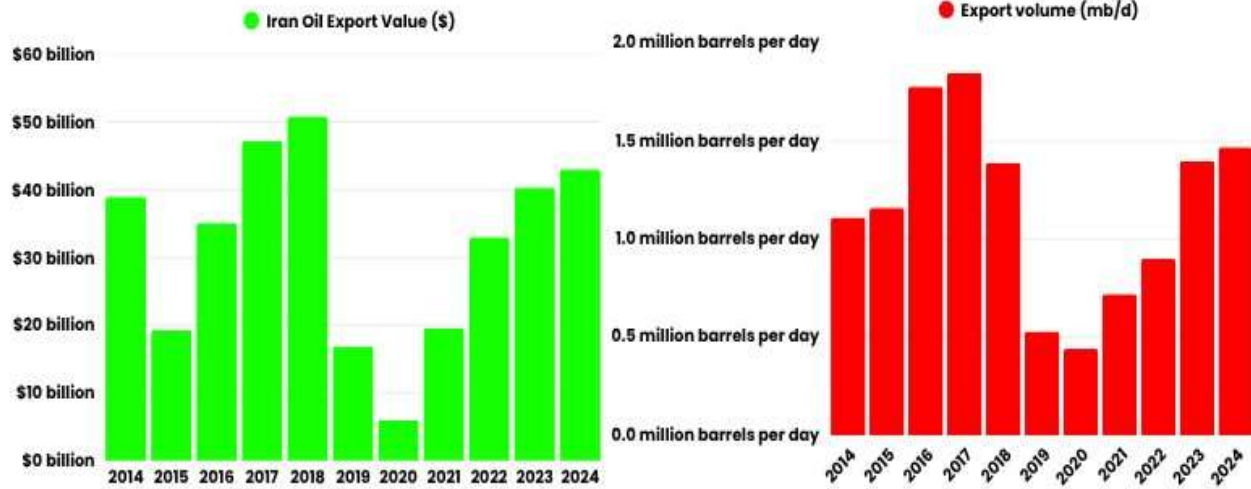
- According to the World Bank, this represented almost 57% of the nation's total export earnings in 2024, the **largest percentage since the reinstatement of US sanctions in 2018**.
- **Iran is the 16th largest oil exporter in the world**, as per the global trade data and Iran customs export data of oil.
- In the **first half of 2025**, Iran's oil exports averaged around **1.7 million barrels per day**, according to the **International Energy Agency**.



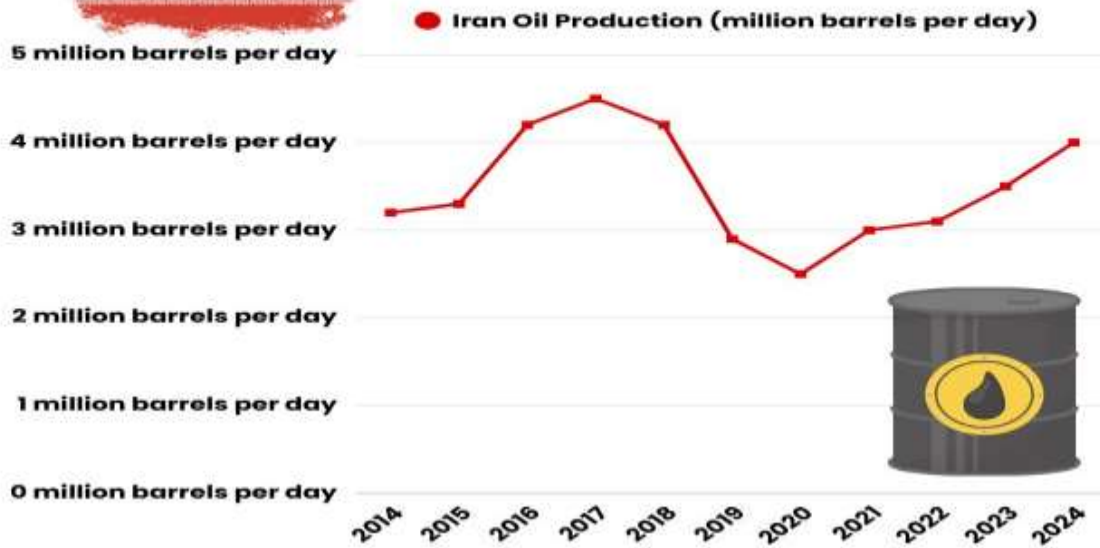


IRAN OIL EXPORTS IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

HISTORICAL IRAN OIL EXPORT DATA



Iran Oil Production in the Last 10 Years



19. Enlist military comparison between Iran and USA?



UNITED STATES		IRAN
\$716,000,000,000	DEFENSE BUDGET	\$6,300,000,000
2,141,900	TOTAL MILITARY PERSONNEL	873,000
13,398	TOTAL AIRCRAFT	509
2,362	FIGHTERS/ INTERCEPTORS	142
5760	HELICOPTERS	126
13,513	SERVICABLE AIRPORTS	319
6,287	TANK STRENGTH	1,634
24	AIRCRAFT CARRIERS	0
68	SUBMARINES	34
22	FRIGATES	6
68	DESTROYERS	0

20. Who are Iran's allies if war with the US and Israel breaks out?



- As Israel continues its attacks on Iran, US President Donald Trump and other global leaders are hardening their stance against the Islamic Republic.
- Iran has long relied on a **network of allied paramilitary groups** across the **Middle East** as part of its **deterrence strategy**.
- This approach has **largely shielded** it from **direct military strikes** by the US or **Israel**, despite constant threats and pressure.
- This so-called "**axis of resistance**" includes groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the **Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)** in Iraq, the **Houthi militants** in Yemen, as well as **Hamas** in Gaza, which has long been under Iran's influence to varying degrees.

Questions for Debate:

- *Should Iran be held directly responsible for the actions of allied groups like Hezbollah, Houthis, and Hamas?*

21. What can be the possible impact of the Iran crisis on India?



- The **Iran Protests** triggered serious concern among major stakeholders in the region, including India.
- The **unrest** is somehow affecting India too, as **any instability there is directly linked to India's strategic** and trade interests.

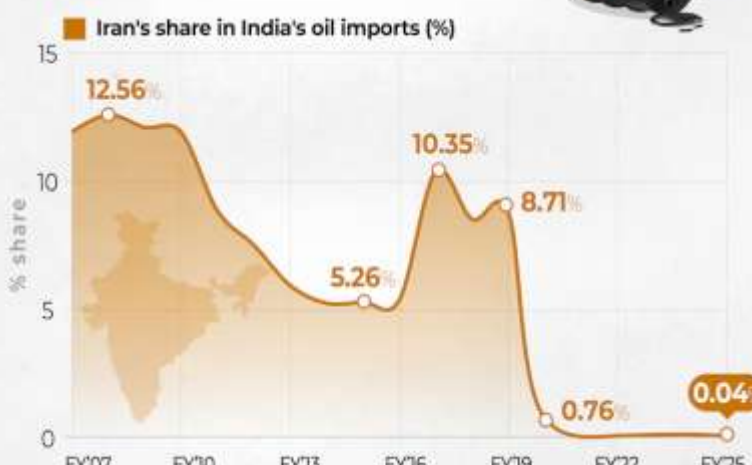
INDIA'S TRADE WITH IRAN IS FALLING!



Metric	Total Trade
2020 - 2021	15,659.82
2021 - 2022	14,294.53
2022 - 2023	18,679.59
2023 - 2024	15,293.81
2024 - 2025	14,244.86

Note: All figures are in ₹ Crore
Source: Commerce Ministry

Impact	Analysis
Energy Security Under Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 40% of India's crude oil imports and 54% of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies pass through the Strait of Hormuz, making it a critical artery for India's energy needs. While the government currently maintains that there is no immediate negative impact on oil prices or supplies, and asserts that India's reserves are sufficient, the situation remains fluid.

	<div data-bbox="539 132 1344 846"> <h3 style="text-align: center;">India Shuts the Tap on Iranian Oil</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">Iran's share in India's oil basket has plunged from double digits to nearly zero</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Iran's share in India's oil imports (%)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Fiscal Year</th> <th>% share</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>FY'07</td> <td>12.56%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY'10</td> <td>~11.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY'13</td> <td>5.26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY'16</td> <td>10.35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY'19</td> <td>8.71%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY'22</td> <td>0.76%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY'25</td> <td>0.04%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Fiscal Year	% share	FY'07	12.56%	FY'10	~11.5%	FY'13	5.26%	FY'16	10.35%	FY'19	8.71%	FY'22	0.76%	FY'25	0.04%
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<p>Trade between India and Iran</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per the Department of Commerce data, the trade relation between India and Iran is good and reached approx USD 1.68 billion in FY2024-25 (April 2024-March 2025). Out of this, New Delhi exported goods worth USD1.24 billion. However, the import is very less as compare to the export, settled at USD0.44 billion. If the Iran crisis further escalates, the trade operations between Chabahar port are expected to slow down. 																
<p>Fall in Basmati Rice prices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citing IREF's data, news agency, ANI, has said, that the domestic price of basmati rice variety 1121 has come down to ₹80 per kg from ₹85 per kg last week, while varieties 1509 and 1718 declined to ₹65 per kg from ₹70 per kg. According to the federation, Iran is India's one of the largest markets for Basmati rice exports. According to the IREF, between 1 April 2024 and 25 March 2025, India exported Basmati Rice worth 59.44 lakh tonnes out of total rice exports of 198.65 lakh tonnes 																

Rising Freight and Shipping Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exporters are already feeling the strain. • Shipping costs are also expected to rise, with companies anticipating war surcharges, higher insurance premiums, and increased fuel costs.
Export Demand and Trade Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian exporters are bracing for reduced demand from Iran, a key market for commodities like basmati rice, soybean, and tea. • Discussions between exporters and the government are underway to evaluate the situation and strategize ways to mitigate adverse effects.
Setback for Strategic Chabahar Port Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the most significant repercussions may be on the development and operations of the Chabahar port in Iran, a critical hub in India's regional connectivity strategy. • The port serves as a vital link to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East, bypassing Pakistan. <div data-bbox="472 982 1409 1591" data-label="Image"> <p>The map illustrates the strategic importance of the Chabahar port in Iran. It shows a solid line connecting Chabahar to Kabul, Afghanistan, and a dashed line connecting Chabahar to Mumbai, India. The map also labels Pakistan, China, and the surrounding bodies of water, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The crisis has disrupted progress on the port's expansion and the associated railway line project intended to connect India with Central Asia and beyond. • Sources indicate that these setbacks could delay India's broader ambitions of enhancing trade and influence in the region.



The strategic and economic importance of Iran's Chabahar port will be greatly enhanced by its integration with the planned INSTC corridor (in red).

22. What would the United States and Israel gain from a change of power in Iran?

Gains	Description
Complete control over the Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States has military bases in countries such as Qatar, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. • Through the Red Sea routes controlled by Iran, American oil and other trade also flows. • Iran is the only country in the region where the US has no base. If a US-friendly government comes to power in Iran, America would gain control over the entire Middle East.
Stronger alliances with countries like Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has long been a rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran for leadership of the Islamic world. • The US has military, economic and diplomatic ties with Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia. As Iran weakens, America's relations with these countries will improve further.

The Israel–US alliance will become stronger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to experts, if Iran weakens, Israel will remain the biggest claimant to American support. • If US relations with Iran were to improve, Israel could face a strong rival in the Middle East. • So far, Israel has been the largest recipient of US economic and military aid. • According to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), since Israel's formation in 1948, the United States has given it more than USD 300 billion, or over INR 25 lakh crore.
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23. What is the relevance of the topic for UPSC CSE?

- **For Prelims:** Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Strait of Hormuz, India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), Red Sea, Two-state Solution, European Union, United Nations, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
- **For Mains:** Reason for Iran protest, Historical background for reasons of conflict, Key Drivers of Conflict in West Asia, Implications of West Asian Conflict on India.

Some previous years prelims questions.

Q. Consider the following statements: (2025)

1. The Red Sea receives very little precipitation in any form.
2. No water enters the Red Sea from rivers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (c)

Some previous years mains questions.

- Q1. "Energy security constitutes the dominant kingpin of India's foreign policy, and is linked with India's overarching influence in Middle Eastern countries." How would you integrate energy security with India's foreign policy trajectories in the coming years? **(2025 - 15 marks)**

Some questions from this year and previous years interview transcripts.

Board Lt Raj Shukla sir (2025)

- Tell me something about Iran nuclear program and US sanctions?

Board Sanjay Verma sir(2024):

- Give an overview of the Israel Iran conflict. Its implications?

Board Bidyut Bihari Swain sir (2024):

- After world war 2, there has been no such war but in recent times some war situations in the world. Can you list it out?
- What is India's stand in it?
- Which countries have suspended aid to Palestine and why
- Tell about Houthi attacks and its impact on India.

Board Suman Sharma mam (2024):

- How much nuclear enrichment has Iran done so far?
- How much time will it take for Iran to create a bomb?
- Can the USA destroy Iran's bombs completely?
- So you mean to say they can delay but not destroy?
- What steps will Iran take in response?

Some questions for QUIZ.

Q1 Consider the following Countries:

1. Afghanistan
2. Turkey
3. Armenia
4. Ajerbaijan
5. Pakistan

How many of the above countries share borders with Iran?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) All five

Ans: (d)

Some questions for POLL.

- Q1. Do you think Iran's current protests are primarily driven by economic hardship?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q2. Are the protests in Iran now nationwide, occurring in most major cities?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q3. Do you believe government security forces in Iran have used lethal force against protesters?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q4. Should the Iranian authorities be held accountable for human-rights violations during the crackdown?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q5. Should the international community increase diplomatic pressure on Iran over the protests?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.

Q6. Do you think the current Iranian crisis will escalate into a larger regional conflict?

- (a) YES
- (b) NO
- (c) Can't say.

Q7. Can internal protests weaken Iran's influence in West Asia (Middle East)?

- (a) YES
- (b) NO
- (c) Can't say.

