

In Ankara, Araghchi says he held 'straightforward' talks with Turkish counterpart on Syria

# 'Terrorism in Syria Will Affect Neighbors'



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## Pezeshkian, Putin pledge coordination to restore stability in northern Syria

TEHRAN – Amid a new terror insurgency in Syria, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed their commitment to coordinated efforts in combating terrorism and preserving the Arab country's sovereignty.

In a phone call on Monday, the leaders discussed the deteriorating situation in Syria following a surge in terrorist activities by different groups.

The Kremlin emphasized that the focus of the conversation was on Syria's worsening crisis, with both leaders condemning the recent escalation as a deliberate attempt to undermine the country's sovereignty and stability.

Putin and Pezeshkian expressed unconditional support for Syria's legitimate authorities in their fight to restore constitutional order and territorial integrity. They also stressed the significance of continued collaboration within the Astana peace framework, involving Turkey.

The two leaders further reviewed progress on bilateral agreements reached during the recent BRICS summit in Kazan, underlining the importance of expanding cooperation in various fields. ▶ Page 2

## 'No permission needed to safeguard our security': Iran's foreign ministry

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei asserted on Monday that Iran will defend its national interests and territorial security without seeking external approval.

"The right to defense is an inherent right," Baqaei stated at a press conference, emphasizing Tehran's resolve to respond to the Israeli regime's attack against Iranian territory on October 26.

### Engagements with Europe

Baqaei also addressed recent diplomatic engagements in Geneva with the E3 — comprising the UK, France, and Germany.

He clarified that discussions extended beyond nuclear issues, stating, "We raised our various concerns with the European side."

The spokesperson said that the meeting was intended for dialogue rather than negotiation, reflecting the natural diplomatic relations Iran maintains with these countries, particularly in light of regional developments. ▶ Page 2

## Iran-EAEU FTA to be implemented in early 2025

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN – The proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has reached a significant milestone, receiving unanimous approval from the Economic Commission of the Iranian Parliament. The agreement now awaits final ratification in Parliament's plenary session, marking a transformative step in strengthening Iran's economic integration with the region.

According to Mohammad Sadegh Ghanadzadeh, Deputy for International Business Development at the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Iran has already established 20 preferential and free trade agreements with various countries, but the Iran-EAEU FTA stands out as the first multilateral agreement of its kind involving the Eurasian bloc. The agreement was signed in December 2023 by the Industry Ministers of Iran and the five member states of the EAEU: Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. ▶ Page 4

## Israel can't heal wounds with repeated truce violations

By Narges Pakdel

TEHRAN – France, an ally of France, announced on Monday that the Israeli army has violated the ceasefire with Lebanon's Hezbollah 52 times since it went into effect on November 27.

Israel's only successes in the war on Hezbollah, which escalated greatly around mid-September with the terrorist pager and walkie-talkie explosions, were because of its advanced warplanes and 2000-pound bombs provided by the United States. But, for about two months its army, which is considered one of the mightiest in the world, was grounded by the lion-hearted Hezbollah fighters at the border. It was the second time that Hezbollah fighters humiliated Israel's ground forces. Israel was first humiliated by Hezbollah in 2006.

Also, contrary to the Israeli army which kills indiscriminately, the brave Hezbollah fighters did not purposefully kill civilians though the entire Israel was within the reach of their missiles. They consider the killing of innocent lives as a wicked act and a sign of fear and weakness.

## Israeli media focusing on Syria: The convergence of interests

By Sondoss Al-Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON – Over the past few days, the Israeli media has shown a clear interest in what is happening in Syria, while Netanyahu has held in-depth consultations with his government about these developments.

The Hebrew language Kan 11 channel has broadcast an interview with one of the terrorists named Suhail Hamoud (aka Abu Taw), that "among other things, Hamoud was reassuring the public in Israel."

The terrorist Hamoud has addressed the Zionist colonial settlers: "My message is that you should not worry about us from Iran and Hezbollah. We will confront them. Brother, you should fear Bashar al-Assad, Iran and Hezbollah, not us."

Kan 11 has revealed that the Israeli side continues to monitor the battles between "the Assad regime and the rebels, and the developments of events, and is keen not to allow Iran to smuggle weapons into the region under the cover of these battles."

## Syrian army repels large terror assault in Hama

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The Syrian Arab Army and its allied forces have repelled a large offensive by terrorist groups in a village northeast of Hama.

Reports earlier indicated that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terrorists, alongside allied militant groups, started waging offensive operations in the direction of Hama after a pause of almost 24 hours.

HTS-led terrorists have already captured many areas in the neighboring city of Aleppo. Footage emerged on Monday showing displaced Syrians sleeping in temporary shelters amid highly cold weather conditions.

Efforts are currently underway to reinforce and support advanced frontlines. This follows a visit on Sunday by the Syrian Chief of Staff to northern Hama's frontline, which forms the primary contact line for terror groups in southern Idlib.

Before the surprise and large-scale terrorist offensive last week that saw Aleppo fall, the militants had been holed up in Syria's northwestern Idlib for the best part of the past five years. ▶ Page 5

## Shiraz, Dushanbe named sister cities

TEHRAN – A sisterhood agreement aimed at enhancing tourism exchange between Iran's ancient city of Shiraz, and Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, has been signed during a ceremony attended by cultural, tourism, and municipal officials from both sides.

The agreement, signed in Shiraz on Sunday, involved the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Fars province, Shiraz Municipality officials, representatives from the Tajikistan Embassy in Iran, and private sector stakeholders in tourism from both countries.

Mohammad Sabet-Eqlidi who presides over the provincial directorate, emphasized the historical and cultural bonds between the two nations. "Iran and Tajikistan share a common civilizational heritage," the official said. ▶ Page 6



Mehrzad Foad Ashiani

## 1st Roosta Azad Award ceremony held at Sharif University

TEHRAN – Sharif University of Technology hosted the inaugural Roosta Azad Award ceremony on Monday, honoring outstanding contributions to governance and technology.

The event featured the Vice President for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, Hossein Afshin, along with other dignitaries. Out of 266 candidates, five winners were recognized for their impactful work in enhancing policymaking and governance quality in Iran.

The award aims to promote innovative research and strengthen international collaborations, focusing on transparency, public engagement, and sustainability. This initiative commemorates the late Dr. Reza Roosta Azad, a key figure in advancing governance and thought leadership.



## TEHRAN PAPERS

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in the yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

## Trump's fatal blow to dollar with BRICS currency threat

In a note, Kayhan addressed the heavy tariff threat by the U.S. president-elect against BRICS and wrote: Trump has threatened to impose a 100% tariff on imported goods from BRICS member countries if they adopt an alternative currency replacing the American dollar. The threat originates from the fear that the dollar would be weakened. This shows the end of the free-market economy and all the claims of economic liberalism and neoliberalism and a fatal blow to the American currency. Trump's threat pushes BRICS, in addition to creating a viable currency, to create an alternative SWIFT and other exchange tools although such ideas are under consideration with Iran's proposal. It will also cause other non-BRICS countries (even Europeans) to stay away from America because it was the American abuse of the dollar and SWIFT in the sanctions against Iran, Russia, and even China that made the whole world think about alternative currencies. Therefore, Trump's threat, rather than against BRICS, is a fatal blow to the American currency and economy, especially as BRICS is expanding day by day.

### Iran: Tehran endurance test

In an analysis, the Iran newspaper dealt with the role of Turkey, Syria's northern neighbor, in the recent insecurity in north-west Syria and said: It cannot be denied that the effort of this northwestern neighbor of Iran was to achieve its security goals by activating terrorists to give the proxy groups of Israel and America more opportunity to maneuver in the process of defying Iran. More than anything, it seems to be an illusory attempt to test the level of the patience of Iran towards its allies when security red lines are passed. Perhaps by making Iranians' patience run thin, it will provide an excuse to turn political tensions and proxy wars into face-to-face conflict. The violence in Syria is not an event that Tehran can easily forego. Maintaining Iran's communication lines and logistical support for Hezbollah and the Resistance Front is very important for Iran. The adventurous neighboring rulers should not forget the hidden hand of extra-regional actors in manipulating the events to inflame the tense situation in the region.

### Sobh-e-No: Lonely Europe

In an explanation, Sobh-e-No discussed the recent negotiations between Iran and

three European countries and wrote: The first round of the talks between Iran and Europe on regional and nuclear issues was held in Geneva. Today, Europe finds itself alone without American support. Europe cannot afford NATO's expenses for the war in Ukraine and is more vulnerable than ever. Therefore, today it is Europe that needs negotiation more than Iran. Although many analysts consider Europe unable to solve problems with Iran without the United States, Trump's return to power has provided an opportunity for Tehran to take maximum advantage of the situation to secure its national interests with a multiplicity of actors. Iran should also change its tactics based on its interests. By avoiding unilateralism in this anarchic international system, Tehran should have tactics to minimize damages and maximize benefits while maintaining its strategies. Therefore, with strong diplomacy, threats can be minimized and regional power can be established.

### Jam-e-Jam: Maximum resistance against maximum pressure

The fundamental position of the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been based on using nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and avoiding moving in the direction of building, stockpiling, and using nuclear weapons, and this position still persists. At the same time, the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to try to create maximum deterrence against foreign threats. Unfortunately, the performance of Germany, France, and England with the support of the United States in the past months caused the Islamic Republic of Iran to pay more attention to the improvement of its deterrence level and reconsider its nuclear doctrine. Instead of supporting the nuclear negotiations and fulfilling its obligations under the JCPOA, Europe's approach has been to threaten to snap back and again refer the Iran case to the UN Security Council. The Islamic Republic of Iran is very suspicious of the plans of America, Germany, France, and England. For this reason, the idea of increasing Iran's deterrence power and revising its missile and nuclear programs has become more prominent. America and Europeans should be aware that the hands of the Islamic Republic of Iran are open and will move towards maximum deterrence against maximum pressure.

## Legislative and judicial chiefs gather to commemorate Parliament Day



TEHRAN – On Monday, a public gathering was held in the Iranian parliament hall, featuring judiciary officials and parliament members as the two bodies work to expand inter-branch cooperation.

The conference featured the leaders of both the legislative and judicial branches of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the meeting, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the speaker of the Iranian Parliament, spoke about a host of national, regional, and international issues.

In his remarks about current regional de-

velopments, Qalibaf stated that recent assaults by terrorist groups in Syria with the help of foreign states signify a breach of Syria's national sovereignty.

Qalibaf asserted that the timing of these terrorist attacks, occurring just after the ceasefire between Hezbollah and the Zionist regime, is no coincidence and indicates that the Zionist adversary aims to undermine Resistance efforts by promoting terrorist-driven narratives, thereby exacerbating regional instability. (See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

# Pezeshkian, Putin pledge coordination to restore stability in northern Syria

Iran's president also tells leaders in Syria, Qatar that Iran takes fight against terrorism seriously



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### 'Iran's support for Syria undying'

In a separate call with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Pezeshkian reiterated Tehran's commitment to assisting Syria in overcoming the ongoing crisis. Highlighting Iran's role as a steadfast ally since the onset of foreign-backed terrorism in 2011, Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of unity among Muslim nations to thwart Zionist and Western plots aimed at destabilizing the region.

"In collaboration with Muslim countries, we will effectively counter attempts to spread terrorism and insecurity in the region," Pezeshkian

stated. He expressed confidence in Syria's ability to overcome the latest threats with Iranian support.

Iran, alongside Russia, played a pivotal role in Syria's victory over Daesh in 2017. However, northern Syria remains under terrorist control, with recent attacks by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) escalating violence. On November 27, HTS launched its largest terror offensive in years, seizing parts of Aleppo and advancing toward Hama. Syrian media reported that the country's army, with Russian support, had killed 320 terrorists near Aleppo, Idlib, and Hama, bringing the total terrorist casualties in recent operations to 1,300.

President Assad accused the United States and Israel of spearheading a renewed phase of war to fragment Syria and redraw the region's geopolitical map. "The latest escalation is part of a broader strategy to weaken the independence of regional nations and impose Western dominance," Assad said. He called for regional unity through the Resistance front to counter these plots and warned of the repercussions of any harm to Syria's independence.

### Iran, Qatar highlight need for regional collaboration

On Monday, President Pezeshkian also held separate discussions with

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Pezeshkian stressed the need for regional collaboration to combat terrorism and promote peace. He commended Qatar's mediatory role in addressing crises, particularly in Gaza, and reaffirmed Iran's commitment to bilateral agreements with Qatar.

Both discussions underscored the shared resolve to strengthen unity among Muslim nations and counter external interference in West Asia.

## 'No permission needed to safeguard our security': Iran's foreign ministry

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### Palestinian Solution and Gaza

Highlighting Iran's stance on the Palestinian conflict, Baqaei advocated for an independent referendum allowing all Palestinian citizens to decide their future.

Regarding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, he expressed concern over the worsening conditions with the onset of winter.

"The continuation of famine and the starvation of the people of Gaza is very painful, and it is necessary to stop these crimes as soon as possible," he remarked.

### Nuclear Policy

In response to queries about a potential change in Iran's nuclear doctrine, Baqaei reiterated that the country's nuclear policy remains unchanged and peaceful.

Recent comments by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were described as warnings against unconstructive Western approaches. Araghchi was quoted by British media last



month as saying that more and more people within Iran are questioning the benefits of dialogue with the West in the face of Western states' continuous shunning of previous agreements.

Baqaei criticized the U.S. for its disruptive influence on Iran's interactions with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), emphasizing that Iran's nuclear program is guided by a religious decree from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and national security concerns.

### Escalating terrorism in Syria

Addressing the situation in Syria, Baqaei highlighted the regional consequences of the country's instability, cautioning that insecurity in the Arab country will not stay limited to its borders, as terrorism will affect other regions if left unaddressed.

He also pointed to collaborative efforts by Iran, Turkey, and Russia to manage tensions.

Baqaei condemned the U.S. military presence as a violation that exacerbates terrorism.

Refuting claims that groups like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) have become less violent, he asserted they have "seasoned trainers who taught them the importance of the media," although their violent nature remains unchanged.

In response to a Tehran Times correspondent's inquiry about the origins of these trainers, Baqaei did not specify but hinted at possible involvement from the Israeli regime and the U.S.

## Former IRGC chief calls for unified Muslim front to counter US, Israeli aggression

TEHRAN – Major General Mohsen Rezaei, a former chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has called on Muslim nations to unite and form a joint military force to counter aggression by the United States and Israel.

In an interview with Al Jazeera on Sunday, Rezaei accused the two powers of destabilizing the region through deliberate provocations and military campaigns, particularly in Syria.

Rezaei pointed to last week's large-scale assault on Aleppo by foreign-backed terrorists as a critical moment, calling it a violation of the 2020 ceasefire agreement between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government and Takfiri terrorists.

He linked the attack to broader efforts by Israel and the U.S. to spread conflict from Gaza and Lebanon into Syria.

"The occupation of Aleppo is a direct result of provocations by Israel and the United States," Rezaei said.

He condemned the assault as part of an ongoing agenda to destabilize the region, citing Israel's repeated airstrikes in Syria and its broader deadly military campaigns over the past year.

The offensive in Aleppo, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terror group, marked one of the most

significant terrorist attacks in Syria in recent years, with Takfiri forces reportedly taking parts of the city and advancing toward Hama.

Rezaei criticized this escalation as a continuation of the war on Lebanon and Gaza, reaffirming Iran's support for the Syrian government and military.

Since the outbreak of foreign-sponsored violence in Syria in 2011, Iran has played a pivotal role in assisting Damascus in its fight against terrorism.

Alongside Russia, Iranian forces were instrumental in helping Syria achieve a major victory over Daesh in 2017.

Rezaei urged solidarity among Muslim nations, emphasizing the need for a unified response to repeated acts of aggression. "Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Iran must stand together against the U.S. and Israel," he said, calling for collective action similar to Hezbollah's successes in Lebanon.

He also referenced a recent truce between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah Resistance movement, which ended over a year of hostilities. According to Rezaei, Israel's acceptance of the ceasefire demonstrated its inability to sustain ground battles, further exposing its vulnerabilities. (See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## Chinese delegation set to visit Iran for boost in bilateral cooperation

TEHRAN – A Chinese delegation is scheduled to visit Iran on Tuesday to enhance economic collaboration between the two nations.

As reported by the Iranian Presidential Office, the deputy prime minister of China will arrive in Iran accompanied by a team of economic officials.

One of the key activities planned for the Chinese delegation includes a meeting with Mohammadreza Aref, the Iranian Vice President, to discuss the economic partnership between Iran and China.

During their visit to Iran, the Chinese delegates will hold discussions with Iranian officials covering various subjects, such as energy, infra-

structure, and technology. These meetings are anticipated to result in agreements and memorandums of understanding that will strengthen the economic collaboration between the two countries.

Additionally, Esmail Baqaei, the spokesperson of the Iranian Foreign Ministry pointed out, "One of the objectives of this trip is to advance the implementation of the 25-year bilateral cooperation agreement between Iran and China."

The 25-year agreement, formally referred to as the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, was signed in March 2021. Its purpose is to enhance economic, political, and security cooperation between the two nations over the next quarter-century.



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei attended the opening night of the mourning ceremonies for Hazrat Fatemeh Zahra (SA) on Monday.



# 'Terrorism in Syria will affect neighbors'

## In Ankara, Araghchi says he held 'straightforward' talks with Turkish counterpart on Syria

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Ankara in the early hours of Monday after a short visit to Syria. The Arab country is currently battling a renewed wave of terrorism in its northwestern Aleppo province after about five years of relative calm.

In the Turkish capital, Iran's top diplomat said he had "straightforward" discussions with his counterpart Hakan Fidan. "The ramifications of such a volatile situation will certainly affect everyone, notably Syria's neighbors," Araghchi said during a joint press conference following the meeting.

He added that the aim of the new terror insurgency in Syria is to divert global attention from the crimes of Israel in Palestine and Lebanon. "Takfiri terrorist groups active in Syria are in close contact and coordination with the United States and the Zionist regime."

The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terrorist group based mainly in Idlib and parts of Latakia launched lightning attacks on Aleppo on Wednesday, at the same time a ceasefire between Lebanon's Hezbollah Resistance Movement and Israel came into effect after 14 months of cross-border fire.

Evidence and reports show Turkey has supported the HTS and its allied factions at least to some point, an



allegation the Turkish foreign minister did not address during the Monday press conference. He, however, said Ankara has always supported and will continue to support Syria's "territorial integrity and national sovereignty".

**Turkey and Syria: attempting reconciliation after years of bad blood**

Turkey has always been a key player in the developments in Syria. But its approach towards the Arab country has changed throughout the years, said Turkish affairs expert Azar Mahdavan.

"Initially supportive of Bashar al-Assad, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shifted in 2011 to an anti-Damascus policy aligned with the West. The AKP government

ence of Turkish troops in Syria and ongoing support for groups Damascus designates as terrorists.

The fingerprints of Turkish support are all over the latest flare-up in Syria, but the reasons behind it are believed to be different from the motivations that fueled Ankara's involvement in Syria over a decade ago.

"Turkey doesn't seem to be pursuing the overthrow of the Assad government this time. It is rather aiming to pressure Syrian authorities into accepting normalization while maintaining its military presence in Syria," Mahdavan noted.

The Iranian foreign minister's timely visits to Syria and Turkey have boosted hopes for a diplomatic resolution to the Ankara-Damascus standoff. With Iranian and Russian support bolstering the Syrian army's fight against terrorism, the four nations—Iran, Russia, Syria, and Turkey—are slated to reconvene for another round of talks under the Astana Platform, aiming to restore peace and stability in Syria.

"Regional countries have common concerns about the resurgence of terrorism and the spread of insecurity in Syria," Araghchi announced on Monday before placing a premium on safeguarding the achievements of the Astana peace talks. "Tehran and Ankara have agreed that the next meeting of the process at the foreign ministerial level would be held soon."

## Iranian envoy to Lebanon resumes duties, says renewed terrorism won't break Resistance Front



TEHRAN – The Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, has returned to Beirut after spending two months in Tehran recovering from injuries sustained in an Israeli terrorist attack.

Amani was wounded in a series of pager explosions in late September alongside thousands of Lebanese people. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently admitted that the regime was behind the pager blasts.

Upon his arrival, Amani was warmly welcomed by senior representatives of Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, Iranian organizations, and Raouf Sheibani, the Special Envoy of Iran's Foreign Minister for West Asia.

During Amani's absence, Sheibani had been based at the Iranian Embassy in Beirut, maintaining diplomatic relations and coordinating with Lebanese officials and groups on behalf of Iran.

The attack left Amani with injuries to his hand and eye, requiring his transfer to Tehran for medical

treatment. The pager explosions, as a calculated act of terrorism, were seen as part of ongoing efforts by hostile Israeli forces to destabilize the region.

**Ambassador Amani calls for collective support for Resistance**

Following his return, Amani spoke to Iranian media Nour News about critical regional issues, emphasizing the importance of collective support for the Resistance movement.

He addressed the potential funeral of Martyr Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, a key figure in the Resistance, describing it as a symbolic event that should unify the region and send a powerful message to the world.

"The martyrdom of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah is an immensely significant matter that requires regional attention. His funeral should be a demonstration of solidarity and support for the Resistance, showing the world the unwavering commitment of the people to this cause," Amani said.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



Iranian citizens gathered in front of the Turkish embassy in Tehran on December 2, 2024 to protest Ankara's reported involvement in the latest terror insurgency in Syria.

## Iran's food diplomacy from Cairo to Damascus



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi at a restaurant in Damascus, Syria on December 1, 2024.

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's Sunday dinner at a busy Damascus restaurant might seem unremarkable at first glance. However, this seemingly casual meal with colleagues offers a glimpse into a practice the Minister seems to value: food diplomacy.

In the field of international relations, where treaties and negotiations often dominate discussions, culinary diplomacy leverages food as a strategic tool. It's used to convey diplomatic, public, or political messages and, ultimately, foster stronger bilateral ties.

Araghchi dined at a packed restaurant on the outskirts of Damascus following meetings with high-ranking Syrian officials amidst a renewed terrorist offensive in northern Syria and swirling rumors of a coup d'état. While the foreign minister's later X post only mentioned the delicious shawarma he enjoyed, his very presence in the hustle and bustle of the city conveyed a powerful message of calm, reassurance, and support to both the Resistance and the Syrian people.

This strategy was also used by U.S. President Joe Biden in March of 2022, roughly a month after Russia began its invasion of Ukraine. The president was photographed dining at a restaurant in Warsaw, a move that was seen as a demonstration of NATO's support for Poland, and Washington's confidence in the east European country's security environment.

Araghchi's first notable use of food diplomacy happened in October when he had traveled to Egypt. The top diplomat shared on his X account that he had enjoyed Egyptian food during his short stay in Cairo, adding that Iranians "lack an Egyptian restaurant in Tehran".

The remarks were seen as a sign that indicated Iran's willingness to restore diplomatic ties with Egypt, which have been severed for over four decades.

Going back a few years, former U.S. President Barack Obama used the same tactic when the U.S. and Vietnam had begun to move towards a thaw in 2016. During his visit to the Asian country, Obama shared a meal at a small restaurant in Hanoi, enjoying Pho and local specialties. The informal act appeared to resonate profoundly with the Vietnamese populace and was celebrated as a moment of cultural connection.

Another example is Angela Merkel's visit to New York in 2015, where the German Chancellor dined at a well-known Manhattan restaurant during her attendance at the United Nations General Assembly. Her decision to engage with New York's dynamic dining culture underscored Germany's dedication to openness and international diplomacy, while also highlighting her capacity to connect on a personal level.

In Iran, another official who recognized the strategic potential of food in international relations was the late President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. In 1997, he hosted King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who was visiting Tehran for the Islamic Conference Summit, at his private residence, where Hashemi Rafsanjani served His wife's Qorme Sabzi, a traditional Iranian dish, as a gesture of his nation's hospitality.

From Foreign Minister Araghchi's shawarma in Syria to Obama's pho in Vietnam, and President Rafsanjani's Qorme Sabzi, these instances of culinary diplomacy demonstrate that food transcends mere sustenance; it serves as a powerful symbol of unity and mutual understanding in international relations.

# IRAN IN FOCUS

DECEMBER 3, 2024

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## SPORTS

### Persepolis register first win at 2024/25 AFC Champions League Elite

TEHRAN – Giorgi Gvelesiani's late penalty earned Persepolis their first win in the AFC Champions League Elite 2024/25 on Monday as the Iranian side launched a late fight back to hand Al Shorta from Iraq a 2-1 defeat in Doha in the most dramatic fashion.

Mohanad Ali's 19th minute lob looked like it was going to earn Al Shorta their first win in the competition but Oston Urunov's strike into the corner pulled Persepolis level and Gvelesiani won the game, but only after Al Shorta's Mahmoud Al Mawas had missed a spot-kick of his own.

The result at Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium moves Persepolis onto six points from six games and into the qualification berths for the last 16 with two matches remaining while Al Shorta remain on two points and with their hopes of advancing dwindling.

An audacious lob from 24-year-old Ali gave Al Shorta the lead and came seven minutes after the Iraq international had forced Persepolis goalkeeper Alexis Guendouz to thump the ball clear in the first opportunity of the game.

Ali was not to miss with his second sight of goal when he capitalised on a mistake by the Persepolis defence, blocking Hossein Kanani's attempt to play the ball across the face of his own goal midway inside the Persepolis half.

Having gained possession, Ali astutely lifted the ball over the advancing Guendouz to score into an empty net.

Persepolis rarely threatened in the opening 45 minutes, the closest the Iranians came to troubling Ahmed Basil was when Milad Mohammadi bent the ball into the six yard box and Vahid Amiri narrowly missed connecting to beat the Al Shorta goalkeeper.

It was Guendouz who was at the greater risk of conceding in the half's dying moments, the Persepolis man unable to do anything about Ahmed Farhan's deflected strike from distance that looped high into the area before crashing against the crossbar and bouncing to safety.

Persepolis were denied the equaliser in the 65th minute when Basil saved at point blank range from Gvelesiani and, from the resulting corner, Isa Alkasir inexplicably headed wide from close range when unmarked at the near post.

Alkasir thought he had made amends 10 minutes later as the substitute made the slightest connection with Soroush Rafiei's free kick into the penalty area from the left but the header was ruled out for a marginal offside call by the VAR officials.

The equaliser finally came in the 89th minute when the ball found its way through to substitute Urunov eight yards from goal and the Uzbekistan international swept his right-foot shot beyond Basil.

But Mohammad Khodabandehlo was deemed to have handled the ball in his own penalty area when he blocked Hussein Ali's goal-bound shot deep into added time only for Al Mawas' penalty came back off the post to ensure the points were shared.

The drama continued at the other end, referee Kim Dae-yong pointing to the spot after the ball hit Salomon Bindjeme on the hand and Gvelesiani converted.

### Iran lose to Jordan in friendly match

TEHRAN – Iran's women's football team lost to Jordan 2-1 in a friendly match held at the Petra Stadium in Madinat Al Hussein, Jordan on Sunday.

Enas Al-Jamaeen was on target for Jordan in the 54th minute and Lana Feras scored the team's second goal in the added time.

Afsaneh Chatreanor scored Iran's goal.

Iran and Jordan had played out a goalless draw on Thursday.

### Iran ready for 2024 Asian Women's Handball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran will start the 20th Asian Women's Handball Championship with a match

against Japan on Tuesday.

The competition will take place in New Delhi from Dec. 3 to 10 at the Gandhi Arena and Iran are drawn in Group B along hosts India, Japan and Hong Kong.

The event, organized by the Asian Handball Federation and presented by the World Handball League, marks a significant milestone as it's the first time the tournament is being held in South Asia.

The tournament will feature eight teams divided into two groups of four. Group A includes reigning champions South Korea, Kazakhstan, China, and Singapore.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals.

Nashmin Shafeian, head coach of Iran women's handball team, is optimistic about her team's success in the competition.

The event acts as the Asian qualifying tournament for the 2025 World Women's Handball Championship, with the top four teams qualifying.

"We have previously qualified for the world championship twice and are determined to book our place in the competition once again. We know that there is a difficult task ahead of us but it's not impossible," Shafeian said.

"Team Melli will start the tournament with a match against Japan and they are the team to beat but we are not an underdog. The match against India will be difficult because they will be supported by their home fans. Hong Kong also play fast and we are well aware of the importance of that match," she added.

"I think we can win a berth in the world championship but you cannot guarantee anything in the sport. We will do everything possible to make it happen," Shafeian concluded.

### FIBA WASL West Asia League 2024/25 new dates announced

TEHRAN – The FIBA Regional Office – Asia has announced updates to the schedule and format of the FIBA West Asia Super League (WASL) – West Asia League for the 2024-2025 season.

Originally slated to commence on 4 December 2024, the league's schedule and format have been adjusted in response to ongoing challenges and uncertainties in the region.

The revised schedule introduces a round-robin format in place of the original home-and-away structure.

Six teams will compete in a single-group round-robin format, with the team accumulating the most points across the two rounds crowned as the FIBA WASL West Asia League 2024-2025 Champion.

The top three teams from the league will earn direct qualification to the FIBA WASL 2024-2025 Final 8, scheduled for May 2025.

The six participating teams include last season's Final 8 finalists Al Riyadi and Sagesse from Lebanon, alongside Syrian champions Al Wahda SC. They will be joined by three debutants: Tabiat (Iran), Difaa Al Jawi SC (Iraq), and Amman United (Jordan).

Tournament locations and additional information will be announced at a later date.

### Malavan move up to fourth place: PGPL

TEHRAN – Malavan football team defeated Kheybar 3-1 and moved up to fourth place of the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Monday.

In the match held in Khoramabad's Takhti Stadium, Omid Noorafkan, Reza Ghandipour and Mohammad Omri were on target for the visiting team and Hamidreza Taherkhani pulled a goal back for Kheybar.

Aluminum and Gol Gohar played out a goalless draw in Arak and Havadar lost to Esteghlal Khuzestan 1-0 in Tehran.

Malavan have moved up to fourth place with 18 points, three points behind leaders Sepahan.



## Sanctions, the main barrier to attracting foreign investment: Hemmati



TEHRAN – Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati stated that sanctions pose the most significant obstacle to attracting foreign investment, not the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Speaking to IRIB, Hemmati noted that even if Iran were to adopt the Palermo and CFT conventions, removal from the FATF blacklist would not be guaranteed in the short term.

The minister highlighted the challenges in attracting foreign investment, stating: "Our foreign investment over the past two years and eight months has totaled \$2.1 billion, which remains relatively modest."

He further emphasized the urgent need to address productivity challenges, saying: "Productivity in the country is nearly zero, and the

foreign investments allocated to production are insufficient. It is imperative that we take steps to significantly boost productivity nationwide."

The Minister mentioned a significant initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Economy in this regard and said: "We have introduced a mechanism for financing the production chain using credit-backed instruments in the commodities exchange. This marks an important step towards supporting economic growth and production."

Commenting on his participation and the outcomes of the Riyadh Investment Conference, Hemmati said: "This global event was a significant opportunity, as it brought together 2,500 leading investment experts and executives from around the world, including over 20 ministers. Valuable discussions took place, and I presented Iran's position on attracting foreign investment. It was an important occasion for our country."

"We must intensify our efforts to attract foreign investment. During the conference, I also had productive meetings with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Economy and Minister of Investment. Our discussions focused on expanding economic ties and emphasized the constructive role these relations can play in strengthening political bonds. I am hopeful that these efforts will lead to continued collaboration and positive developments in our relations," he added.

## Iran-EAEU FTA to be implemented in early 2025

From page 1 ▶

### A Milestone in Regional Trade

Under the agreement's implementation framework, enforcement will begin two months after ratification by the parliaments of all member states. So far, four EAEU countries—Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus—have completed the ratification process. Kazakhstan, the final member, is in the process of securing legislative approval, paving the way for the FTA's activation.

"The Iran-EAEU trade agreement was the result of 60 rounds of negotiations spanning five years," Ghanadzadeh stated.

"Once implemented, 87 percent of the trade tariffs between Iran and the EAEU will be reduced to zero, creating unprecedented opportunities for trade and economic collaboration."

### Implications for Trade and Investment

The FTA promises to boost Iran's non-oil exports, expand market access, and attract foreign investment.

Key sectors poised to benefit include agriculture, petrochemicals, machinery, and textiles.

Iran's geographical position as a gateway to the Middle East and South Asia also provides EAEU members with a strategic corridor for trade expansion.

Trade between Iran and EAEU member states has shown steady growth since the establishment of a temporary trade agreement in 2019.

In 2022, bilateral trade exceeded \$5 billion, a 73 percent increase compared to 2021. Major Iranian exports to the EAEU include food products, construction materials, and petrochemicals, while imports primarily consist of machinery, steel, and agricultural goods.

### Strategic Importance

The Iran-EAEU FTA aligns with Tehran's broader goal of pivoting toward regional



partnerships in response to Western economic sanctions. Strengthening ties with the EAEU provides Iran with diversified trade routes and reduces dependency on traditional markets.

For the EAEU, the agreement enhances access to the Middle Eastern market and supports the bloc's vision of deeper economic integration among member states and their neighbors.

Russia, a leading EAEU member, views this agreement as a crucial step in countering Western economic pressures while fostering closer ties with regional allies.

### Future Outlook

Economic analysts suggest the FTA could significantly boost trade volume between Iran and the EAEU, potentially exceeding \$10 billion annually within a few years.

Beyond trade, the agreement could encourage joint ventures, knowledge exchange, and technology transfer in industries such as energy, transportation, and manufacturing.

The Iran-EAEU Free Trade Agreement represents a landmark achievement, underscoring the importance of regional economic cooperation in an increasingly interconnected global economy.

As implementation draws closer, the agreement is set to redefine economic relations between Iran and the Eurasian region, offering substantial benefits for all parties involved.

## Non-oil exports from Mazandaran up 25% in 8 months

TEHRAN – An official at customs office of Mazandaran province says that export of non-oil products from this northern province registered a 28 percent growth in the first eight months of current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2024).

Observer of Customs Office of Mazandaran province Amir Jamshidi added that more than 125 items of goods were exported from this province to 44 world countries.

More than one million tons of non-oil goods, valued at over \$259 million, were exported from Mazandaran province between

March 21 and November 21, 2024, showing a 25% growth compared to the same period last year.

In addition, \$86 million, \$31 million, \$29 million and \$21 million worth of dairy products, cements, plastic materials and ordinary metals were exported from this northern province in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year, Jamshidi added.

In this period, Mazandaran province's export target market included Iraq, Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Pakistan, respectively.

# Makran coasts; Trade development highway with Russia and India

By Mohammadmahdi Ehsantalab

The coasts of Makran form the communication route between Iran and the open waters and the Indian Ocean. Chabahar port, as Iran's only oceanic port in the Makran Sea, has a high capacity in activating the country's geo-economic advantages and developing trade relations with Russia and India. This advantage, along with Iran's membership in BRICS, can help define common interests with these three countries and Iran's entry into the Asian supply chain.

### Introduction

According to the 5-year development plan of Makran zones, this area should account for 5% of the country's gross domestic income by 1407. In addition, the development of telecommunication and logistics infrastructure, loading and transportation of 15 million tons of goods per year from the region's ports, establishment of 5 economic driver zones, provision of 2.5% of Makran's gross domestic income from providing international financial services are other goals of this program. Currently, 8 ports are active in Makran region, and Chabahar port is important in terms of its strategic location in the north-south corridor and its ability to accept ocean-going ships. In the following, we will examine the role of Makran coast development in Iran's economic relations with these two countries.

### From geopolitical suffocation to India's dependence on Makran coastal ports

India's issues with Pakistan and China, on the one hand, the recent change that took place in Bangladesh against the established government, has isolated India in terms of land routes and increased its desire to develop its maritime advantages. Due to its strategic location and access to the key ports of India, Makran's zone provide direct and active business communication. Indian investors can use these regions



as a base to access wider markets in the Middle East and Central Asia. Also, Makran region can play a role as a reference for supplying energy and raw materials needed by the newly emerging economy of India. According to the statistics of 2022-2023, India has imported 31 billion dollars of oil from Russia. Completion and expansion of Iranian oil pipelines from Caspian Sea ports to Makran coasts will help to reduce energy transit costs between the two countries. The development of Makran coast can lead to the expansion of industrial and technological cooperation between Iran and India. By establishing commercial and industrial free zones on these coasts, Indian companies can cooperate in joint projects with Iran and benefit from new markets. Bilateral trade between India and Iran in the fiscal year 2022-2023 was 2.33 billion dollars, registering a growth of 21.76% over the previous year. During this period, India's export to Iran was 1.66 billion dollars (14.34% growth) and India's import from Iran was 672.12 million dollars (45.05% growth)

### Ukraine crisis and changes in the market of Russian products

The crisis in Ukraine and the Western economic sanctions against Russia and the transit routes of this country have changed the market of Russian products from Europe to other regions and countries such as India, China, Central Asia and Africa. In addition, the transit sanctions

imposed against Russia, the desire of this country to activate the North-South corridor in order to synchronize the transit routes with the change of the market of Russian products from the open waters of Makran coasts. With the blocking of the Black Sea route during the Ukraine crisis, India and Russia have turned to using the Chabahar port for the purpose of transiting goods and energy, which significantly reduces transportation costs.

North-South corridor is a multimodal route that has the capacity to connect Mumbai in India to Helsinki in Finland. This corridor, centered on Iran, connects the economies of India and Russia. The transportation time on this route is 25 to 30 and its cost is estimated to be 30% cheaper than traditional routes.

### Conclusion

The market of Iranian products towards the big market of India and Russia have become important. These developments include:

\*\*\*Ukraine crisis: The beginning of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine has caused a wave of Western sanctions against Russia. This conflict, along with the obstacles and the reduction of the purchase of Russian oil and gas from Europe, has changed the strategy of the Russian energy market from Europe to China, India and other Asian customers. The conclusion of the contract for the purchase of Russian gas by Iran is a positive step in the direc-

tion of turning Iran into a gas hub in the region, which took place after the crisis in Ukraine.

**7 October Hamas-led attack on Israel:** The operation of Hamas military forces against the Zionist regime has had many consequences for this regime and global geopolitics. This operation has shown Israel's inability to provide its own security and, as a result, the loss of the trust of Western powers and India from this country in order to play its role as the main link of the IMEC Corridor. This corridor, linking India and the Arabian Peninsula to Europe through Israel, has been an alternative route for the Belt and Road Initiative to connect Asia to Europe. The alternative India-Iran-Türkiye route can lead to connecting India to Europe with a similar function. The realization of this route requires the development of Makran coastal ports and the activation of economic diplomacy in order to define common interests with the sides of the route.

**Iran's membership in BRICS:** Iran's membership in BRICS can provide access to the large and growing markets of the member countries. This can help increase the export of Iranian products and increase foreign exchange earnings. Also, attracting foreign investment and facilitating access to financial resources and banking facilities of the BRICS group can lead to the development of infrastructure projects in the framework of the 5-year Makran coastal development plan.

Taking advantage of the development of relations between India and Russia requires the definition of common interests with the parties in the framework of the geo-economic advantages of the country on the shores of Makran. To help the common value chain between the three countries of Russia, Iran and India through the development of production capacities and free economic zones in the coasts of Makran.

## Iran among global leaders in thermal power plant efficiency

TEHRAN – Iran has emerged as a global leader in thermal power plant efficiency, ranking 12th out of 197 countries. Recent improvements in technology and operational strategies have raised the efficiency of thermal plants from 39.3 percent last year to 39.56 percent this year, positioning Iran among the top 12 nations in this category.

According to ISNA, while thermal power plants account for 82 percent of Iran's power generation capacity, they produce over 94 percent of the electricity consumed nationwide. This achievement has been realized through 146 power plants and 629 generation units.

Over the past several years, Iran has undertaken significant measures including expanding gas-fired power plant capacity, addressing output limitations in steam power plants, and deploying high-efficiency F-class power plants, with efficiencies exceeding 58 percent, to enhance its power infrastructure.

The mentioned initiatives have propelled

the average efficiency of the country's power plants to over 39.5 percent, far surpassing the global average and outperforming many developed nations still reliant on low-efficiency coal-fired plants.

### Maintenance and Future Expansion

Annual maintenance schedules for thermal power plants coincide with the winter season, when electricity demand is lower. This year, the Ministry of Energy has planned maintenance operations for power plants with a total capacity of more than 110,000 megawatts. Upon completion, these efforts are expected to further improve plant efficiency.

Additionally, over 6,000 megawatts of high-efficiency F-class units have been commissioned in recent years, with an additional 3,600 megawatts slated to come online before the summer peak of 2025.

These advancements, combined with operational improvements in steam units, are central to achieving higher efficiency levels.

### Efficiency Gains Amid Fuel Challenges

Despite reductions in the supply of natural gas and liquid fuel to power plants this year, thermal generation capacity has grown by 2.33 percent. This highlights the effectiveness of Iran's efficiency-enhancing measures and operational upgrades.

The government's ongoing efforts to reform the electricity sector, including adjusted tariffs for high-consumption users and the establishment of an energy exchange, have created a conducive environment for investment. These reforms are accelerating research, development, and modernization across the thermal power sector, ensuring sustained improvements in efficiency.

By leveraging strategic upgrades and fostering innovation, Iran continues to solidify its position as a leader in energy efficiency, paving the way for sustainable energy management and economic growth.

## ECO expert meeting begins in Mashhad

TEHRAN – An expert meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) commenced in the Iranian northeastern city of Mashhad on Monday.

The meeting will be followed by a foreign ministerial meeting on the next day.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas

Araghchi will chair the Tuesday meeting when he and his ECO counterparts will explore ways to enhance economic cooperation among member countries.

ECO's new Secretary General Asad Majeed Khan is also in Iran for the meeting. In an exclusive interview with Iran Chamber of Commerce newsroom last week,

he emphasized his objective to foster trade, transport, and tourism integration across the ECO region.

He called on Iran, as the host country of the organization, to play a pivotal role in achieving these goals.

During a meeting with Head of

Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh, the ECO chief regretted that the \$1.8 billion volume of annual exchanges between member countries remains a fraction of global trade, underscoring the urgency of more efforts to encourage further intra-ECO trade.

## Gas consumption in Iran hits 852 mcm

TEHRAN – Gas consumption across Iran has reached 852 million cubic meters (mcm), as reported by the Head of the National Gas Network Control Center.

Gholamreza Koushki commented on the rising demand, stating that in the last 24 hours, total gas consumption in the country had

reached 852 million cubic meters, with the residential sector accounting for 68 percent of the country's total gas consumption.

Of this total, 574 million cubic meters were consumed by the residential, commercial, and small industrial sectors, reflecting a 22 percent increase compared to the same period

last year.

Koushki also noted that, due to the ongoing cold weather, gas consumption in the household sector has increased by 100 million cubic meters over the past week.



# Syrian army repels large terror assault in Hama

Another 400 HTS terrorists from various nationalities killed in Syria

From page 1 ▶ In Aleppo itself, clashes have erupted and escalated between opposing terrorist groups following disputes over the governance of Syria's second-largest city.

Syrian and Russian air forces carried out two airstrikes targeting a convoy of militants in the city of Khan Sheikhoun in the Idlib countryside.

The airstrikes have reportedly continued, focusing on the southern Idlib countryside and movements by militants in two areas that HTS had occupied.

The Syrian army has been relying heavily on airpower amid reports that airstrikes extended to the western countryside of Aleppo. Military vehicles and movements of militants entering Aleppo were also targeted.

Analysts have highlighted the advanced weapons being used by militants in this offensive, which has shifted Western media coverage away from the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on Gaza.

Russian news agency RIA Novosti, citing a source close to Syria's intelligence services, has reported that HTS attacked Aleppo using advanced American-made arms and with the help of Ukrainian advisors.

The Takfiri militants employed drones equipped with encrypted GPS and artificial intelligence, "so that the use and navigation of attack UAVs and kamikaze drones took place from a long distance," the source revealed.

The source added that US-provided electronic warfare systems disrupted the Syrian army's com-



munications during the attack as Ukrainian advisors, alongside defected Syrian officers, played a key role in training the militants on high-tech equipment.

The Syrian army has intercepted drones in the northern Hama countryside with air defense systems, shooting down several of them. Militants had used drones intensively during their attacks on Aleppo and other areas in recent days.

A statement issued on Monday by the General Command of the Syrian Army and Armed Forces read:

"During the past 24 hours, the targeting carried out by the Syrian Arab Army in cooperation with the friendly Russian forces operating in Syria continued through concentrated air, missile and artillery strikes on terrorist sites, warehouses, supply lines and axes of movement in the countryside of Aleppo and Idlib, which resulted in the destruction of

five command headquarters and seven ammunition and various weapons depots, some of which contained drones.

The precise strikes launched by our armed forces in cooperation with friendly Russian forces led to the elimination of more than 400 terrorists, including various foreign nationalities, during the past hours.

Our armed forces have begun moving on several axes in the countryside of Aleppo, Hama and Idlib to encircle the terrorists, expel them from the areas they entered, secure them completely and establish new concentration points to prepare for the next attack, with more military reinforcements continuing to arrive at the engagement axes.

The General Command of the Army and Armed Forces stresses that all the rumors about terrorist organizations controlling areas, towns and villages are false and fall within the false propa-

ganda launched by these organizations in an attempt to raise the morale of their members who have begun to flee in many locations and towns as a result of the painful strikes and losses they have suffered.

The General Command of the Army and Armed Forces affirms the readiness, determination, and resolve of the men of the Syrian Arab Army to continue carrying out their missions at a high pace and with great enthusiasm until every pure inch defiled by terrorism is restored."

The Syrian Ministry of Defense further pointed out that joint Syrian-Russian warplanes launched successive strikes on terrorist gatherings and their movement axes on the outskirts of the town of al-Safira in the eastern countryside of Aleppo, killing and wounding dozens of terrorists in addition to destroying vehicles and machinery they had in their possession.

Experts have cautioned that Idlib and Aleppo provinces will turn into open battlefields between terrorist groups and the Syrian army over the next few days with the military momentum shifting regularly in favor of one side over the other.

This comes as civilians have issued distress calls from Aleppo and its northern countryside to rescue them before terrorists enter and to establish safe corridors for their evacuation.

Terrorist groups are believed to be holding more than 10,000 civilians in the city of al-Safira in the Aleppo governorate, preventing them from leaving.

## Israeli media focusing on Syria: The convergence of interests

From page 1 ▶ Meanwhile, units of the Syrian armed forces – operating in the northern Hama countryside – last night (Saturday night) reinforced their defensive lines with various means of fire, personnel and equipment.

A Syrian military source told SANA that the Syrian army had confronted the terrorist groups, preventing them from making any breach. The army, the source said, was able to "expel the terrorists from a number of areas, most notably Qalaat al-Madiq and Maardis, where it killed dozens, while the rest fled."

In parallel, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad held contacts with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, as well as Emirati President Mohammed bin Zayed.

Al Assad has confirmed that the army will defend the Syrian territory, in exchange for clear support in the words of al-Sudani and bin Zayed for Syria to preserve the integrity of its territory.

This movement is important in its timing, as Damascus received Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Sunday before moving

to Ankara.

In turn, the Syrian and Russian warplanes have targeted the terrorist groups in Hazarin and al-Rakaya in the southern Idlib countryside. They have also targeted points of the so-called "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham" in the vicinity of Khan Sheikhoun, south of Idlib, and Morek in the northern Hama countryside.

Further, the Syrian army has fortified its positions in Hama and its north, as it regained control of the town of Halfaya in the northern Hama countryside.

The Syrian and Russian air forces continue to pound the strongholds of the so-called "Jabhat al-Nusra" militants in the countryside of Aleppo and Idlib.

Syria state TV has confirmed that the army has killed nearly 1400 Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists in the past four days.

In a statement, the Syrian Ministry of Defense has denied the veracity of the news published by terrorist organizations about the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Hama. The statement points out that mili-

tary units are stationed in the northern and eastern countryside of Hama province, "and are fully prepared to repel any potential terrorist attack."

Besides, the Syrian army has stressed that it will continue to confront terrorists to restore control over Aleppo, its countryside, and its institutions.

Meanwhile, the Syrian army units have been redeployed near Aleppo International Airport to prevent the destruction of the city's neighborhood. Simultaneously, army aircraft are targeting their gatherings in Aleppo and its countryside.

The Russian Reconciliation Centre in Syria has announced the elimination of at least 300 militants in the provinces of Aleppo and Idlib in northern Syria, in cooperation with the Syrian army.

Oleg Ignasyuk, deputy head of the center, has stated that "rocket and bomb strikes were carried out on militant concentrations, observation points, ammunition depots and artillery positions, and at least 300 militants were eliminated, over the course of 24 hours."

## Scholz promises \$685 million military aid in surprise Kyiv visit

The visit, his first to Kyiv since the early months of Russia's invasion in 2022, comes weeks after his governing coalition collapsed, setting him up for a tough election battle in February.

The political turmoil in Europe's biggest economy adds to a growing feeling of uncertainty in Ukraine, with Russian troops advancing ever faster. It is unclear how much Kyiv's European allies can step up support for Ukraine if Trump cuts back help from its biggest backer.

Scholz and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met at an undisclosed location and reviewed military drones manufactured by Ukrainian and German firms.

Scholz was expected to hold talks later with Zelenskyy, whose government is urging NATO to invite Ukraine to join the military alliance at a meeting in Brussels this week.

While trumpeting Germany as

Ukraine's second-biggest weapons supplier after the United States, Scholz has repeatedly refused to send Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine, fearing this could draw his country into a direct conflict with Russia.

He also drew fire from allies, including Zelenskyy himself, for holding a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin in November, for the first time in almost two years, which critics saw as a bid for domestic political gain.

"Germany will remain Ukraine's strongest supporter in Europe," Scholz wrote on X, adding that he would promise Zelenskyy "further military equipment worth 650 million euros", to be delivered this month.

**Ukraine an issue in German election campaign**

Backing for Ukraine is shaping up as a major issue in Germany's election.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



Palestinians walk past a damaged house in the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on December 2, 2024, amid the Israeli ongoing war against Hamas [Eyad Baba/AFP]

## Netanyahu's testimony in corruption trial moved for security reasons

Netanyahu's testimony in his corruption trial will be moved from Jerusalem (al-Quds) to an underground fortified hall in Tel Aviv. The Times of Israel has reported citing the country's court administration.

The decision comes after the Israeli security agency Shin Bet informed the court about

"threats" to the prime minister. Since the Jerusalem court does not have adequate bomb shelters, it was decided to choose a different location.

Netanyahu is scheduled to testify on December 10 in three cases related to fraud, bribery and breach of trust, filed in 2019.

## Lufthansa, Swiss Air extend Tel Aviv flight suspension until January

Lufthansa and all of its subsidiary airlines are extending the suspension of flights to Tel Aviv till January 31, according to the German group.

Swiss Air also decided to continue canceling flights to and from Tel Aviv, announcing that it will not serve the Israeli metropolis until January 31, Al Jazeera reported.

This comes as Iran has vowed to retaliate against Israel's violation of its territory and

targeting some military sites inside Iran. In the Israeli attack on Iran on October 26, four Iranian military personnel lost their lives.

It was Israel that first triggered a direct clash with Iran by launching a deadly air attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus on April 1. Seven Iranian military advisors, including a general, were assassinated in the air raid on the diplomatic center, which is a violation of international law.

## UN chief says situation in Gaza 'appalling and apocalyptic'

Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general, has warned that conditions faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip may amount to the "gravest international crimes".

In remarks read out on his behalf at a Cairo conference aimed at increasing humanitarian aid to the Strip, Guterres urged the international community to "build a foundation for sustainable peace in Gaza and across the Middle East".

Guterres highlighted the devastating toll of the conflict and the urgent need for international action. "Malnutrition is rampant... Famine is imminent. Meanwhile, the health system has collapsed," he lamented, Al Jazeera reported.

The besieged enclave now has "the highest number of children amputees per capita anywhere in the world", with "many losing limbs and undergoing surgeries without even anesthesia", the UN chief added.



The world's top diplomat criticized the severe restrictions on aid delivery, calling the current levels "grossly insufficient".

The blockade of aid "is not a crisis of logistics" but rather "a crisis of political will and of respect for fundamental principles of international humanitarian law," Guterres said.

## Biden's pardon of his son Hunter rattles the political world

President Biden's announcement that he had pardoned his son, Hunter Biden, rattled the political world late Sunday.

The president argued in a statement on Sunday that the charges brought against his son, which included three felony charges on his purchase and possession of a gun in 2018, came about due to political reasons.

"No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son – and that is wrong," Biden said.

Reactions from both sides of the aisle poured in in the wake of the announcement, with Republicans expressing furor over the president's pardon of his son.

President-elect Trump, in a post on his Truth Social platform, called Biden's pardon of his son "an abuse and miscarriage of justice" Sunday.

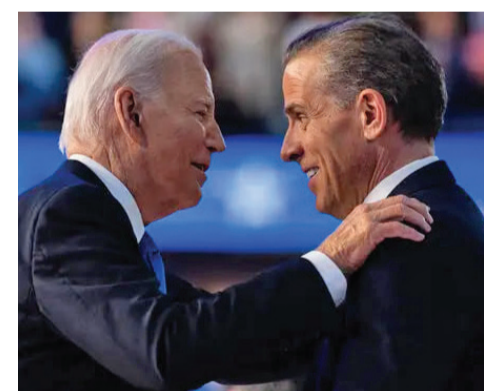
## Israel can't heal wounds with repeated truce violations

From page 1 ▶ To show their power, Hezbollah fighters even fired a drone at Netanyahu's private house in the central seaside town of Caesarea.

Now in less than one week, the occupation Israeli regime has violated the ceasefire 52 times, which mainly originates from its failure to convince tens of thousands of its citizens, who had fled the north since last year, to return to their homes. However, the Lebanese civilians started returning to their

homes in the south by waving victory signs, not noticing the warnings by Israel to stay away.

This feeling of fearlessness both among the Hezbollah fighters and the civilians loyal to Hezbollah has made the Israeli rulers seriously disheartened and prompted them to violate the truce. However, these violations will not help the Israeli rulers to heal the wounds they have suffered from the war with Hezbollah.



"Does the Pardon given by Joe to Hunter include the J-6 Hostages, who have now been imprisoned for years? Such an abuse and miscarriage of Justice!" the president-elect said, seemingly referring to rioters who have been accused of storming the U.S. Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021 attack.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



## Iranian architect wins 2A Continental Architectural Award for restoring 19th-century house



Ramezani.

Rozas House owners Zeynab Azizi and Alireza Safakish expressed pride in the achievement, stating, "This award is an honor for Kashan and this historic residence. Our efforts aimed to preserve a cultural heritage while contributing to the tourism economy of Kashan."

Earlier this year, Shaigan, a graduate of the University of Tehran's Faculty of Fine Arts, won first place in the Preservation and Restoration category at Iran's 16th Architecture Awards. Her recent honor at the 2A Awards underscores her commitment to blending heritage with innovation.

The annual 2A Continental Architectural Awards serve as a platform to honor architects who address modern architectural challenges and enrich cultural landscapes, fostering a global exchange of ideas and expertise.

### Delightful oasis city

Many travelers opt to bypass Kashan on their journeys between Tehran, Isfahan, and Yazd, but this delightful oasis city on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir is one of Iran's most alluring destinations. The city not only boasts a cluster of architectural wonders and a UNESCO-recognized garden, but it also offers some of central Iran's best traditional hotels.

During the Seljuk period (1051-1220) Kashan became famous for its textiles, pottery and tiles, reaching high levels of accomplishment in each of these cottage industries. Today, it is more widely known as a major center for the production of rose water, which is sold at outlets around the main tourist attractions and dedicated stores in the bazaar.

TEHRAN - Iranian architect Shima Shaigan has been awarded the prestigious first-place gold prize in the Restoration category at the 2A Continental Architectural Awards 2024 for her remarkable work on the Rozas House, a 250-year-old historical building in Kashan, central Iran.

Held in Dubai, the 2A Continental Architectural Awards celebrate innovative, contextually rooted architectural projects across Asia. This year's theme, "Innovative Contextual Architecture Across Continents," highlighted designs that harmonize with the cultural, social, and geographical contexts of their origins.

Shaigan's two-year project transformed Rozas House, an elegant Qajar-era residence, into a boutique hotel while preserving its historical integrity. The restoration involved collaboration with experts, including traditional restoration master Seyyed Akbar Heli, and a team comprising Kourosh Naibifar, Hosna Shahvardi, Yasmin Khoramabadi, and Elmira

## Spanish hotels to collect more personal data from tourists

Hotels and other tourism operators will have to collect and report over 40 pieces of information for accommodation bookings and over 60 for car rental bookings.

Starting today, tourists arriving in Spain will have to provide more personal data to authorities.

Information requested will include home address and their relationship to children travelling in the same party.

Data will be collected by hotels, holiday rentals, campsites, travel agencies and car rental companies.

Spanish officials say the increased checks, part of a royal decree, are part of a wider crackdown on organized crime.

However, hotels have been protesting the introduction of the rules saying it will negatively impact the visitor experience.

From 2 December, hotels and other tourism operators will have to collect and report over 40 pieces of information for accommodation bookings and over 60 for car rental bookings.

They are already required to send the full name, email address and passport or ID

number of guests to authorities within 24 hours.

New information includes payment details, home address, phone numbers, the number of guests in a party and family relationship details.

The data will then be uploaded onto a platform which will be monitored by Spanish security forces.

The new measures apply to mainland Spain and its islands, including the Balearics and the Canary Islands.

Businesses which do not comply face fines of up to €30,000.

Spanish hotels protest new data collection rules

Hoteliers have been calling for the new decree to be dismissed or watered down.

CEHAT, Spain's leading hotel association, succeeded in postponing its introduction, which was originally slated for January 2023.

But other than that, the group says they have received no communication from the authorities or offers of solutions.

(Source: euronews)

## Tourism and sport: creating a lasting legacy for destinations at 3rd World Sports Tourism Congress

The 3rd World Sports Tourism Congress (WSTC) gathered worldwide experts and leaders of sports and tourism at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium in Madrid. Co-organized by UN Tourism and the Government of the Region of Madrid, with support of Visit Nayarit and Turkish Airlines, the Congress highlighted the transformative potential of sports tourism as a driver of economic growth, social development, and sustainability.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "This Congress, as well as the whole line of activity on Sports Tourism developed by UN Tourism through the Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department, represents the continuation of a path we embarked upon several years ago. The World Sports Tourism Congress was designed as a platform to exchange and generate knowledge, showcasing

best practices, and fostering connections. Working together, we can make Sports Tourism a key driver of economic diversification for destinations worldwide."

Mariano de Paco Serrano, Regional Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Sports, of the Region of Madrid, added that: "Madrid is a leading region and a point of attraction for all those who want to enjoy sports in a unique setting. In addition to its cultural, heritage, and leisure offerings, it provides a vast array of sports activities for a wide audience. Furthermore, the regional government is committed to improving the quality of life for its citizens through physical activity and sports."

### Spotlight on Leadership and Inclusivity

The WSTC featured 40 speakers across 10 panels, addressing a variety of topics such as government

strategies, sponsorship trends, best practices in sports tourism and sustainable, reinforcing its position as a unique platform for dialogue and the exchange of knowledge. The congress also featured conversations with inspiring sports figures, including Gilberto Godoy, UN Tourism Ambassador for Sports Tourism and volleyball Olympic medallist from Brazil; Gabriela Szabo, Romanian track and field Olympic medallist and former Minister of Youth and Sports; and Teresa Perales, swimmer, and 28-time Paralympic medallist. On this occasion, UN Tourism officially welcomed Perales among its Ambassadors for Sports Tourism, recognizing her as an example and symbol of perseverance given her important contributions to sports and the promotion of inclusivity in tourism.

(Source: UN Tourism)

# Shiraz, Dushanbe named sister cities

From Page 1 ▶ "Historically, Iran was at the heart of the civilization of 33 nations, a legacy vividly depicted in Persepolis," the official underlined.

In his remarks, Sabet-Eqlidi pointed to the shared language and cultural ties, which have fostered mutual familiarity between the two nations.

"Tajik tourists feel at home in Shiraz, and Iranians who cherish their history and culture can devotedly explore Tajikistan and its attractions" he added.

Highlighting Fars province's renowned attractions, Eqlidi mentioned Persepolis, a global symbol of Iranian heritage, and the tombs of literary giants Hafez and Sadi in Shiraz, which attract tourists worldwide. He also underscored the province's rich craft heritage, with Shiraz recognized as a global handicraft hub and Abadeh listed as a world city of woodcarving.

The director also pointed to the potential of Fars as a destination for nature tourism, adventure sports, and health tourism. "Shiraz is a leading health tourism hub in Iran,



annually welcoming many visitors from the Persian Gulf region seeking medical care," Eqlidi stated.

Moreover, the official suggested that organizing cultural days and tourism events would be instrumental in showcasing the unique offerings of both nations and advancing mutual tourism development.

The signing ceremony included face-to-face meetings between private sector representatives from Tajikistan and Fars province, fostering opportunities for deeper collaboration.

### Dushanbe

Dushanbe, with its rural hinterland of lush grassy pastures and snow-capped mountains visible from the city center, is a charming metropolis designed around parks, lakes, and fountains.

Following a decade of all-out development, the city center now exudes a palpable sense of accomplishment. Its grand boulevard, Rudaki Avenue, gracefully weaves through pastel-toned Soviet-era relics and modern symbols of national pride. Chief among these is the

golden statue of 10th-century leader Ismoil Somoni, standing prominently in Friendship Square. This iconic landmark embodies the spirit of renewal and cultural renaissance that defines contemporary Dushanbe and Tajikistan as a whole.

### Shiraz

Celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture for over 2000 years, Shiraz has become synonymous with education, nightingales, poetry, and crafts skills passed down from generation to generation. It was one of the most important cities in the medieval Islamic world and was the Iranian capital during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

Shiraz is home to some of the country's most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking to this provincial capital. Eram Garden, Afif-Abad Garden, Tomb of Hafez, Tomb of Sa'di, Jameh Mosque of Atigh, and Persepolis are among the historical, cultural, and ancient sites of Shiraz that are of interest to domestic and foreign tourists.

## National Museum of Iran explores Chinese iron casting legacy

TEHRAN - The specialized seminar titled "Iron Smelting and Casting in Ancient China" was held on Saturday at the National Museum of Iran.

The lecture was delivered by Linheng Mo from the Hunan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, China.

The presentation was divided into two parts. The first part focused on metalworking methods, introducing various iron smelting furnaces discovered in archaeological excavations in China.

The second part presented the achievements of the Guantian site excavation in Sangzhi County, Hunan Province, which primarily involved iron metallurgy.

The Guantian excavation revealed diverse iron processing furnaces and a variety of iron artifacts, indicating advanced technology at the site. Additionally, various iron alloys, including steel from periods contemporaneous with late Sassanian and early

Islamic Iran (Han Dynasty China), were found.

At the conclusion of the seminar, Jebrail Nokandeh, the director of the National Museum of Iran, noted that contemporary to the Bronze and Iron Ages in Iran, metalworking in China had made significant advancements, producing large and impressive bronze figures and objects.

He further mentioned that given Mr. Mo and his colleagues' research background in ancient Chinese metalworking sites, their recent studies with Iranian colleagues in the cultural landscape of Masouleh, Gilan, could provide new insights into Islamic and historic metalworking.

He expressed hope that this team of archaeo-metallurgy specialists could initiate focused research in Masouleh.

Recently, Mr. Linheng Mo, Ms. Yuexuan Li, and Mr. Ali Aarab, all specialists in archaeometallurgy, in collaboration with the Masouleh Cultural



Heritage Base, the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Gilan province, and the National Museum of Iran, visited several ancient metallurgical sites in the cultural landscape of Masouleh. Most of these sites have been identified in recent years through archaeological surveys of the area led by Fereidoun Biglari, archaeologist and the deputy director of the National Museum.

## Conference on Islamic and Iranian studies held in Dagestan



TEHRAN - The fifth scientific conference honoring the legacy of Magomed-Nuri Osmanov, a prominent Russian Islamic scholar and linguist, was held in Makhachkala, the capital of the Republic of Dagestan, on Saturday.

Scholars from Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated in the event, sharing insights on Islamic and Iranian studies, ISNA reported.

In his online address at the conference's opening ceremony, Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, emphasized the pivotal role of Russian

Iranologists in fostering deeper understanding and enhancing relationships between nations. "The unique characteristics of Russian Iranology have significantly contributed to strengthening ties between governments and peoples," he stated.

Jalali highlighted the Caucasus region as a historical focal point of collaboration between Iran and Russia, particularly in cultural and academic domains, and underscored Dagestan's distinguished role in these partnerships.

Paying tribute to Magomed-Nuri Osmanov, Jalali described him as a luminary in Russian Iranology whose extensive research and influential works, including a Russian translation of the Holy Quran and critical studies of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and Omar Khayyam's poetry, have left a lasting legacy.

Another speaker at that event was Masoud Ahmadvand, Iran's cultural attaché in Russia, who elaborated on Osmanov's profound impact on the fields of Islamic and Iranian studies in the region.

Ahmadvand also outlined the unique strengths

of Russian Iranology, such as its direct access to Iran's cultural and historical resources, vast collections of Iranian-Islamic artifacts in Russian museums, and extensive archives of Persian manuscripts and historical documents.

He noted that the 200-year tradition of Iranology in Russia has led to the emergence of a distinct school of thought, independent from Western Iranology, characterized by its depth and unique methodologies.

The conference also featured addresses by Murtazali Rabadanov, from Dagestan State University, and Fatima Osmanova, daughter of the late scholar.

Magomed-Nuri Osmanov (1924-2015) was a Dagestani philologist, renowned for his translations of the holy Quran into Russian and his scholarly contributions to Persian historical and literary studies, including Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. Over his lifetime, he authored numerous books and more than 250 scholarly articles, cementing his status as a leading figure in Islamic and Iranian studies.

### Second Announcement



1  
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## NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

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# People with disabilities could ensure sustainable development for all

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – Observed annually on December 3, the International Day of People with Disability aims to raise public awareness and promote understanding and acceptance of individuals with disability.

This year, the day is observed with the theme of 'Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future.'

It highlights the significance of empowering people with disabilities to take the lead in shaping their own destinies and contributing to society.

The leadership of persons with disabilities is epitomized by the global disability rights movement's slogan "Nothing About Us Without Us".

It connotes the basic requirements of participation, representation, and inclusion and calls for persons with disabilities to actively shape the conditions of their lives.

One of the priorities of the global disability agenda is to advance the agency and leadership of persons with disabilities.

In the past decades, persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) have already championed for the changes in their communities, and have been leading many of the community-led



initiatives not only to advance their own rights and wellbeing, but also to promote inclusive development for instance enabling universal access to basic services by all.

They have done so by taking both targeted and mainstreaming approaches to disability inclusion through, among others, consultation, data collection and analysis, and support with advocacy and accountability efforts.

The observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024 (IDPD 2024) takes place against the backdrop of pivotal global developments, from the Summit of the Future to the upcoming Second World Summit for Social Development.

These key global Summits will complement one another in providing a continuous roadmap toward disability-inclusive and

sustainable peace and development.

## The International Day of People with Disability is observed annually on December 3.

By emphasizing this complementarity, the theme chosen for the observance in 2024 aims to underscore the importance of leveraging the leadership of persons with disabilities to ensure disability-inclusive and sustainable peace and development for all.

### Impacts of sanctions on persons with disabilities

Speaking at the 17th Session of the Conference of States Par-

ties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Ali-Mohammad Qaderi, the former head of the State Welfare Organization, said Iran will make every effort to enhance and expand the necessary services for persons with disabilities in accordance with the framework of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The conference was held from June 12 to 13 June at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

"This is notwithstanding the fact that the cruel sanctions imposed by the United States and many Western countries on the Islamic Republic of Iran have significantly increased the prime costs of rehabilitation items and specialized services, and affected the economic capabilities of individuals receiving such services," he said.

"Respecting persons with disabilities and striving to create equal opportunities for them has always been integral to our religious and national teachings, as well as the programs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

One of the most significant measures we have undertaken to support the rights of persons with disabilities is the enactment of the Law on Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," the official stressed.

## Youth population law stabilizes total fertility rate

TEHRAN – Enacting the youth population law has stabilized the total fertility rate, slightly increasing the general fertility index over the past two years.

After experiencing seven years of decline by about 20 percent, the fertility rate is now stabilized at around 1.6, IRNA reported.

The total fertility rate has experienced a sharp decline since the Iranian calendar year 1394 (2015-2016) as the number of births reached 1.057 million in 1402 (2023-2024) from 1.570 million in 1394. However, since the Iranian calendar year 1401 (March 2022-March 2023), the downward trend in fertility came to a halt.

The total fertility rate has lowered to 1.6 children per woman from about 2 children per woman.

According to Civil Registration Organization's report, the total fertility rate in Iranian years 1396 (2017-2018), 1397 (2018-2019), 1398 (2019-2020), 1399 (2020-2021), and 1400 (2021-2022) were 2.09, 1.95, 1.74, 1.65, 1.61 per each woman, respectively.

Despite offering incentives to encourage childbearing in line with youth population law, the desired growth in the youth population has not been accomplished yet.

At best, Iran's population with a total fertility rate of 2.5 will reach 102,890,000 by the next seven years, IRIB quoted Mohammad-Javad Mahmoudi, an official with the Civil Registration Organization, as saying.

In May, Hasan Farshidi, an official with the health ministry, said two years after the implementation of the law on supporting families and the youth, investigations have shown that the health ministry has played a central role in the implementation of the law.

"Since the implementation of the law, the number of births among mothers aged 20 to 24 has notably increased," the official added.

The rate of mothers giving birth to three children increased from 16 percent in the Iranian year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020) to 18.97 percent in 1402 (March 2023 -March 2024) and even the fourth childbirth increased from 5 percent to about 7 percent, Farshidi stated.

## The total fertility rate has experienced a sharp decline since the Iranian calendar year 1394 (2016-2015).

### Fertility rate should reach 2.5

In November 2023, an official with the Ministry of Health said that the total fertility rate should reach 2.5 from 1.6 before the closure of the demographic window in the next five



years.

"The country is on the threshold of aging; to tackle this crisis, we must promote childbearing and youth population," IRNA quoted Saber Jabbari as saying.

"Carrying out programs that are focusing on the youth population at the national level is a strategy to increase the total fertility rate," Jabbari stressed.

Talking about modern methods of infertility treatment, he said all modern methods of infertility treatment are offered in the country.

A center in the Ministry of Health provides services in the field of care, education, and counseling, as well as facilitating successful and stable marriages, healthy fertility, and promoting natural childbirth, early diagnosis of infertility, and timely treatment, he pointed out.

## ISC database shows 15% increase in most-cited researchers

TEHRAN – The Islamic World Science Citation (ISC) Institute database has recognized 489 most-cited Iranian researchers in human sciences, social sciences, art, and architecture, which shows a fifteen percent increase compared to the previous year.

The most-cited researchers have been identified in a ten-year period from Iranian calendar year 1392 (2013-2014) to 1401 (2022-2023), IRNA quoted Ahmad Fazlzadeh, the head of ISC Institute, as saying.

Researchers in each field are listed based on their citation counts, that is how many citations their papers have received over the selected time period.

Most-cited researchers have been categorized into 16 subject areas in the field of humanities, social sciences, art, and architecture, of which 413 researchers are in one subject area, and the rest of the researchers are in several subject areas.

Researchers in the subject areas of 'business, management, and accounting' (12.68 percent), 'Social sciences' (12.27 percent), and 'other' (9.41 percent) are ranked first to third.

The rest of the researchers are in 13 subject areas including educational sciences, psychology, theology and Islamic studies, sociology and political sciences, geographical sciences, economic sciences, language and linguistics, law, language and literature, historical sciences, philosophy, art and architecture, knowledge and information science.

Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology represents 89.35 percent, Islamic Azad University represents 6.05 percent, Ministry of Health represents 1.94 percent, and other educational, research, and technological institutions represent 2.66 percent of most-cited researchers.

University of Tehran, Tarbiat Modarres University, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Isfahan University, and Ferdowsi University of Mashhad with 55, 35, 34, 23, and 21 researchers have the highest number of most-cited researchers, respectively.

### Over 1,000 Iranians among world's 1% most-cited researchers

A total of 1056 Iranian researchers have been recognized among the world's top one percent most-cited researchers in 2024, indicating a 12 percent increase compared to 938 identified researchers in 2023.

"The Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (with 427 researchers) represents 40.44 percent, and the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education (with 518 researchers) accounts for 49.05 percent of the most-cited Iranian researchers," IRNA quoted Fazlzadeh as saying.

Clinical medicine with 22.54 percent, Multidisciplinary with 21.78 percent, Engineering with 17.05 percent, Pharmacology and Toxicology with 9.66 percent, Chemistry with 8.43 percent, and Agricultural sciences with 7.01 percent held the highest shares of the most-cited researchers, respectively.

### Over 2,500 Iranians among world's top 2% most-cited researchers

Stanford University, using Scopus data pro-

vided by Elsevier, listed 2,503 Iranian researchers among the top 2 percent of the most-cited scientists in the world, a significant growth compared to 1,870 researchers in 2023.

The selection is based on the top 100,000 scientists by c-score (with and without self-citations) or a percentile rank of 2 percent or above in the sub-field. This version (7) is based on the August 1, 2024, snapshot from Scopus, updated to the end of the citation year 2023.

The inclusion in the 'Top 2%' list is determined by several key metrics. C-score which is the composite score based on various bibliometric factors, including the total number of citations, h-index, and the number of citations with and without self-citations.

Field and Sub-field Percentiles: scientists are classified into 22 broad fields and 176 sub-fields. Only those who rank in the top 2% of their sub-field are included.

Career-Long vs. Single-Year Impact: the ranking is available for both career-long impact and single-year performance, offering insights into both long-term contributions and recent achievements.

### Iran ranks 14th for most-cited institutes

The number of top Iranian universities and research institutes in the Essential Science Indicators (ESI) database has increased from 115 last year to 134 this year, ranking the country 14th worldwide, and second among Islamic countries, the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) has reported.

Essential Science Indicators, or ESI, is a fundamental analysis and evaluation tool that reveals emerging science trends, as well as the performance of influential individuals, academic institutions, papers, journals, countries, and regions in various fields of scientific research.

A total of 9,019 universities and research institutes in all subject areas are ranked by the ESI database in a ten-year period, from 2014 to 2024.

Iran's top universities and research institutes are present in 19 subject areas, and the largest number is in the clinical medicine subject area with 74 universities and research institutes.

The number of institutions in the subject areas of engineering was 67, chemistry 57, agricultural sciences 29, materials sciences 28, pharmacology and toxicology 27, social sciences, general sciences 21.

Also, the number of institutions in the fields of plant and animal sciences, and environment/ecology 20 each, neuroscience and behavior 18, biology and biochemistry 17, computer science 15, immunology 10, geology 8, molecular biology and genetics and physics 5 each, microbiology and psychiatry and psychology 3 each and mathematics one.

The ranking includes 35 Islamic countries. Turkey ranks first among Islamic nations, followed by Iran in second place.

Also, Turkey with 149 universities and research institutes ranks 12th in the world.

Egypt (with 48 universities and research institutes) ranks 25th, Pakistan (with 46 universities) ranks 27th, and Saudi Arabia (with 45 universities) ranks 38th, respectively.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## 'Organ donation rate grows 60-fold in 18 years'

Organ donation rate has increased by 60 times over the past 18 years, though the growth is not considerable compared to the global scale, head of the transplantation and treatment of diseases department at the Ministry of Health has announced.

Some countries including China have grown 122-fold in terms of organ donation over the past 10 years, ISNA quoted Mehdi Shadnough as saying on Monday.

Although, Iran ranks 26 in organ donation in the world, it can claim better ranks given some plans being implemented in this regard, he highlighted, adding, we will achieve better results certainly by the next year (March 2019-March 2020), as many barriers have been removed last year.

## رشد اهدای عضو در ۱۸ سال گذشته، ۶۰ برابر شده است

ریس مرکز مدیریت پیوند و درمان بیماری‌ها وزارت بهداشت گفت: رشد اهدای عضو در ۱۸ سال گذشته در ایران ۶۰ برابر شده است البته در مقیاس جهانی شاخص قابل قبولی نیست.

به گزارش ایسنا دکتر مهدی شادنوش اظهار کرد: کشوری مانند چین طی ۱۰ سال در زمینه اهدای عضو رشد ۱۲۲ برابری داشته است.

وی خاطر نشان کرد: رتبه اهدای عضو ایران در رنکینگ جهانی ۲۶ است اما می تواند وضعیت بهتر داشته باشد و البته با توجه به فعالیت‌هایی که آغاز شده نتایج بهتری در انتظار خواهد بود و در سال ۹۸ نیز جهش خوبی را شاهد خواهیم بود چراکه چالش‌های موجود در سال ۹۷ رفع شده است.



## Migratory birds flocking to Tehran lake

Khalj-e Fars (Persian Gulf) lake in the west of Tehran is hosting birds that are migrating from Siberia and eastern Europe to spend the winter. Around two million birds fly each year to spend winter in the country's wetlands.





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DECEMBER 3, 2024

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*If the right usurped from us is given back to us we shall take it, otherwise we shall go on claiming it.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:11:53 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:28 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:57 (tomorrow)

## “What Makes Us Human” published in Persian

TEHRAN- “What Makes Us Human”, a picture book written by Victor D.O. Santos and illustrated by Anna Forlati has been published in Persian.

Fatemi is the publisher of the book originally released in 2023. It has been translated into Persian by Hossein Sheikh Rezai.

“What Makes Us Human,” is a poignant exploration of language, identity, and the intricate ways that communication shapes our lives. Released in partnership with UNESCO to honor the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), this book serves as both a poetic riddle and a thoughtful reflection on the essence of what makes us uniquely human.

At the heart of the book is a compelling question: “Can you guess what I am?” The narrative unfolds with hints about the nature of language, emphasizing its long history and profound importance to humanity. Readers are invited to ponder the significance of language in connecting us to our past, present, and future. From the thousands of languages spoken around the globe to those at risk of disappearing, Santos masterfully illustrates the critical role that language plays in our lives.

The clever and thought-provoking text makes complex concepts accessible to young readers. Santos deftly incorporates examples of how language manifests in various forms, from digital communication through text messages to non-verbal cues like Braille, promoting an understanding of communication as a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon. This inclusivity is particularly impactful as it encourages children to appreciate the diverse ways people express themselves, fostering empathy and curiosity about different cul-

tures.

Anna Forlati’s stunning illustrations complement the text beautifully, bringing the concepts to life with vibrant images that capture the imagination. Her illustrative style enhances the narrative, providing visual context that engages young readers and encourages them to connect with the themes presented. The combination of Santos’s insightful writing and Forlati’s captivating artwork creates a rich reading experience that resonates with both children and adults alike.

The book is not just an educational resource but a celebration of human connection and identity. It raises essential questions about the future of language and the importance of preserving endangered languages, making it a vital addition to family and school libraries. Its clever approach to difficult themes invites discussions about culture, history, and the intrinsic value of communication.

With its impactful message and artistic expression, “What Makes Us Human” has garnered acclaim. This book not only enlightens young minds but also encourages them to explore their own connections to the languages that shape their identities.

Victor D.O. Santos is an American-Brazilian linguist and children’s author with a rich background, having lived in five different countries and studied ten languages. His English-language debut, “My Dad, My Rock” (Scribble), was recognized as a Kirkus Best Book of 2022.

Anna Forlati is an illustrator known for her engaging books, including “Yoga Poses for Kids” (Albert Whitman) and “My Dad, My Rock” (Scribble). Her work on “What Makes Us Human” was recognized in dPICTUS’s Unpublished Picture Book Showcase and showcased at the Bologna Children’s Book Fair.

## Cartoon of Day



### ISRAEL GENOCIDAL WAR

UN Special Committee finds Israel’s warfare methods in Gaza consistent with genocide, including use of starvation as weapon of war.

Cartoonist: Simon Nsaka (Stillmatic) from Zambia

# “Mary”: Netflix’s Israeli reading of the Bible

By Ali Hamedin

TEHRAN-In mid-October of this year, the news of the removal of a significant number of films about life under occupation for the Palestinian people caught the world’s attention.

This shocking news was surprising to many, but such an action was not unexpected from a platform that had produced the series “The Messiah” in Christmas 2020.

The series presented substantial distortions regarding the situation of the Palestinian people and, on the other hand, praised the Israeli Security Agency.

Netflix’s streak of surprises did not end there.

Recently, the platform announced that it will release a feature film about Mary, the mother of Jesus, on December 6 of this year.

Titled “Mary,” the film, which was shot in Morocco, focuses on the period before the birth of Jesus Christ, his birth, and King Herod’s (played by Anthony Hopkins) efforts to find Jesus and his mother.

### Christ under siege by Zionists

A controversial aspect of this film led people worldwide to call for its boycott, highlighting the perceived influential role of Zionists in the project: the portrayal of Mary by a 21-year-old Israeli actress Noa Cohen.

The casting of this Zionist actress in such a role sparked significant negative reactions from opponents of genocide and critics of Israeli crimes.

They believed that Netflix, under Israeli influence, intended to erase the Palestinian historical roots of the story’s characters through this move.

According to IMDb, the cast also includes several other Israeli actors, such as Ido Tako, Ori Pfeffer, Mili Avital, Keren Tzur and Hilla Vidor.

### Genocidal authenticity

In an interview with the American magazine “Entertainment Weekly”, D. J. Caruso, the director of “Mary”, introduced the film as the story of a smart and determined young woman who faces immense challenges.

In support of casting Israeli actors for the movie, he stated: “It was important to us that Mary, along with most of our primary cast, be selected from Israel to ensure authenticity.”

Caruso further mentioned they auditioned around 75 young women, and somewhere in the middle of that process, Noa stood out.

The director spoke of “authenticity,” even as Israel had been bombing women and children for over a year—people who were considered the true compatriots of Christ and Mary.

By attacking churches such as the Greek Orthodox Saint Por-



A scene from “Mary” directed by D. J. Caruso

phryus Church in Gaza, the Zionist regime proved that it makes no distinction between Muslim and Christian people in its genocide.

The false “authenticity” mentioned by Caruso sparked sharp opinions from social media users regarding the film “Mary”.

“Israel” has destroyed three churches in Gaza over the past year, and killed at least three percent of Gaza’s Christian population meanwhile the director of this film believed the main cast including the lead role of Mary should be “Israeli” to “ensure authenticity,” tweeted one account.

“Netflix thought it was a good idea to cast an Israeli to place Mother Mary like Israelis aren’t bombing the homeland of Jesus himself as well as all the churches,” one user wrote.

Some social media users also considered the choice of an Israeli actress for the role of Mary blasphemous: “There is something deeply blasphemous about casting an Israeli to play the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, while Israel is carrying out a genocide against Palestinians, killing some of the oldest Christian populations in the area and destroying their heritage sites.”

### Distorting Zionists

“Mary” is not the first film about prophets imbued with a Zionist narrative. “Exodus: Gods and Kings” was a 2014 film by Ridley Scott that told the story of the prophet Moses.

Gaber Asfour, who was the Egypt’s Culture Minister at the time, said the film was rife with mistakes, including an apparent claim that “Moses and the Jews built the pyramids”.

“This totally contradicts proven historical facts,” he stated.

“It is a Zionist film,” Asfour mentioned. “It gives a Zionist view of history and contains historical inaccuracies and that’s why we have decided to ban it.”

As a result of these historical inaccuracies, “Exodus: Gods and Kings” was banned in countries

such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

### Moving pictures as a weapon

Zionism has never neglected the capabilities of the silver screen.

As historians Tony Shaw and Giora Goodman mention in their book “Hollywood and Israel: A History”, “Theodore Herzl, the Austro-Hungarian journalist who founded the Zionist movement, saw moving pictures as central to furthering his cause.”

Many Hollywood films across the years—from “Exodus” (1960) to “Munich” (2005)—have been guided by explicitly Zionist politics, normalizing and often glorifying the colonization of Palestine.

The relationship between Hollywood and Israel during the pre- and early statehood years reflected Zionist leaders’ recognition of the potential of cinema to build cultural and financial bridges.

In “Casting a Giant Shadow: The Transnational Shaping of Israeli Cinema”, Harris and co-editor Chyutin discuss this relationship:

“The Israeli government’s support for Hollywood projects such as Otto Preminger’s “Exodus” (1960) reflects the significant Zionist involvement in shaping narratives in American cinema.

These productions often drew on Zionist themes, portraying Israel as an idealized democratic society free from the stigma of socialist or communist affiliations.”

### From comic pages to the pages of the Bible

The high-profile presence of Israeli actors on the silver screen can be said to have begun with the casting of Israeli actress and soldier Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman.

The move was highly controversial from the start, but it provided an opportunity for global audiences to gain a distorted and more positive view of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. This made Gadot one of the most famous Zionist faces.

As the Jerusalem Post argued,

Gadot’s relatability to western audiences helped humanize the widespread trope of the brutal Israeli soldier.

The trend of casting Israeli actors in superhero roles has continued. Following Gal Gadot’s repeated performances as Wonder Woman, the spotlight has now shifted to Shira Haas.

This time, reports emerged that an Israeli actress would portray an Israeli superhero named “Sabra” in the new Captain America movie.

The timing of this news coinciding with the escalation of the genocide in Gaza has led to strong global reactions against the film, with calls for a boycott gaining momentum.

Netflix, however, has demonstrated with the production of the film “Mary” that Zionism has now entered a new phase, moving beyond the quick-yielding superhero genre.

The film’s director, by casting Israeli actors in key roles in the story of Mary’s life, has attempted to challenge the historical and Palestinian roots of Christ even before narrating the story.

Such a change reflects the Zionist regime’s determination to make more deliberate use of its cinematic forces for the purpose of fabricating a false civilization—a move that will come at the cost of distorting true history.

In addition to highlighting the collaboration between companies and platforms such as Disney and Netflix, the impact of grassroots boycott movements should not be overlooked.

In many cases, these boycotts have compelled targeted companies to backtrack on their decisions.

For instance, the boycotts against the new Captain America film prompted Marvel to announce plans to approach this superhero with a fresh perspective.

Subsequently, the company released the first trailer for the film, which made no mention of the superhero’s Israeli background.

## Dream House Ensemble to perform Karlheinz Stockhausen’s “Stimmung” at IAF

TEHRAN-Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran will host a contemporary music performance by the Dream House Ensemble on Tuesday.

The event is the 24th session from the series of “Delkook” program, which is dedicated to the live performance of ambient music, Honaronline reported.

Managed by Soheil Shirangi, and supervised by Parsa Sotudeh, the Dream House Ensemble will perform the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen’s 1968 piece “Stimmung”.

Sina Jabbari, Farhad Mohammadi, Melina Johari, Nastaran Bakhtiari, and Mana Esmailfard perform in the ensemble.

“Stimmung” is a tonal and yet also a serial composition. It is the first major Western composition to be based entirely on the pro-

duction of vocal harmonics, the first to use overtones as a primary element.

An additional innovation is the unique kind of rhythmic polyphony which arises from the gradual transformation/assimilation of rhythmic models.

Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007) is widely acknowledged by critics as one of the most important but also controversial composers of the 20th and early 21st centuries.

He is known for his groundbreaking work in electronic music, having been called the “father of electronic music,” for introducing controlled chance (aleatory techniques) into



serial composition, and for musical spatialization.

Dream House Ensemble was formed in 2018 to perform the works of contemporary composers and introduce them to the audience.

The attention and selection of Dream House Ensemble’s repertoires are mostly focused on the less performed works of composers of the second half of the 20th century.

The performance will begin at 7 p.m. and the admission is free for the public. The IAF is situated at Artists Park on North Mousavi Street, Taleqani Street.