



# West Pursues Illegitimate Interests Under Pretexts of Freedom, Women's Rights

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## Hezbollah able to turn challenges into opportunities

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - Throughout the past decades of conflict with the Israeli occupation regime, Syria has been a strategic ally for all Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements in West Asia.

Obviously, the unfolding events in Syria, which started on December 8, will impose undeniable challenges; however, Hezbollah has long proven its ability to transform challenges into opportunities in parallel with developing its local production and expanding regional alliances.

Hezbollah possesses a large military stockpile that enabled it to resist a fierce war for 66 consecutive days. During the recent "Uli al-Bas" battle, the Israeli enemy claimed that it had eliminated thousands of Hezbollah's missile launchers and weakened its military capabilities. Nevertheless, Hezbollah carried out dozens of missile and attack operations with suicide drones, in addition to thwarting the Israeli military ground invasion.

Accordingly, in the short term, Hezbollah has sufficient equipment to confront any US-led Israeli aggression, especially as it has thrived on resistance which takes into account the difficulty of providing logistical support.

## Israel now occupies "370km<sup>2</sup>" of Syria

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Hebrew media has confirmed that the Israeli military has expanded its occupation of Syria to more than 370 square kilometers.

Occupying more than 370 square kilometers of Syrian land would mean the Israeli regime has illegally grabbed Syrian territory that is larger than the besieged Gaza Strip, albeit far less inhabited.

On Tuesday, reporters on the ground said Israeli infantry was advancing in some neighborhoods of the city of Hader in Quneitra province, southwestern Syria.

The Israeli news television channel i24 NEWS stated that Israeli ground forces destroyed Syrian army military sites and assets in southern Syria.

The Israeli news outlet indicated that the activity "was approved by the necessary levels given the sensitive mission," clarifying that it "was carried out with the assistance of armored battalions deployed in the region and infantry fighters."

The Israeli occupation forces have also confirmed these details, according to the channel.

## Palestinians' enduring resilience forces Israel to seek truce

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - Israel's failure to eliminate Hamas has prompted the regime to intensify efforts to finalize a ceasefire deal with the resistance movement amid the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

An Israeli delegation arrived in Qatar on Monday evening to hold talks with mediators to pave the way for a ceasefire and the release of captives held in Gaza, that's according to the Financial Times.

In recent weeks, the United States, Qatar and Egypt have renewed their mediation efforts to wrap up a deal.

Citing negotiators from the three countries, the Associated Press said Israel and Hamas are edging toward a truce agreement.

Egyptian and Hamas officials have said the likely agreement would take place in phases.

The first phase of the deal would last up to two months during which Hamas would release some 30 captives. Israel would also release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

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## Tehran photo exhibition showcases Palestinian resilience

TEHRAN - The photo exhibition titled "Keys That Last Longer Than Israel" is currently underway at the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran.

The photo-narrative exhibition features works by Iranian photographer Vahab Ramezi, capturing the lives of Palestinians residing in four refugee camps in Lebanon.

In addition to showcasing the photos of the Palestinian camps, this exhibition uniquely pairs images with the narratives of the subjects involved.

From the combination of photographs and narratives presented in this exhibition, a book titled "Return," authored by Sajedah Ebrahimi, will be published and unveiled in the coming days.



## Winners of Farabi Intl. Award honored

TEHRAN - The winners of the 15th Farabi International Award (FIA) in different national and international sections were honored on Tuesday in Tehran with the presence of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

This year, FIA was held from October 9 to November 21. A total of 2,585 works including 2,222 works in the national section and 383 works in the international section were submitted.

The submitted works were evaluated for the categories of adults (above 35 years) and youths (under 35 years).

The 15th edition of the FIA Award recognized eligible researchers in two categories, 'Distinguished Researcher' and 'Distinguished Research'.

A total of 29 scientists and experts from Iran and four from other countries were selected as the top researchers. ▶ Page 7

## Iran will use 'all tools' to defend itself, foreign ministry says

TEHRAN - Iran has emphasized its unwavering commitment to defending its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, with foreign ministry spokesperson stating that the country is fully prepared to utilize all available resources to safeguard these core interests.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing in Tehran on Tuesday, Esmail Baqaei also addressed a range of diplomatic issues, including the reopening of Iran's embassy in Damascus. He confirmed that the reopening of the embassy is "high on the agenda" and will proceed as soon as the "necessary conditions" are met.

The diplomat clarified that the reopening process would require careful preparation, particularly to ensure the security of the embassy and its personnel. While Baqaei did not provide a specific timeline for the embassy's reopening, he reiterated that Iran is committed to resuming its diplomatic mission in Syria as soon as the required conditions are in place.

**Iran's role in Syria: security, not expansionism**

Baqaei also took the opportunity to reflect on Iran's influence in Syria, stressing that Iran's presence in the country was never about territorial expansion or supporting any specific faction. ▶ Page 2

## Eslami: Iran's nuclear progress is unstoppable

TEHRAN - In a speech delivered in the country's central province of Isfahan on Monday, Mohammad Eslami, the Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), asserted that the country's advancements in nuclear technology "will never be curtailed."

"Iran's progress in the nuclear sector is impervious to interference from hegemonic powers. Our nation's commitment to achieving significant advancements is unwavering," the nuclear chief announced before condemning certain countries for attempts to limit developing nations' access to advanced technologies, especially in the nuclear sector.

The nuclear chief highlighted that the restriction of access to advanced technologies also serves to stifle the economic growth of developing nations. Despite these obstacles, he insisted that Iran's nuclear program would continue to advance through determination and perseverance.

Highlighting the importance of modern sciences and technologies, Eslami pointed to nuclear energy, aerospace, information technology, nanotechnology, and biotechnology as vital sources of power. ▶ Page 2

## Tehran denies reports of decline in crude oil exports

TEHRAN - The head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has dismissed reports circulating on social media claiming a decline in the country's crude oil exports as "false and baseless."

Speaking on a televised program late Monday, Hamid Bovard, the head of NIOC, said, "Iran's crude oil exports remain at the same levels as before."

"We are in a good position regarding crude oil sales and exports," Bovard added, emphasizing there is no cause for concern over the current trajectory of Iran's oil trade.

Refuting allegations of reduced exports, Bovard stated, "The claims of a decline are simply untrue."

His remarks came in response to recent reports on social media suggesting a drop in Iran's crude oil sales and export levels.

Iran, one of the largest oil producers in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), has faced ongoing challenges in maintaining its export volumes amid U.S.-led sanctions targeting the country's energy sector. ▶ Page 4

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The new geopolitics of the region

The Sharq newspaper says the fall of the Assad government in Syria should be considered a historical turning point that would trigger huge geopolitical changes in the Middle East, and we should expect extensive changes in the alignment of power players in the region. The weakening of the Axis of Resistance and the collapse of the Syrian government have affected Iran's influence in the region and this has enabled Turkey to take the place of Iran and Russia in Syria. It is also possible that Turkey would focus on the Caucasus, specifically on the so-called Zangezur Corridor and the violation of Armenian sovereignty in Sivnik province. The fact that Russia is aligned with Turkey and Baku adds to the volatility of the situation. Moreover, Turkey's relations with America and Israel have always made Ankara's hands open for all kinds of maneuvers in the region. The secret of Turkey's success is a focus on possible goals, while Iran has focused on absolutely impossible goals. While Iran should support stability in Syria where everyone is interested, it can also take advantage of the gaps in the region to protect its interests. There is a need for foreign policy priorities. Iran should be patient in setting its foreign policy goals and, like other middle powers, avoid focusing on distant and impossible goals and focus on goals related to its interests.

The real goal of Zionists' claims

In a note, Jam-e-Jam addressed the commotion created against Iran and wrote: One of the upshots that was started by the Zionists against Iran, especially after Operation True Promise, is the presence of an unprecedented number of Iranian spies inside the occupied territories to collect information about Zionist regime's military. But to advance this news story, Israel has had to admit the success of the True Promise I and II operations. The publication of these reports is intended to divert public opinion from the obvious failure of the regime's anti-missile system to counter the barrage of missiles raining down on Israel by Iran. Experts believe that the purpose behind publishing such reports on the American-Israeli side is to justify the failure of their anti-missile system by Iranian missiles. They have other goals in mind. This comes while the world extremely hates Netanyahu for his crimes especially as the Hague-based International Court of Jus-

tice has issued an arrest warrant against him and his former defense minister. Therefore, publishing such news in the current conditions is an attempt by the Zionist regime to justify its crimes in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria.

Hamshahri: Psychological war against Iran

In an article, Hamshahri addressed Tel Aviv's new project against Tehran and said: Abusing the recent developments in Syria to launch a psychological war against Iran has become one of the main policies of the Zionist-Western officials and their media outlets. Following the recent developments in Syria, some Zionist media and decision-makers seek to insinuate that now is the best opportunity to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, because regional developments have put Iran in a weak position. The truth is that although recent developments in the region have managed to separate Syria from the Axis of Resistance, this does not mean a weakening of Iran's strategic ability to its ability to respond to any threat from the Washington-Tel Aviv axis. The other side is well aware that Tehran has different options to respond to any military threat, and that the two "True Promise" operations are only a part of Iran's strategic ability to face threats.

Iran: 2 strategic paths

The Iran newspaper points to the Islamic Republic's return to the South Caucasus and the expansion of its influence throughout the large Black Sea region and this originates from 2 strategic goals that have emerged following the development of two mutual transit corridors. The first strategic goal is to strengthen closer relations with Russia. The two countries are cooperating through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which connects India to Russia via Iran and Azerbaijan and serves as an alternative to the longer and more expensive route through the Suez Canal. The importance of this transit route has increased due to the severe sanctions imposed on Iran and Russia. The second strategic goal is to strengthen access to the rich European market. To achieve this goal, Tehran is developing the Persian Gulf-Black Sea international transit corridor. It is a multipurpose route that connects Iran to EU member states such as Bulgaria or Romania through Armenia, Georgia, and the Black Sea.

could pose threats to the country," the rear admiral warned.

He further said that surprises could lead to strategic setbacks, diminishing Iran's ability to stand against enemy threats.

He underscored Iran's resilience, asserting, "The Iranian nation is strong and proud, always steadfast in defending its independence and territorial integrity."

Sayyari added that to bolster its defense capabilities, Iran must pay special attention to these emerging technologies.

The rear admiral elaborated on AI's potential: "AI can have an impact across all defense technology areas, and in this regard, the Iranian Army has made significant advancements."

He reiterated, "AI in drones and other defense equipment can play a pivotal role, and this technology is on the Army's agenda."

The rise of AI in Iran's defense strategy

Iran has achieved notable progress in incorporating AI into its military capabilities, spearheaded by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy.

They have reportedly developed over 2,600 AI-enhanced pieces of equipment, including advanced missiles and drones, to boost precision and operational capabilities.

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

Iranian Army to expand AI use in drones and defense



TEHRAN – Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, the Coordinating Deputy of the Iranian Army, underscored the increasing importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in military applications during the First National Conference on Command and Control in Cognitive Warfare on Monday.

"AI can play a crucial role in drones and other defense equipment, and this technology is on the Army's agenda," he stated.

Sayyari highlighted that 15 emerging technologies, including plasma, climate, quantum computing, AI, robotics, and electromagnetism, are set to significantly influence future warfare.

"If we ignore these technologies, we will certainly face technological surprises, which

Iran will use 'all tools' to defend itself, foreign ministry says

From page 1 ▶ Rather, he stated that Iranian military advisers were deployed in Syria to assist with ensuring public safety and countering terrorism, at the invitation of the Syrian government. He further emphasized that Iran's commitment to Syria's territorial integrity remained steadfast throughout its involvement.

In this context, Baqaei condemned Israel's recent acts of aggression against Syria, accusing the Israeli regime of undermining Syria's territorial integrity by occupying parts of its territory. He pointed to these actions as clear violations of United Nations Security Council resolutions and international law.

Western support for Israeli aggression against Gaza

Turning to the ongoing conflict in Gaza, Baqaei criticized the United States and Germany for supplying nearly all of the weapons used by Israel in its operations against the Palestinian territories. He accused the two nations of complicity in Israel's genocidal actions.

Baqaei called on the global community to take immediate



steps to halt the violence in Gaza, urging the prosecution of Israeli leaders for war crimes.

The Iranian spokesperson also referenced the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials, stressing that member states of the ICC are obligated to enforce these warrants and uphold international humanitarian law, including preventing genocide.

European Union's role in regional instability

Baqaei took aim at the recent remarks by European Union for-

eign policy chief, Josep Borrell, who suggested that Iran and Russia should have no role in Syria's future.

Baqaei condemned this position, calling on European officials to reconsider their approach to the region, particularly given Europe's historical role in fueling instability.

He pointed out that many terrorists who have contributed to the chaos in Syria came from Western countries, and he urged European nations to examine their past actions rather than dictate the future of Syria and

the broader West Asia.

Shifting European stance on Persian Gulf islands

In a more positive development, Baqaei acknowledged that some European countries have revised their positions on the three Persian Gulf islands—Bu Musa, Greater Tumb, and Lesser Tumb—which are parts of Iran's sovereign territory. He highlighted that Germany, in particular, has changed its stance and issued formal notes of correction on the matter.

Strengthening Iran-China relations

Finally, Baqaei addressed Iran's growing relationship with China, describing the ties between the two nations as thriving.

He pointed to a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement signed in 2021 as evidence of the deepening political, economic, and cultural cooperation between Tehran and Beijing.

Baqaei stressed that Iran-China relations are expanding across various domains, further solidifying Iran's international standing in the face of ongoing challenges.

Eslami: Iran's nuclear progress is unstoppable

From Page 1 ▶ "A nation without advanced science and technology will undoubtedly struggle," he declared.

Eslami stressed that these technologies are crucial for maintaining national independence and progress.

He warned that Iran's armed forces "could face unexpected challenges if they are not equipped with advanced sciences and technologies."

Among the notable achievements of Iran's nuclear industry, Eslami highlighted the production of heavy water.

Used across various sectors, including pharmaceuticals, Iran's heavy water is recognized as one of the highest-quality compounds globally.

Iran, he pointed out, exports heavy water internationally, with applications including newborn metabolic disease screening in public health.

Addressing historical contexts, Eslami not-



Mohammad Eslami, the director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), delivers a speech at an event in Isfahan on December 16, 2024.

ed that since the Islamic Revolution's victory in 1979, Iran has been subject to sanctions due to its steadfast commitment to independence and freedom.

Additionally, Eslami condemned the Israeli regime for diverting the United Nations from its core mission of upholding human rights and justice.

He questioned the international organizations' positions on the regime's actions and the reliability of the UN and its Security Council.

In reference to the recent vote at the UN General Assembly, Eslami pointed out that most countries endorsed the Palestinian right to self-governance. Nevertheless, a small group of nations, including the United States, voted against it.

Despite the majority vote, these few countries wield decisive influence in international affairs, often disregarding the will of the majority, Eslami concluded.

Sixth Iran-Kuwait consular commission meeting successfully concludes in Tehran



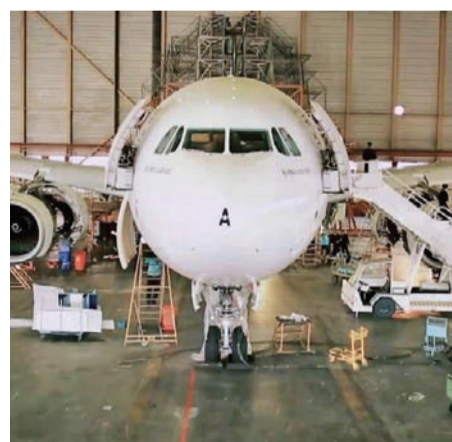
TEHRAN – The sixth session of the joint consular commission between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Persian Gulf State of Kuwait was successfully concluded in Tehran.

The meeting, held Monday evening, was attended by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular, Parliamentary, and Expatriates Affairs, Vahid Jalalzadeh, and Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs, Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani.

Jalalzadeh announced the successful conclusion of the meeting via a post on the X social media platform. The discussions took place at the Consular Office of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and included participation from diplomatic staff of both nations. The focus of the Iran-Kuwait meeting remained on consular affairs of mutual interest to the two countries.

This meeting marks the sixth time the two countries have convened this joint consular commission. Jalalzadeh's participation in this meeting follows his recent visits to neighboring Iraq and Turkey, where he also engaged in similar bilateral joint consular gatherings.

Iran develops domestic aircraft engine parts, official says



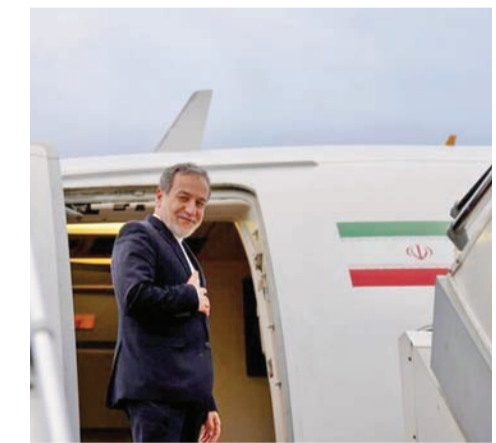
TEHRAN – Iran has achieved a major milestone in its aviation industry by localizing the production of Airbus and Boeing aircraft engine parts, according to Hossein Pourfarzaneh, head of the Civil Aviation Organization.

Speaking to Tasnim News Agency, Pourfarzaneh highlighted the challenges posed by international sanctions on Iran's aviation sector, which prompted the country to develop a comprehensive plan for domestic production of critical engine components.

"In response to the sanctions, we initiated efforts to localize the manufacturing of aircraft engine parts," he stated.

Pourfarzaneh explained that the project, carried out in collaboration with MAPNA Group, involved reverse engineering and a nine-year development process. This effort has culminated in Iran acquiring the technology to produce essential components for the aviation industry, a significant step toward self-reliance.

Araghchi heads to Cairo for D-8 meeting



TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has embarked on a diplomatic mission to the Egyptian capital of Cairo to participate in the upcoming meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.

The organization, which includes eight Islamic countries, aims to enhance economic cooperation and development among its member states.

The Foreign Ministers' meeting is scheduled for Wednesday and will serve as a crucial precursor to the D-8 leaders' summit. During this meeting, ministers are expected to finalize key documents that will be presented at the summit, ensuring a cohesive agenda for the leaders.

The eleventh summit of the D-8 Organization is set to take place on Thursday and will feature the participation of heads of state from the member countries. Among them will be Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The D-8 Organization, founded in 1997, includes Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. The upcoming summit aims to strengthen ties among these nations and foster collaborative efforts in various sectors, including trade, technology, and sustainable development.

# West pursues illegitimate interests under pretexts of freedom, women's rights: Leader

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – In a gathering with thousands of Iranian women from different walks of life, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei criticized Western perspectives on women's rights, explaining that capitalist nations use them as a façade to serve their political and illegitimate interests.

"Capitalism and the politicians aligned with it, by controlling the world's influential media and through dishonesty and lies, conceal their criminal and corrupt motives for interfering in and manipulating women's affairs worldwide, all for gaining illegitimate profits, under the guise of a philosophical and humanitarian theory," the Leader said on Tuesday.

The Leader viewed dishonesty and hypocrisy as hallmarks of Western colonialism and capitalism. He highlighted the historical context of women's labor, highlighting that the recruitment of women into factories was framed as a pursuit of freedom and independence, yet served primarily to satisfy industries' demands for low-wage workers. "This is a clear example of hypocrisy," he stated, asserting that such practices are rooted in a long tradition of colonial exploitation.

Drawing parallels to historical injustices, Ayatollah Khamenei recalled the slogan for freedom for American slaves two centuries ago which ultimately aimed to shift enslaved individuals from southern plantations to northern factories. "Today, too, behind Western states'



feminist slogans and calls for women's freedom and rights lie inhumane and political objectives," he warned, noting that while some of these motives are apparent, others may only become evident over time.

The Leader emphasized the importance of promoting Islamic teachings regarding women, urging society to embrace and understand these principles. "We must instill this logic in society and act accordingly," he declared, acknowledging that significant efforts have been made since the Iranian Revolution to address women's issues within an Islamic framework.

Ayatollah Khamenei holds annual meetings with Iranian women on the birth anniversary of Lady Fatimah (PBUH), the esteemed daughter of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

**'Israel will be uprooted'**

Elsewhere in his remarks, The Leader of the Islamic Revolution

highlighted regional issues, the endeavors of the Resistance, and the situation in Syria. He pointed out that the actions taken in Syria, coupled with the crimes committed by the Zionist regime and the United States, bolstered by support from other entities, have led enemies to mistakenly believe that the Resistance Movement had been defeated. However, he emphasized that this is a grave mistake on their part.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that the spirit of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah and Yahya Sinwar lives on. "Their bodies have left, but martyrdom has not erased them from existence. Their spirit and ideas remain, and their path continues," he stated.

Referring to the steadfastness of Gaza against the daily attacks of the Zionists and the ongoing resistance in Lebanon, the Leader stated, "The Zionist regime believes it is preparing

itself by way of Syria to surround and eliminate Hezbollah in Lebanon, but it is Israel that will be uprooted."

He emphasized Iran's steadfastness in standing alongside the Palestinian fighters and the Mujahideen of Hezbollah, reaffirming the nation's dedication to providing ongoing support and assistance. He expressed hope that the day will come when the fighters will see the evil enemy getting trampled under their feet.

Also, during his speech, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution elucidated the character of Lady Fatimah (PBUH). "It is remarkable and extraordinary that a young woman can attain such a spiritual and celestial identity, to the extent that, as narrated by both Shias and Sunnis, her anger represents the anger of God, and her satisfaction reflects the pleasure of the Almighty," he remarked.

Ayatollah Khamenei described some of the unique qualities of Lady Fatimah (PBUH) as "comforting the Prophet (PBUH) during difficult times", "accompanying the Commander of the Faithful in jihad", "engaging in worship in such a way that captivated the angels", "delivering eloquent, articulate, and fiery sermons", and "raising Imam Hassan, Imam Hussain and Lady Zainab (PBUH)." He further added that Lady Fatimah Zahra's childhood, youth, marriage, and life all serve as the highest, most beautiful models that represent the pinnacle of a Muslim woman.

## US attempts to frame Iran for Jordan drone attack as it files federal charges against two citizens

TEHRAN – The U.S. Justice Department announced on Monday that two citizens are facing federal charges in connection to a January attack by Iraqi Resistance groups against an American base at the Syria-Jordan border.

The two male American citizens of Iranian descent have been accused of "conspiring to export electronic equipment from the United States to Iran." It remains unclear how these charges, even if substantiated, would hold the individuals responsible for the drone attack that killed three American soldiers and injuries to at least 30 others.

According to a DOJ news release, the two men worked to evade U.S. sanctions by sending U.S. technology from a Massachusetts-based microelectronics manufacturer. One of them is also being charged with "providing material" to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Over the past 15 months, Resistance groups have launched numerous attacks



while they support the Resistance, they do not have authority over the groups' actions.

It seems that the accusations against the two citizens also attempt to suggest that Iranian drones utilize Western-smuggled materials—a claim analysts largely dismiss. They argue that Iran's substantial and advanced weapons arsenal could not exist if it relied on imported components, given four decades of stringent Western sanctions.

**Washington's use of misinformation and lies to justify hostile acts**

The United States has a history of employing various pretexts and disseminating questionable information to cast Iran as a hostile actor and justify its own potentially aggressive actions. These narratives often center around alleged Iranian interference in U.S. internal affairs, accusations of support for terrorists, and Iran-orchestrated plots to assassinate U.S. officials.

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

## JCPOA no longer relevant, says IAEA chief

TEHRAN – Rafael Grossi, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has said that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is no longer viable, appearing to place sole responsibility for the 2015 nuclear deal's lame-duck state on Iran.

"The philosophy of the initial JCPOA agreement can be used as a basis, but the agreement itself is no longer necessary," Grossi remarked during his visit to Italy for discussions with the Foreign Ministry.

The UN nuclear chief pointed out that Iran is now enriching uranium to levels of 60%, a threshold that he said brings the country close to the capability to produce military-grade uranium, which requires enrich-



ment to 90%. "Iran is rapidly approaching the status of a nuclear state," he claimed.

Grossi, however, omitted any mention of the West's abandonment of the deal, the factor that prompted Iran to curtail some of its JCPOA commitments in the first place.

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

## Muslim nations must unite to counter global hegemony: Leader's aide

TEHRAN – A senior military adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has proposed that unity among Muslim nations could play a transformative role in reshaping global dynamics.

"The convergence and unity of Muslim countries, forming a Muslim power bloc, is the only way to liberate Muslim nations from the hegemony of global arrogance, particularly the United States and Israel," Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi asserted.

The Iranian general accused the U.S. and Israel of being key drivers of instability, war, and human suffering across the



region and the globe. Safavi argued that Muslim nations must prioritize sustainable security, regional peace, and self-reliance to achieve true progress and independence.

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

### Fardin Hedayati among UWW's Rising Stars for 2024

TEHRAN – United World Wrestling (UWW) has named Masanosuke Ono (JPN), Iryna Bondar (UKR) and Fardin Hedayati (IRI) as the Emerging Stars of the Year in Freestyle, Women's Wrestling and Greco-Roman for 2024.

While a lot can be said about Hedayati and his age-group world titles, he stunned the wrestling world in Budapest this year.

At the Budapest Ranking Series in July, a tune-up tournament for the Paris Olympics, Hedayati shocked world and Olympic champion Riza Kayaalp at Greco-Roman 130kg with a 4-0 win. Hedayati broke the Turkish legend in the six-minute bout and claimed the most famous win of his career so far.

Hedayati has been knocking on the 130kg door of the Iran team for a long but Olympic bronze medalist Amin Mirzazadeh (IRI) is still holding the spot. But the 2024 year has further Hedayati's claim over it.

Beginning the year with the Zagreb Open Ranking Series, Hedayati won the gold medal at 130kg with victories over Laszlo Darabos (HUN), Wenhao Jiang (CHN), Oscar Pino Hinds (CUB), Mantas Knystautas (LTU) and Lingzhe Meng (CHN).

Then came the 2024 Vehbi Emre tournament in which he challenged Mirzazadeh for the spot on the Iran team but suffered a loss, his only of the season. He bounced back quickly from that and won the Budapest Ranking Series gold medal. Hedayati's style can be gauged with the fact that he did not give up a single point in three bouts in Budapest, making him a highly active wrestler.

He capped off the year with his first U23 World Championships gold medal at 130kg in Tirana. Hedayati's golden run included victories over some of the biggest names in age-group wrestling like Pavel HLINCHUK (AIN), Mykhailo VYSHNYVETSKYI (UKR), Hamza BAKIR (TUR).

Only Vyshnyvetskyi, who defeated Hedayati for the gold at the U20 World Championships in 2022, was able to score points on Hedayati when he hit an arm-throw. However, even in that bout, the Iranian never looked in any trouble.

Hedayati's active wrestler makes it difficult for his opponents to get him in forced par terre, making it difficult for them to score.

### Iran to send 14 athletes to 2025 Asian Winter Games

TEHRAN – A total of 14 athletes will represent Iran at the 9th Asian Winter Games Harbin 2025.

Iranian athletes will compete in three disciplines: alpine, cross-country and ski mountaineering.

Sports minister Ahmad Donyamali will accompany the Iranian delegation in the Games.

A multi-sport event will be held in Harbin, Heilongjiang, China from Feb. 7 to 14. This will be the second time that Harbin will host the event and the third time China has hosted the Asian Winter Games.

### Iram pitted with India at 2024 Asian Roll Ball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran discovered its rivals at the fourth edition of the Asian Roll Ball Championship.

Team Melli has been drawn in Pool A along with India, Sri Lanka, Qatar, Myanmar and Malaysia.

Pool B consists of Nepal, Oman, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Bhutan.

Roll ball is a game played between two teams and is a unique combination of roller skates, basketball, handball, and throwball.

The competition will be held in Goa, India from December 16 to 19.

### Mehrzaad helps Iran sitting volleyball win gold at Paris

TEHRAN – As the end of the year approaches, now is the perfect time to go back and relive the 10 days of incredible competition at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has shared the top moments from the Games.

Iran's Morteza Mehrzaad needs no introduction to sitting volleyball fans. At 2.46 meters, he was the tallest athlete in Paris and the star of the Iranian men's team that captured their third straight gold at the Games.

He was Iran's top point scorer in the 3-1 victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina in the final. Mehrzaad also led Iran to gold at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

He was diagnosed at a young age with acromegaly, a rare condition due to excessive growth hormone.

Mehrzaad's towering height has been a crucial asset for Iran's sitting volleyball team for years, compelling rival teams to reconsider their strategies.

### Tractor steal the show in Iran football league

TEHRAN – Tabriz-based Tractor have continued their impressive start to the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL), defeating Malavan away to maintain their position at the top of the table.

The team's unbeaten away record this season has been nothing short of extraordinary. Despite losing home games to Zob Ahan and Foolad and being knocked out of the Hazfi Cup by Gol Gohar, Tractor's 100% away win rate has propelled them to the summit of the PGPL with 28 points.

Tractor's dominance extends beyond the team's collective performance. Individually, players have been setting records. Goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand leads the league with eight clean sheets, while Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh, Mehdi Hashemnejad, and Tomislav Strkalj share the top scorer honors with five goals each. Notably, Hosseinzadeh also leads the league in assists.

In another significant match, Sepahan defeated defending champions Persepolis 2-1, solidifying their position in second place with 27 points.

The top of the PGPL table is looking different this season. With Tractor and Sepahan performing exceptionally well, and both Tehran giants, Persepolis and Esteghlal, facing challenges, there is a real possibility that the championship trophy could leave Tehran for the first time since 2015 when Esteghlal Khuzestan claimed the title.

Tractor, Sepahan, and even Foolad Khuzestan are all emerging as strong contenders for the championship. As the season progresses, it will be fascinating to see if these teams can maintain their current form and prevent the traditional powerhouses from reclaiming their dominance.

## Tehran denies reports of decline in crude oil exports

TEHRAN – The head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has dismissed reports circulating on social media claiming a decline in the country's crude oil exports as "false and baseless."

Speaking on a televised program late Monday, Hamid Bovard, the head of NIOC, said, "Iran's crude oil exports remain at the same levels as before."

"We are in a good position regarding crude oil sales and exports," Bovard added, emphasizing there is no cause for concern over the current trajectory of Iran's oil trade.

Refuting allegations of reduced exports, Bovard stated, "The claims of a decline are simply untrue."

His remarks came in response to recent reports on social media suggesting a drop in Iran's crude oil sales and export levels.

Iran, one of the largest oil producers in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), has faced ongoing challenges in maintaining its export volumes amid U.S.-led sanctions targeting the country's energy sector.

## 'Rasht-Astara railway a top priority for Iran's logistics network'

TEHRAN – Iran's Ministry of Transport and Urban Development has identified the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway as a top logistical priority to enhance regional connectivity, a senior official said.

Saeed Rasouli, acting deputy for transportation at the ministry, described the country's comprehensive transport plan as a valuable logistical framework based on territorial planning, integration, and efficiency.

"The overall structure of this project has been defined, but engaging the private sector and transport associations is essential to its successful execution."

I will regularly hold discussions with these sectors to gather their input," Rasouli stated,

Despite the restrictions, Iran has reportedly managed to maintain oil sales through alternative markets, including shipments to Asia, particularly China, which remains a key buyer of Iranian crude.

In recent weeks, unconfirmed reports suggested a slight reduction in Iranian oil shipments due to logistical bottlenecks and increased global competition. However, Iranian officials have repeatedly denied any significant impact on production or exports, affirming that the country's oil industry continues to operate stably.

Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad previously underscored the ministry's plans to ensure stability in the country's oil production and export operations, saying there is "no significant cause for concern" in this regard. He noted that efforts to sustain production levels and diversify trade partnerships remain a top priority for the government.

Iran's ability to navigate sanctions and maintain exports has been closely watched by global energy markets, as its output plays a crucial role in regional and international supply dynamics.

emphasizing the need for proper implementation of the strategy.

Highlighting progress on the Rasht-Astara railway, Rasouli said the project remains a key logistical priority for Iran, as it would further integrate the country's rail network with neighboring states.

"Expanding rail connections to border regions and linking them to neighboring countries' networks is critical and has the full support of the government," he noted.

Rasouli added that a recent high-level meeting demonstrated advancements in the project's technical, financial, and legal aspects, underscoring its significance for Iran's regional trade and logistics goals.

## Artificial intelligence to boost Iran's petrochemical industry

TEHRAN – Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology has announced plans to introduce innovative artificial intelligence tools into the petrochemical industry to drive its development, Mehr News Agency reported.

Hossein Afshin, speaking at a press conference during the third Petrofan event, emphasized the vital role of the oil and petrochemical sectors in driving the country's economic growth and national revenue.

"When we talk about oil and petrochemicals, we are discussing foreign currency earnings and national progress. While technology advances rapidly, our focus remains on petrochemicals as a key income-generating sector," Afshin said.

He stressed that without investment in research and development, industries are doomed to stagnation.

Afshin acknowledged that while the petrochemical industry is a major driver of Iran's economy, it still faces challenges, including underdevelopment in some downstream sectors. Additionally, the proportion of investment in research and development remains low compared to the size of the industry.

"Today, we aim to apply cutting-edge artificial intelligence tools in the petrochemical sector to foster its growth and development," he added.

In mid-November, the head of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said that completing the value chain and developing complementary industries is going to ensure a balanced and sustained development of the country's petrochemical industry.

"The development of the industry in all sectors must be pursued seriously, and for this purpose, all the people active in the petrochemical industry must pay attention to the development of complementary industries according to the existing capacities in the country," Hassan Abbaszadeh said in a meeting with NPC officials.

Stating that the provincial development of complementary industries, in addition to job creation, can create more added value, he said:

"The development of downstream industries should be pursued and implemented seriously, and the National Petrochemical Company is ready for any cooperation in this regard."

Emphasizing the existence of suitable capacities for investment in complementary industries, Abbaszadeh said: "The portfolio of petrochemical products can be diversified with the cooperation of holdings and petrochemical companies."

Based on Iran's seventh National Development Plan (2022-2027), the country's petrochemical production capacity is planned to increase by eight percent to reach 130 million tons.

The Islamic Republic is also going to invest over \$40 billion in the petrochemical industry for the eighth National Development plan to further expand the mentioned sector and complete its value chain.

Currently, Iran accounts for 2.8 percent of the world's petrochemical capacity and about 28 percent of the capacity of this industry in the region, and with the plans made, the capacity of the petrochemical industry will increase significantly in the horizon of the seventh development plan.

According to the latest data released by the NPC, the capacity of Iran's petrochemical production will reach 103 million tons by the end of the current Iranian year (late March 2025).

Also, considering that about 60 petrochemical projects are planned to go operational during the seventh National Development Plan, 35 million tons will be added to the country's petrochemical capacity by 2027.

However, in order to achieve development goals, set for the seventh and eighth National Development Plan, the country needs at least \$70 billion of investment annually. Achieving this figure and realizing the mentioned target is a focal point for cooperation between the government and the petrochemical industry because the petrochemical industry alone cannot achieve the mentioned goal and requires government assistance to attract the necessary funds.

# Iran-China non-oil trade stands at \$21.4b in 8 months

TEHRAN – The value of non-oil trade between Iran and China stood at \$21.4 billion in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 – November 20), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Foroud Asgari said that importing non-oil goods worth \$9.9 billion from Iran, China was the first destination of Iranian products in the mentioned eight-month period.

He also announced that by exporting non-oil products valued at \$11.5 billion to Iran, China was the second source of import for Iran in the first eight months of the present year.

As previously announced by the former head of the IRICA, the value of non-oil trade between Iran and China stood at \$18.8 billion in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21).

Mohammad Rezvani said that Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$8.6 billion to China in the seven-month period, adding that China was the top export destination of Iran in that time span.

The official also announced that Iran has imported goods worth \$10.2 billion from China in the first seven months of this year.

China was the second top source of import for Iran in the mentioned time span, he added.

In a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Cong Peiwu on October 15, Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati emphasized the importance of implementing the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) signed between Iran and China.

In the meeting, held at the place of the ministry, the Iranian minister followed up on the negotiations that took place during the BRICS Economic Ministers' Meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, stressing the importance of implementing the MOUs between the two countries.

He also considered the two countries' Joint Economic Committee as a suitable platform for negotiations on economic, trade, and investment cooperation, and welcomed the holding of the 19th Joint Economic Committee in Tehran.

Cong Peiwu, for his part, stated that Beijing aims to expedite the implementation of the MOUs and enhance practical cooperation to deepen relations between the two countries.

Both sides also highlighted the commitment of their statesmen to comprehensive development, expressing hope that consultations between senior officials of Iran and China will continue to expand bilateral relations.

In late September, Hemmati had also met and held talks with Chinese Minister of Finance Lan Fo'an, during which the two sides



emphasized the implementation of the two countries' long-term strategic partnership plan.

Hemmati met with Fo'an on the sidelines of the 9th ministerial meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) members in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

In addition to the issues related to the cooperation of the two countries in AIIB, the two sides discussed the most important issues related to bilateral relations, especially the follow-up of the results of previous agreements.

Holding the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting in the new future was another topic discussed by the two officials.

In this meeting, the ministers of the two countries emphasized that Iran and China have put a more serious and deeper implementation of the comprehensive long-term strategic plan of the two countries on their agenda and will continue this path in the official interactions of the two countries until concrete practical achievements are reached.

Also, in a meeting with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Head Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi on October 28, Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Cong Peiwu emphasized that his country is willing to strengthen trade ties with Iran in all fields.

The ambassador emphasized the importance of enhancing trade cooperation between Iran and China.

He highlighted the necessity of developing trade relations across all economic sectors and expressed China's willingness to strengthen trade exchanges with Iran in every field.

Dehghan Dehnavi, for his part, emphasized that trade cooperation between Iran and China is at its highest level, adding that the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran is keen to enhance and grow constructive trade relations between the two countries.

Additionally, he highlighted that Iran's membership in regional agreements like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will facilitate trade cooperation.

Dehnavi also underscored the importance of developing bilateral ties through international exhibitions, technology transfer, and commercial advancements in the industrial and mining sectors.

It is worth mentioning that Mo-

hammad Aghajani, the head of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), was also present at the meeting and shared his insights on developing joint cooperation between Iran and China in the mining and mineral industries.

He emphasized the importance of transferring modern technologies from China to Iran, noting that this updated knowledge would enhance productivity in mining and enable the processing of mineral products with higher added value.

Moreover, he pointed out that sharing knowledge and experiences between mining experts and engineers from both countries could help improve skills and standards in the industry.

Iran and China officially signed the document for 25-year comprehensive cooperation in March 2021.

The document was signed between Iran's former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Back in December 2022, Iran and China finalized 16 MOUs under the framework of the two countries' strategic 25-year agreement.

The MOUs were signed in an Iran-China comprehensive cooperation program summit which was held in Tehran on December 13 in the presence of Iran's former First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber and China's Vice Premier Hu Chunhua.

The summit was focused on four areas explored by four committees between the two countries with the aim of paving the way for the implementation of the 25-year agreement.

Iran and China also signed 20 memoranda of understanding in the presence of the presidents of the two countries in Beijing in mid-February, 2023.

Also, a meeting between Hormozgan economic operators and Cong Peiwu, China's Ambassador to Iran, was held last week to explore opportunities for economic, cultural, and trade cooperation between the two nations.

Speaking at the meeting, Mohammadreza Safa, head of the Hormozgan Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the province's investment potential in maritime and mining industries, saying: "We hope the challenges facing

Hormozgan's economic operators will be resolved. Our request is to facilitate visa issuance for business and tourism professionals to streamline processes."

He emphasized the Chamber's readiness to send trade delegations to China and welcome Chinese investors to Hormozgan.

China's Ambassador Cong Peiwu underscored the province's strategic significance for trade relations, calling Hormozgan "one of the best regions" to expand economic and investment partnerships.

"China's economic growth, which has secured the second global ranking in recent years, benefits not only China but also other nations, including Iran," Cong stated.

He noted that diplomatic ties, strengthened since 1971, reached a milestone with the 25-year cooperation agreement signed in 2016. Focus on agriculture, seafood exports, and cultural collaboration

Cong highlighted the agricultural and food sectors as key areas for enhanced cooperation, stressing the potential for exporting Iranian produce, such as fruits, dried fruits, and seafood, to China.

"Chinese consumers have a strong preference for seafood, creating significant opportunities for Iranian products in the Chinese market," he said.

Addressing educational and cultural exchanges, the envoy pointed out that Chinese universities offer favorable conditions for Iranian students, while Chinese students also show interest in studying in Iran. "The presence of Chinese students at the University of Hormozgan strengthens cultural ties," he added.

The ambassador further emphasized maritime transportation as a vital area for cooperation, particularly through the revival of maritime trade routes known as the "Maritime Silk Road." He described these routes as essential for bolstering sustainable trade between the two countries.

The ambassador acknowledged external pressures on China-Iran relations, asserting their resilience. "The ties between our two countries are stronger than ever. We do not support financial warfare of any kind. The future of Iran-China cooperation is bright, with economic, cultural, and trade relations as top priorities," Cong stated.

During the meeting, the strategic capacities of Bandar Abbas and Jask were introduced as key economic hubs, with Hormozgan officials reiterating the province's readiness to attract Chinese investors.

The discussions laid the groundwork for further initiatives to capitalize on economic, cultural, and academic opportunities between Iran and China.

## Iran highlights youth empowerment, innovation at annual industry festival

TEHRAN – Iran's 18th Festival of Young Producers and Managers, alongside the 16th event honoring prominent figures in industry, mining, and trade, was held in Tehran.

In this event, the organizers emphasized the critical role of youth empowerment, innovation, and efforts to prevent brain drain, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

In a keynote address at the event organized by the Iranian Young Industry, Mining, and Trade House, ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh underscored the need for greater support of young entrepreneurs to foster "hope" and "vitality" across the nation.

"Today, Iran more than ever needs a sense of optimism among its youth, who are the builders

of our future," Hassanzadeh said, commending the government for appointing younger individuals to key positions in recent months. He emphasized that promoting fairness and equal opportunity among the younger generation requires both state policies and active engagement from entrepreneurial youth.

Hassanzadeh acknowledged persistent challenges hindering young Iranians from finding their footing, despite widespread access to higher education. He pointed to gaps in practical, skill-based training and broader socio-cultural issues as contributing factors.

"Entrepreneurial youth and young managers hold a dual social responsibility. Not only must they succeed in their fields, but they must also guide and lead others who require mentorship,"

he added.

The official expressed hope that greater collaboration among young leaders could instill "unprecedented levels of hope and vitality," positioning Iranian youth as global examples of success.

Highlighting concerns over the emigration of skilled workers, the ICCIMA head called for concrete measures to retain talented youth, particularly in the industrial and trade sectors.

"Industry leaders and trade organizations must create effective mechanisms to identify and engage young, skilled professionals in key decision-making positions. When this effort becomes widespread, not only will we retain talent, but we may also reverse migration trends," he stated.

# Israel now occupies “370km<sup>2</sup>” of Syria

From page 1 ▶ According to the Israeli military correspondent Yonon Shalom Yitah, the operation targeted military infrastructure belonging to the Syrian army that was discovered in the area.

Since the fall of the Syrian president, the Israeli army continues to seize more territory in the Arab state, after occupying Jabal Sheikh (Mount Hermon) and the buffer zone in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

The occupation forces are now only 15 kilometers away from the international highway between Damascus and Beirut.

They have also seized the most significant freshwater sources in southern Syria, located along the Yarmouk River.

For decades, a large portion of Syrian households and businesses have relied on these basins along the Yarmouk River for sanitized water supplies.

The Israeli occupation continues its attacks on military positions to neutralize Syria's combat capability.

The Israeli army reported that its attacks over the past few days have “severely damaged Syria's air defense system,” destroying “more than 90% of strategic surface-to-air missiles.”

Meanwhile, Israeli occupation



Israeli occupation forces operating in Syria

forces continue a ground invasion into southern Syria, expanding its control over new Syrian villages along the border with Lebanon.

Sources told regional media that Israeli occupation forces have brought in engineering equipment towards the slopes of Jabal Sheikh (Mount Hermon) in a bid to dig trenches and prevent any potential connection with Lebanese territories.

The same sources say it is called a “gap” because this area served as a main supply route for the Lebanese resistance Hezbollah before 2011.

This was discussed during the

recent war on Lebanon, as the Israeli occupation regime sought to prevent the Lebanese resistance's access to it.

Military experts say Hezbollah is no longer dependent on a land route with Syria to acquire weapons.

During the two-month Israeli war on Lebanon, Hezbollah drones proved the most effective in evading the Iron Dome and more advanced Israeli air defense systems.

It was Hezbollah drones that left around 100 Israeli troops injured at a training camp for the elite 8200 Unit in the city of Bin-yamina. Hezbollah drones were also responsible for the damage

inflicted on the house of the Israeli Prime Minister during the war.

The supply of Hezbollah drones is widely believed to be homegrown, which means the resistance in Lebanon can manufacture more UAVs at a faster speed to replenish its stockpile.

Hezbollah is also believed to have acquired the military knowledge to indigenously manufacture short, medium, and long-range missiles to preserve Lebanese sovereignty, experts say.

Furthermore, analysts believe Hezbollah has only used a fraction of its long-range missiles, as was evident in the last days of the Israeli war on Lebanon when Tel Aviv came under extensive missile attack.

All signs indicate the cabinet of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has exposed the lack of resistance by the new interim Syrian government to expand the illegal Israeli occupation further.

On Sunday, the occupation regime decided to double its illegal settler population squatting on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

All pretexts about ending a supply route to Hezbollah are widely believed to be excuses to grab and annex more Syrian land.

## Palestinians' enduring resilience forces Israel to seek truce

From page 1 ▶ In the initial phase, Israeli forces would pull back from certain Palestinian urban areas, enabling a significant number of Palestinians to return to their residences.

It is expected to lead to a massive increase in aid to Gaza, which is on the verge of famine. Israel has largely obstructed the delivery of essentials such as food to the Gaza Strip, in particular to the north of the Palestinian territory.

Since Israel launched a ground incursion into Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah in May, it has closed the enclave's Rafah crossing with Egypt. The ceasefire agreement is set to pave the ground for a re-opening of this crossing.

The parties involved would then engage in negotiations for a permanent agreement. These talks would include the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and the release of any remaining captives held in Gaza.

Last week, Israeli war minister Israel Katz told his American counterpart Lloyd Austin that there was “a chance” for an agreement that would allow for the release of all captives.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition have so far derailed talks aimed at concluding a ceasefire.

Netanyahu ordered his army to launch war on Gaza after Hamas carried out the Al-Aqsa Storm Operation, a surprise attack in southern Israel on October 7, 2023. More than 1,100 people were killed and about 250 others were taken captive during the Hamas attack.

Hamas freed more than 100 captives following a swap deal in November last year. Dozens of the captives still remain in Gaza. Several captives were released following Israel's brutal raids in Gaza and the rest have lost their lives as a result of the regime's strikes on the enclave.

Netanyahu, known as Bibi, has time and again vowed to continue the war until achieving “total victory” over Hamas by “destroying” the group.

Some 14 months after launching the onslaught, he has not only failed to deliver on his promise but hundreds of his troops have been killed at the hands of resistance fighters on the battlefield.

Israeli officials have admitted that the regime won't be able to defeat Hamas.



In August, Netanyahu's former sacked war minister Yoav Gallant dismissed the “total victory” slogan as “nonsense” and “gibberish”.

In June, the Israeli military spokesman expressed skepticism regarding the feasibility of Netanyahu's objective to eliminate Hamas.

“The idea that it is possible to destroy Hamas, to make Hamas vanish — that is throwing sand in the eyes of the public,” Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told Israel's Channel 13. He added, “Hamas is an idea, deeply rooted in the hearts of the residents of Gaza.”

The Israeli military's intelligence and the American intelligence community have already cast doubt about whether Netanyahu's war aim of defeating Hamas can be achieved.

## Israel has butchered more than 45,000 people in Gaza but it has not succeeded in breaking the resolve of Palestinians.

Israel has been unable to defeat Hamas. But his army has slaughtered tens of thousands of Palestinians since the start of the war.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza announced on Monday that the death toll from Israel's brutal war on the

enclave has topped the grim milestone of 45,000. The fatalities include 17,000 children.

The slaughter of Palestinian civilians has deepened Israel's international isolation. The regime's failure to release captives has also developed domestic rifts.

Israel and its main supporter, the United States, are now desperately trying to establish a ceasefire. A potential ceasefire may assist Israel in extricating itself from the complexities of the Gaza conflict; however, it will also highlight the strength of the Palestinian resistance more prominently than before.

## Hezbollah able to turn challenges into opportunities

From page 1 ▶ In the long term, Hezbollah will seemingly give priority to manufacturing weapons and equipment inside Lebanon. Further, it may use the Yemeni supply model via the Red Sea or the one followed by the Palestinian resistance in Gaza and the West Bank, which has significantly succeeded despite the blockade.

During a speech on February 16, 2022, Martyr Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah (RA), Hezbollah's Secretary-General, revealed that the resistance had long ago begun manufacturing drones and precision-guided missiles inside Lebanon. He added: “The [Israeli] enemy knows that the resistance is receiving qualitative weapons from Iran, so it is trying to stop this through bombing in Syria.” Hezbollah was founded in the early 1980s amid the 15-year Lebanese civil war. It gained momentum by opposing imperialist influence in West Asia until it forced the Israeli army to withdraw from southern Lebanon in May

2000, and posed an existential threat to it during the July 2006 and September 2024 wars.

On 30 September 2024, following the martyrdom of Sayyed Nasrallah, Sheikh Naim Qassem asserted that Hezbollah “We know that the battle will be long, we are prepared to face any possibility, and we will emerge victorious from this battle.”

Hezbollah has, in advance, drawn up plans for scenarios, which may hinder its traditional supply route; thus its engineers have, over the past years, developed short, medium, and ballistic missiles, launchers, rocket launchers, suicide drones, and various military technologies.

In addition, Hezbollah can assemble, reproduce, and develop military components, including all types of shells and missiles, explosive devices, and other types of warships and sea mines. This reduces the cost and

the resistance can guarantee the outcome. In parallel, Hezbollah has paid close attention to intensifying the training of its combat, technical and planning cadres in engineering, electronics and artificial intelligence.

In an article published on November 3, 2024, The Times revealed that Britons were fighting alongside the Israeli army in the war against Hezbollah. A British paratrooper reserve soldier recorded his diary during the 8 days he spent in Lebanon, noting that most of the Hezbollah fighters he encountered had undergone training in Iran and gained combat experience in Syria.

The British soldier describes them as “the best of the best, the cream of the crop”. He was part of two brigades that attempted to invade Lebanese towns near the border on October 20. Each brigade includes up to 2,000 soldiers. He recounted that while he was preparing to enter a building, they discovered that it was rigged with explosives.

## 13,000 students have been killed in Israeli genocidal war on Gaza

The Palestinian Ministry of Education says 12,799 students have been killed and another 20,942 injured since the beginning of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on October 7, 2023.

The ministry said in a statement that the number of students who were killed in the Gaza

Strip since the beginning of the aggression reached more than 12,681, and those who were injured reached 20,311, while in the West Bank 118 students were killed and 631 others were injured, in addition to the arrest of 538, Wafa news agency reported.

It also affirmed that 598 teachers and administrators

were killed and 3,801 were injured in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and more than 158 were detained in the West Bank.

The ministry also stated that 425 government schools, universities and their buildings, and 65 affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA),

were bombed and vandalized in the Gaza Strip.

It also confirmed that 788,000 students in the Gaza Strip have been deprived of attending schools and universities since the beginning of the aggression. It added most students suffer from psychological trauma and face difficult health conditions.

## Over 13,500 Israeli soldiers wounded during the Gaza war

Over 13,500 soldiers and officers have been wounded during Israel's war on Gaza, with about 1,500 of them sustaining injuries on two separate occasions, the Israeli war ministry said.

The report highlights that 287 soldiers suffered head injuries, 87 of which are categorized as severe, and 10 soldiers are now

confined to wheelchairs as a result of their wounds, Middle East Eye reported.

Additionally, the ministry stated that 37 percent of the injured personnel sustained limb injuries, with the majority being bone fractures.

Mental health challenges have also emerged as a significant concern, affecting

approximately 5,200 soldiers. Of these, 3,350 are dealing with anxiety, depression, and adjustment difficulties, while 1,300 have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The figures underscore the heavy toll the war has taken on the physical and mental well-being of military personnel.

## 7,000 authors and book workers join 'historic' Israel boycott

The largest boycott against Israeli cultural institutions in history has been endorsed by more than 7,000 authors and book workers, according to the Palestine Festival of Literature, an annual event held across the occupied West Bank.

It said the signatories include winners of the Nobel Prize, Booker Prize, Pulitzer Prize and other top international awards, along with editors at each of the Big Five publishing houses and many independent publishers.

Meanwhile, pro-Palestine activ-

ists threw leaflets in a shopping center in the German capital, Berlin, to protest Israel's war on Gaza.

During their action on Monday, they expressed their rejection of normal Christmas shopping while a “live-streamed genocide” is continuing in the besieged and bombarded territory.

A video published by a German pro-Palestine page on Instagram, verified by Al Jazeera, showed the moment activists threw a large number of leaflets before being asked to stop.

## Beijing blasts EU sanctions for 'smearing' Chinese firms

China has consistently opposed unilateral sanctions that lack a basis in international law and are not authorized by the UN Security Council. The country expressed strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to the EU's unjustified sanctions against Chinese companies, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated on Tuesday.

This statement came in response to the imposition of “fully-fledged sanctions” on Chinese entities and individuals, including asset freezes

and visa bans, by the EU for their alleged involvement in supporting Russia during the Ukraine crisis.

On the issue of Ukraine, Lin emphasized that China has always worked to promote peace and dialogue, has never supplied weapons to the parties involved in the conflict, and strictly controls the export of dual-use items. Additionally, he stressed that China maintains the world's strictest controls on the export of unmanned aerial vehicles.

## Russia's Medvedev threatens punishment over attack on senior general Kirillov

The Kyiv regime will pay dearly for the death of Chief of Russia's Radiation, Chemical and Biological Protection Troops, Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev warned on Tuesday.

“Attempts to intimidate our nation, stop the Russian offensive or sow fear are doomed. Certain punishment awaits Banderite Nazis, including the top military and political leaders of a crumbling country,” Medvedev's office quoted the Russian politician as saying in a message of condolences to the family and friends of the fallen Russian general, TASS reported.

Medvedev condemned the attack, saying, “This terrorist attack demonstrates the agony of the Banderite regime, which is struggling to justify its shaky existence in the eyes of its Western patrons and prolong the deadly hostilities while delivering cowardly attacks on civilians in cities and towns.”

The senior Russian security official described Kirillov as a true patriot of Russia. “Igor [Kirillov] was a military leader known for his unwavering devotion to his duties. I knew him as a dedicated professional and



a reliable, honest, and responsible person,” he added.

On the morning of Tuesday, an explosive device planted in a scooter exploded near the entrance of a residential building on Ryazansky Avenue in Moscow, investigators revealed. Kirillov, 54, and his aide were killed in the blast. The Russian Investigative Committee has classified the explosion as a terrorist attack, Committee Spokeswoman Svetlana Petrenko told TASS.

## Tourism minister attends Ancient Civilizations Forum in Yerevan



TEHRAN – The Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, traveled to Yerevan, Armenia, on Tuesday morning to attend the 8th Ministerial Meeting of the Ancient Civilizations Forum.

The Ancient Civilizations Forum, established in 2017, is made up of ten countries: Iran, Armenia, Italy, Bolivia, Peru, China, Iraq, Egypt, Mexico, and Greece.

In 2023, Iran assumed the presidency and hosting responsibilities for the Forum. In previous meetings, the Islamic Republic proposed measures to combat the trafficking of cultural heritage and advocated for the return of stolen and looted historical artifacts.

Yerevan is scheduled to host the Forum on December 18.

## China extends visa-free transit policy to 10 days

China has tripled the amount of time visitors can spend in the country without a visa in yet another move to entice more foreign tourists.

The Chinese State Administration of Immigration announced the country will expand its visa-free layover period to 240 hours (10 days) across the board.

The transit program, a popular “hack” for foreign tourists who want to visit China but find the visa process too complicated or overwhelming, allows visitors who have existing flight bookings from China to a third country or territory to snag a visa on arrival at a Chinese airport and travel for a short period before departing.

Citizens of more than 50 countries, including the United States, are eligible for the program.

China has made no secret of its desire to increase the number of international visitors and has made several major policy changes since reopening following the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2024, the number of foreigners entering mainland China in the third quarter of the year reached a record high since tracking began in 2014, according to data from the National Immigration Administration.

Passport holders from 38 countries can enter China visa-free for up to 30 days, including France, Malaysia, New Zealand, Japan and Switzerland.

However, the United States is not among them. Until 2023, U.S. citizens seeking a China travel visa had to confirm a hotel booking, tour itinerary and flight reservation before applying for a visa, but those requirements have since been dropped.

Foreigners eligible to visit under the new 240-hour transit policy are permitted to travel between 24 provincial regions, up from 19 previously. While a few of those provinces limit access to certain cities, most permit travel across the whole region, covering tourist hot spots like Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Guangzhou.

(Source: CNN)

## Abu Dhabi awarded UN Tourism QUEST certification for excellence in destination management

UN Tourism has recognized the Department of Culture and Tourism of Abu Dhabi (DCT-Abu Dhabi) for its excellence in destination management.

Abu Dhabi becomes the sixth Destination Management Organization (DMO) in the world and the first in the Middle East region to receive the UN Tourism QUEST certification, testament to its ongoing dedication to excellence in governance and commitment to sustainability.

DCT-Abu Dhabi scored exceptionally high in the three areas of assessment of the certification after receiving 120 hours of capacity building sessions delivered by UN Tourism Academy, which included courses on: Sustainable Tourism; Governance for Sustainable Tourism; Quality and Competitiveness; and

Sustainable Tourism Practices for Destination Management.

These courses were complemented with eight one-to-one training sessions for DCT-Abu Dhabi officials to advance their understanding of UN Tourism QUEST assessment criteria and indicators.

The QUEST certification is an example of UN Tourism's leading work in the field of tourism standards to improve destination management and governance and highlights the importance and success of public-private-community partnerships, as well as horizontal and vertical cooperation in institutional governance.

The Certification is valid for four years with the possibility of renewal.

(Source: UN Tourism)

# Windcatchers in Iran: a cooling marvel of ancient ingenuity

By Afshin Majlesi

Imagine living in an oasis house during the scorching summer heat. It might sound unbearable, but thanks to the ingenuity of ancient engineers, towering windcatchers transformed these homes into havens of comfort!

Iran's rich architectural heritage shines through its ingenious creations that harmonize with nature, and among these, the windcatchers (or badgirs) stand out as a testament to ancient engineering wisdom.

These relatively tall, decorative structures have been a sustainable solution to cooling and ventilation in arid climates, predating modern air conditioning for centuries and even for millennials.

They are chimney-like towers with open sides designed to capture breezes high above ground level and direct them into the buildings below.

By channeling cool air downward and expelling warm air through opposite vents, they provide natural ventilation and reduce indoor temperatures by an impressive 8 to 12 °C. In some cases, the incoming air is directed over water, commonly the flowing subterranean aqueducts or qanats that pass under vast mansions or big houses, offering additional cooling.



Even on still days, when there is a complete absence of wind, uses passive solar energy to enhance natural ventilation through the convection of air heated by the sun. This way, warm air rises through it, drawing down cooler air into the building from the other side.

The origins of windcatchers trace back thousands of years, with early examples possibly appearing in Persian temples and even Ancient Egyptian art.

Iran's central city of Yazd, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, is home to some of the most iconic and well-preserved windcatchers. A top example is Yazd's Dowlatabad garden, which is home to a towering 33-metre windcatcher, one of the tallest in

the world.

This city, surrounded by desert, is often celebrated as the pinnacle of windcatcher architecture, showcasing both its functional brilliance and cultural significance.

A visit to Yazd, with its skyline dotted by these magnificent windcatchers, offers a glimpse into a world where tradition and sustainability converge.

### Design and functionality

Windcatchers typically consist of three main components: a shaft, which serves as a channel for air; a wind scoop, located at the top, which captures and directs the wind, and a diffuser, at the base, which evenly distributes the air throughout the building.

## Four restoration projects undertaken to preserve Isfahan mosque

TEHRAN – Four major restoration projects have been completed to address the emergency structural issues facing the Seyyed Mosque in Isfahan.

The Qajar-era monument has suffered significant damage due to uneven subsidence in the area, according to Amir Karamzadeh, the tourism chief of Isfahan province, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The worsening condition is linked to cracks and structural instability caused by asymmetric ground subsidence. Experts attribute these issues partly to the drying of traditional water channels connected to the Zayandeh Rud River, which remains dry for much of the year.

Karamzadeh says monitoring efforts for the mosque began last year after clear signs of subsidence were observed in the structure. “Sci-

entific analyses revealed that the subsidence phenomenon is most pronounced in the western section of the mosque, particularly in the prayer hall and dome chamber,” he stated.

As mentioned by the official, in a period starting from the winter of last year through the first half of the current year, four critical restoration projects were implemented to mitigate the damage.

“Restoration and sealing of the roofs of the prayer halls and the southern dome chamber to prevent further structural decay; repair of intricate moqarnas tilework on the western and eastern walls of the mosque.”

Other majors were the reinforcement of the flooring in the southern prayer hall and dome chamber, areas severely impacted by unstable soil and subsidence, the official added.

The ancient city of Isfahan, situated at the crossroads of Iran's north-south and east-west trade routes, reached its zenith between the 9th and 18th centuries. During the Safavid era, it became Iran's capital under Shah Abbas the Great.

Moreover, the ancient city was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. It is filled with many architectural wonders, such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The Persian proverb “Isfahan nesf-e-jahan ast” (Isfahan is half the world) reflects the city's cultural and historical prominence.

## Historical inscription deciphered in Yazd

TEHRAN – A historical inscription located the entrance of the Hosseinian House in Yazd has been fully deciphered as part of a local calligraphy workshop.

The Hosseinian House, also known as Tagh-e Bolandha, is a distinguished and well-preserved structure from the Ilkhanid period, situated in Yazd's historic district, according to Seyyed Mohammad Rastegari, the tourism chief of Yazd province.

The inscription that bears Kufic

and Persian scripts, is particularly significant as it features Iranian phrases and poetic expressions, emphasizing the cultural richness of the period, the official said.

“The inscription was first discovered in 2005 by a provincial team of cultural heritage experts specializing in biological damage control for historical buildings.”

Then, a team of restoration experts began the task of deciphering it, with parts initially translated by the late Abdullah Qouchani.

Recently, further progress was made by calligraphy masters Zahra Rashidi and Aliyeh-Sadat Najafi during the Kufic workshop, the official explained.

The inscription includes poetic lines such as:

“May your days, months, and years be auspicious,

May Norouz, Mehregan, autumn, and spring bring joy to you.”

The inclusion of these verses highlights the cultural connection to traditional Iranian festivals, such as Mehregan, which was recently inscribed on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Given its historical and cultural value, experts emphasize the need for the complete restoration and stabilization of the inscription to make it accessible to the public. The Hosseinian House and its inscription offer a unique window into the artistic and linguistic heritage of Iran's Ilkhanid era.

### A don't miss destination

In July 2017, the historical core of Yazd, the provincial capital, was named a UNESCO World Heritage site. Yazd is regularly referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a “don't miss” destination by almost all of its visitors.

The city is full of mudbrick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

Cultural heritage experts believe that Yazd is a living testimo-

ny to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

Furthermore, the use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs through the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

The historical core of Yazd is chockfull of mudbrick houses, bazaars, public bathhouses, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and centuries-old gardens. From the divine point of view, the city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

Yazd is home to numerous qanats which have supplied water to agricultural and permanent settlements for thousands of years. The man-carved underground qanat system relies on snow-fed streams flowing down the foothills of surrounding mountains.

The earliest water supply to Yazd is estimated to date from the Sassanid era (224 to 651 CE). However, many others have been continually repaired and used over time, and most surviving Ab-Anbars (traditional mudbrick cisterns) can today be traced to the late Safavid and Qajar periods.



EMBASSY OF INDIA  
TEHRAN

### JOB VACANCY

Embassy of India in Tehran invites applications for the post of one Messenger. The essential qualifications for the post are as following:

#### Messenger:

- Proficiency in English and Farsi, both, in writing and speaking
- Familiar with MS Office and IT skills
- Good inter-personal and public relation skills
- Age: 22-35

**Experience:** Minimum 02 years of prior work experience in an organization in an secretarial, administrative, logistics or services role. Past experience of working with Foreign Missions, Government/Private Organizations is an added qualification.

More details at <https://www.indianembassytehran.gov.in>

Applications, along with contact details, CV and recent photograph should be sent to Embassy of India by email ([hoc.tehran@mea.gov.in](mailto:hoc.tehran@mea.gov.in)), with subject “**APPLICATION FOR MESSENGER**” no later than 27.12.2024 (Friday).



EMBASSY OF INDIA  
TEHRAN

### JOB VACANCY

Embassy of India in Tehran invites applications for the post of one Clerk. The essential qualifications for the post are as following:

#### Clerk:

- Proficiency in English and Farsi, both, in writing and speaking
- Proficient in MS Office and IT skills
- Translation skills from English to Farsi and vice versa
- Good inter-personal and public relation skills
- Age : 25 – 35 years

**Experience:** Minimum 04 years of prior work experience in an organization in an administrative/accounts/front-desk role. Past experience of working with Foreign Missions, Government is an added qualification.

More details at <https://www.indianembassytehran.gov.in>

Applications, along with contact details, CV and recent photograph should be sent to Embassy of India by email ([hoc.tehran@mea.gov.in](mailto:hoc.tehran@mea.gov.in)), with subject “**APPLICATION FOR CLERK**” no later than 27.12.2024 (Friday).

# Iran-Cuba health ties 'strategic': official

TEHRAN –Ali Jafarian, a senior advisor to the health minister, has stated that the relations between Iran and Cuba in the health sector are strategic.

"Regarding the status of Cuba as a political partner in the South American region, collaborations between Iran and Cuba is considered to be a strategic relationship," the health ministry's website quoted Jafarian as saying.

The official made the remarks on Monday while addressing the coordination meeting of the 19th Joint Economic Committee Meeting which is scheduled to be held in Havana, the capital of Cuba, from January 4 to 8.

Mohammad-Hossein Niknam, the deputy health minister for international affairs, for his part, said the relationship between Iran and Cuba has always been friendly.

Reviewing the latest status of upcoming joint projects and documents which are scheduled to be signed during the committee meeting, the official said, "In addition to the main document, seven other documents related to organizations have been finalized so far. Also, a list of joint projects in the health sector has been prepared."

In October, Niknam, and the Cuban ambassador to Tehran, Alexis Bandrich Vega, discussed ways to foster cooperation between the two countries.

The officials attended a coordi-



nating meeting to discuss issues for the upcoming Iran-Cuban Joint Economic Committee Meeting.

Referring to the friendly relations, Vega said the main goal of the meeting was to boost solidarity between the two countries, IRNA reported.

"The two countries seek to establish peace not only between Iran and Cuba but among all the countries of the world," the Cuban official stressed.

Sadly, sanctions have made life more difficult for targeted nations due to imposed barriers and restrictive measures, he added.

However, Iran and Cuban relations are growing; Iranian knowledge-based companies will attend an exhibition planned to be held next month in Havana, and the Cuban minister of information and communication technology will pay a visit to Iran next week.

"Holding the joint committee

meeting will bring positive outcomes for the two countries. Cuba is a safe market for Iran. Also, it can be a reliable friend with potential benefits in the long-term for the country.

Niknam, for his part, said the friendly relations between Iran and Cuba are exemplary. There have always been positive interactions between the two countries, but the current relations can be expanded.

The official touched also on the joint projects to develop vaccines during the Covid-19 pandemic.

He expressed optimism that the joint commission will help develop the relations between Iran and Cuba.

**Iran, Cuba discuss joint response to decry U.S. sanctions**

In August, representatives from Iran's Pasteur Institute and the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute convened with their Cu-

ban counterparts to address the impacts and challenges posed by the illegal unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States.

This discussion occurred during the fourth meeting of the working group on the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention (BTWC), held from August 19-23, 2024, in Geneva, Switzerland.

During the meeting, officials from the Razi and Pasteur Institute highlighted Iran's advancements in biological sciences and its collaborative efforts with nations such as Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Uzbekistan, and Cuba in vaccine and serum production, as well as the organization of various training programs.

They also emphasized the difficulties Iran encounters in exercising its international rights due to the sanctions imposed by the United States on the Islamic Republic.

The BTWC, an international treaty that prohibits the development and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, was enacted in March 1975 and has since been ratified by 187 countries.

Nevertheless, the United States undermines the rights of nations to engage in international cooperation and to leverage the advancements in biological sciences, as it imposes unlawful sanctions and disregards its international legal responsibilities in this area.

## Warmer temperature, lower rainfall forecasted



TEHRAN –According to the Metrological Organization, the weather is forecast to get 1 °C warmer than normal, and the precipitations are expected to decrease till the end of next week (December 27).

On December 20 and 21, the maximum temperature will drop, but from then on it will get warmer, ISNA quoted Ahad Vazifteh, an official with Metrological Organization, as saying.

This week, the average temperature from the western to the central parts of the country is between normal and 2 °C below normal. However, in the eastern half of the country, the situation is different.

The temperature in the provinces of Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, South Khorasan, Yazd, Kerman, Semnan, and Sistan-Baluchestan is about 1 to 3 °C, and in western parts of Khorasan Razavi, it is up to 6 °C colder than normal.

Next week, the country is expected to get 1 °C warmer than normal. A warmer air mass

will replace the current cold air.

The temperature in the eastern half of the country, including the provinces of Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, Semnan, and Sistan-Baluchestan will increase by 2-4 °C. The air temperature in the western regions is forecast to be 1-2 °C above normal, the official noted.

The official went on to say that low rainfall is expected this week and next week.

From the beginning of the current water year (September 22) till December 15, the average rainfall was recorded to be about 33 mm, indicating a 36 percent decrease compared to the long-term average which is 53 mm, Vazifteh stated,

In the current water year, all provinces had received low rainfall, except North Khorasan and Mazandaran where precipitations were normal or slightly above normal.

The recorded rainfall in Mazandaran province has amounted to 266 mm compared to the average recorded rainfall of 209 mm, the province has received 57 mm more rain.

Precipitation in East Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, and Tehran provinces have been 56 percent, 67 percent, 57 percent, and 36 percent less than normal.

During the same period, the weather was on average 1.4 °C warmer than normal. Since

November 21, the beginning of the last month of the fall, the recorded temperature has been on average 9.9 °C, about 0.8 °C more than the normal temperature, which is 9.1 °C.

**Over 250mm rain in previous water year**

The previous water year (September 22, 2023 – September 22, 2024) came to an end with receiving 252.7 mm of precipitation, showing a 19 percent increase compared to the year before.

The low precipitations at the beginning of the previous water year were worrisome, but the volume of precipitations improved with the passage of time.

Due to successive years of drought, the increase in rainfall amounts did not compensate water deficit in the country, some provinces are suffering from water shortage, IRNA reported.

A total of 10 provinces received less than normal rainfall.

According to the latest reports, the total amount of recorded rainfall in the previous water year (ended on September 23) amounted to 252.7 mm, which signifies a 19 percent increase compared to 212.9 mm rain received in the water year before (September 2022 – September 2023).

Compared to the long-term figure, 248.7, it shows a two percent increase.

**Next week, the country is expected to get 1 °C warmer than normal.**

## ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

### COVID-19 takes lowest toll on foreign nationals

Iran had the lowest coronavirus cases and mortality among refugees and foreign nationals compared to the population it is hosting, Mehdi Mahmoudi, Director of Citizens and Immigrants Affairs of the Ministry of Interior has said.

Referring to the measures taken for non-Iranian citizens during the pandemic, he said that since the very beginning, when the country became infected with the disease, the community of foreign nationals in our country was no exception to this issue, and prevention programs and necessary measures have been taken for this group.

"We identified foreign nationals in need and tried to provide them with livelihood assistance, as well as health packages and self-protective items needed to prevent the infection," he explained.

### ایران کمترین تلفات کرونا اتباع خارجی را داشته‌است

مهدي محمودي مديرکل امور اتباع و مهاجرین وزارت کشور گفت در خصوص ابتلا به بیماری کرونا در بین اتباع خارجی، ایران کمترین ابتلا و کمترین تلفات را نسبت به جمعیت داشته‌است.

او در گفت‌وگو با ایلنا درباره اقدامات صورت گرفته برای اتباع غیرایرانی در ایام کرونا گفت: از همان ابتدا که کشور درگیر این بیماری شد، جامعه اتباع خارجی هم در کشور ما مستثنی از این موضوع نبود و برنامه‌های پیشگیری و تمهیدات لازم نیز برای این گروه نیز در نظر گرفته شده است.

اتباع غیرایرانی که نیازمند بودند را شناسایی کرده و تلاش کردیم از نظر معیشتی به این گروه نیز کمک‌هایی صورت بگیرد و همچنین بسته‌های بهداشتی و اقلام مورد نیاز پیشگیری از بیماری کرونا در چندین نوبت به آنها ارائه شده است.

## Anti-Narcotics Police attend training workshop on addressing drug-related crimes



TEHRAN –A group of senior police officers of the Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police have attended a training workshop on 'Investigation of Crimes related to Drug Trafficking'.

The five-day specialized training was organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Iran, in coordination with the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ) of the country, in Tehran from September 8 to 12.

The training was conducted by two senior professional instructors from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

The UNODC supports national anti-narcotic forces with advanced skills training; it has consistently supported national partners by organizing a series of training workshops for the Anti-Narcotics Force, the UNODC website reported in a press release on December 17.

This particular workshop aimed to strengthen the operational knowledge and investigative skills of Iranian partners in addressing drug-related crimes.

It was developed as part of UNODC Iran's activities under its Country Partnership Programme with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The content was tailored based on feedback from participants in previous UNODC trainings and consultations with Iranian drug control authorities to identify the most relevant and needed topics.

During the opening session of the event, Alexander Fedulov, UNODC Iran Country Representative, expressed his appreciation to all participants and UNODC's national counterparts. He also expressed hope that similar capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives could be organized in the future, subject to budget availability.

Mohammad Narimani, Interim Director General of the International Relations Office of the DCHQ, for his part, emphasized the importance of holding this event in Tehran and requested the participants to make use of this specialized training event organized for them to the most extent possible.

The Deputy Head of the Anti-Narcotics Police of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Gholamreza Hamidikia, also expressed his gratitude for the continuous support of UNODC and encouraged the attendees to participate interactively by asking questions and sharing knowledge. This specialized training which was designed to cover topics related to the investigation of crimes related to drug trafficking was well received by the participants and assessment of the evaluation of the training workshop and feedback received from the participants evidently indicated that the subjects covered by respected instructors were relevant to their expectations and in general the training session has been evaluated and rated as strongly

fruitful and beneficial.

During the graduation ceremony, Alexander Fedulov presented certificates to the participants from the Islamic Republic of Iran. He thanked the Russian Federation for funding the initiative and acknowledged the Drug Control Headquarters of the Islamic Republic of Iran for their support in organizing the training.

This event was organized as part of the activities foreseen in the framework of Sub-programme '1 Border Management and Illicit Trafficking' of the UNODC Country Partnership Program (2023 – 2026) for the Islamic Republic of Iran through the generous donation of the Russian Federation. It is hoped that with the kind cooperation of the Russian Federation, it will be possible to hold similar training workshops in the future.

**UNODC highlights Iran's substantial efforts in fight against drug trafficking**

The UNODC has lauded the Iranian government for its substantial efforts and steadfast commitment to tackling drug trafficking.

On December 8, Fedulov attended a high-level meeting which was held at the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ) on the occasion of the successful seizure of 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

During the meeting, Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi, Commander of the Iranian Border Guard, shared details of a major drug seizure in Sistan-Baluchestan Province. On September 10, Iranian forces successfully seized 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine.

This operation underscored the relentless commitment of Iran's border forces, who are at the forefront of combating the production and trafficking of drugs, particularly those originating in Afghanistan.

Brigadier General Goudarzi emphasized that the seizure not only reflects the escalating challenges posed by methamphetamine production in the region but also the dedication of Iran's border guards, law enforcement, and customs officials in addressing this issue.

Fedulov, for his part, expressed his gratitude to Iranian authorities for their invaluable contributions to this global challenge.

Fedulov stressed the importance of strengthened regional cooperation, and emphasized the need for further international support to bolster collective efforts in combating drug trafficking across West Asia.

The UNODC Country Representative stated that this successful operation will be presented to the international community as a testament to Iran's noble resolve in combating drug trafficking and its dedication to regional security.

## Winners of Farabi Intl. Award honored

TEHRAN –The winners of the 15th Farabi International Award (FIA) in different national and international sections were honored on Tuesday in Tehran with the presence of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

This year, FIA was held from October 9 to November 21. A total of 2,585 works including 2,222 works in the national section and 383 works in the international section were submitted.

The submitted works were evaluated for the categories of adults (above 35 years) and youths (under 35 years). The 15th edition of the FIA Award recognized eligible researchers in two categories, 'Distinguished Researcher' and 'Distinguished Research'.

A total of 29 scientists and experts from Iran and four from other countries were selected as the top researchers.

The awards were presented in the categories of scientific groups, pioneers of humanities and Islamic studies, top international researchers, development of Quran culture in research and higher education, the best



foreign research, the winner of the peace and friendship award, and the winners of other categories.

The Farabi International Award is held annually by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology of Iran in cooperation with Iran's National Elite Foundation, and the Research Institute for Cultural, Social, and Civilizational Studies.

It aims to identify the most talented researchers in the field of humanities and Islamic sciences and introduce the best works and theories, new methods, and projects in the field of humanities and Islamic sciences among national and international researchers.



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DECEMBER 18, 2024

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*When Allah chooses to favor someone, He makes him the source of satisfying other people's needs.*

**Prophet Muhammad (S)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 17:13 Dawn: 5:39 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:09 (tomorrow)

## Persian edition of "The Little Prince" republished



TEHRAN- The 82nd edition of the Persian translation of French writer and military pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's 1943 novella "The Little Prince" has recently been published.

Amir Kabir is the publisher of the book translated by prominent Iranian translator Mohammad Qazi. The publisher released the first edition in 1954.

"The Little Prince" tells the story of a young prince who travels from his home asteroid, B-612, to explore the universe and learn about life, love, and human nature. The narrative begins with the narrator, a stranded pilot in the Sahara Desert, who encounters the Little Prince. The prince asks the pilot to draw him a sheep, initiating a conversation that reveals the prince's journey and insights.

As the prince recounts his story, he explains that he comes from a small asteroid where he tends to three volcanoes and his beloved rose. His rose, though unique and cherished, is also vain and demanding, leading the prince to feel lonely and confused about love. Seeking understanding, he leaves his asteroid to explore other planets.

The prince visits six other asteroids, each inhabited by a solitary adult representing various flaws of adulthood. He meets a king who believes he rules the universe, a vain man obsessed with admiration, a drunkard who drinks

to forget his shame, a businessman fixated on owning stars, a geographer who values knowledge over experience, and a lamp lighter who mindlessly follows orders. Each encounter reveals the absurdities and emptiness of adult behaviors, emphasizing the prince's longing for companionship and genuine connections.

Finally, the prince arrives on Earth, where he meets a fox, who teaches him valuable lessons about relationships and emotions. The fox explains that true connections are formed through love and commitment, stating, "One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes." This profound realization leads the prince to understand the significance of his bond with his rose, as she is unique because of the love he has poured into her.

The story culminates in a poignant moment when the prince encounters a snake, representing both danger and transformation. The snake offers the prince a way to return to his asteroid, emphasizing the cyclical nature of life and death. The book concludes with the narrator reflecting on loss and the enduring nature of love and friendship.

"The Little Prince" is a philosophical tale that explores themes of childhood innocence, human relationships, and the contrast between the simplicity of a child's perspective and the complexities of adulthood. Through the eyes of the Little Prince, readers are encouraged to reconnect with what truly matters in life: love, friendship, and the beauty of seeing the world with the heart.

"The Little Prince" is one of the most translated and best-selling books in history, with over 140 translations and 150 million copies sold worldwide. Celebrated for its profound themes and enchanting storytelling, it has garnered numerous accolades. The story's universal appeal has led to a wide range of adaptations across various media.

## Cartoon of Day



Gifts For the New Year

Cartoonist: José Alberto Rodríguez Avila from Cuba

# Tehran photo exhibition showcases Palestinian resilience

TEHRAN- A photo exhibition titled "Keys That Last Longer Than Israel" is currently underway at the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran.

The photo-narrative exhibition features works by Iranian photographer Vahab Ramezi, capturing the lives of Palestinians residing in four refugee camps in Lebanon.

In addition to showcasing the photos of the Palestinian camps, this exhibition uniquely pairs images with the narratives of the subjects involved.

From the combination of photographs and narratives presented in this exhibition, a book titled "Return," authored by Sajedah Ebrahimi, will be published and unveiled in the coming days.

Organized by the Solouk Media Art Center, the "Keys That Last Longer Than Israel" exhibition offers images and stories of hope and resilience from people who, despite decades of separation from their homeland, continue to hold onto the keys to their homes as a symbol of their right of return. The exhibition will be open to the public until January 9, 2025.

The Palestinian key, often referred to as the Key of Return, serves as a poignant symbol of the homes lost during the Nakba, referring to the mass expulsion

and flight of Palestinians during the 1948 conflict. When more than half the population of Palestine was displaced, the keys became emblems of the homes they were forced to abandon, as well as their enduring aspiration to return.

This connection to lost properties emphasizes the right to return, a principle deeply embedded within Palestinian identity.

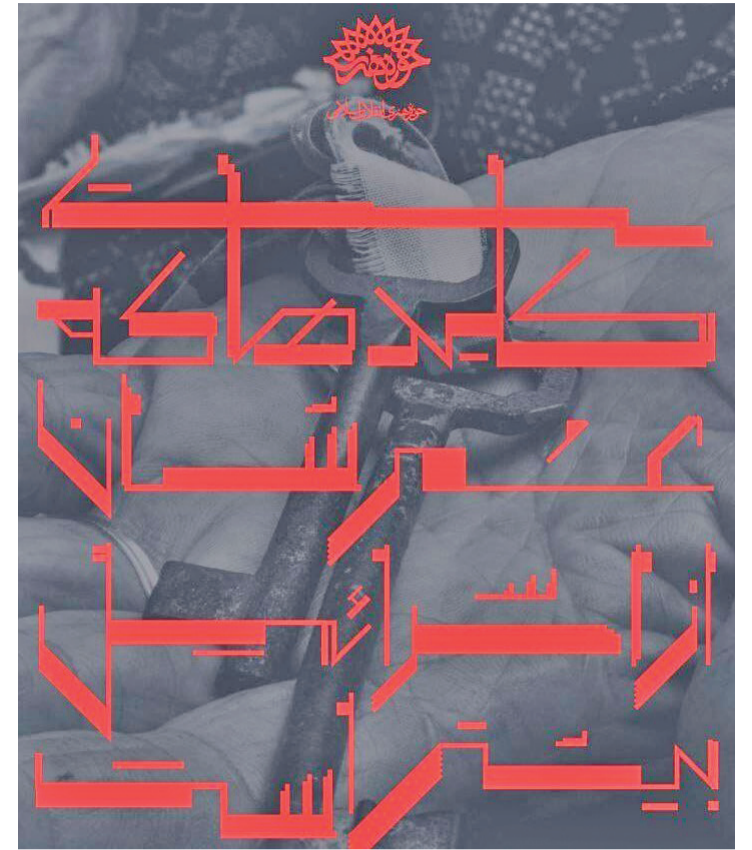
Typically designed in a large, old-fashioned style, these keys have taken on a life of their own as powerful symbols of resistance.

Enlarged replicas are prominently displayed in Palestinian refugee camps and during pro-Palestinian demonstrations worldwide, serving as collective reminders of a shared heritage and collective memory.

The Key of Return is often depicted as a golden key, adorned with intricate designs, encapsulating the desire of Palestinian refugees to reclaim their homeland.

In the context of Palestinian art, literature, and political activism, the key embodies the longing for identity and home amidst decades of displacement.

It symbolizes the resilience of a people determined to retain their cultural heritage, refusing to let the trauma of their past define



their future.

Moreover, the Key of Return has evolved into a powerful icon of the Palestinian struggle against occupation and oppression.

Found in murals, inscribed on walls, and incorporated into var-

ious forms of media and apparel, the key serves as a beacon of hope and an assertion of rights.

As it continues to inspire Palestinians and their allies globally, the Key of Return remains a lasting testament to their indomitable spirit and quest for justice.

## Tehran-Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival opens at Aab-o-Atash park



TEHRAN-The 20th Tehran-Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival kicked off at the Aab-o-Atash park in Tehran on Monday with the march of a large carnival of puppets, artists, and

children, which was accompanied by live musical performances.

The opening of the festival also included educational workshops for different ages, musical performances with giant puppets, and fireworks, Honaronline reported.

This year's edition of the festival includes outdoor shows, international performances, a playwriting competition, a 100-second short film category for virtual platforms, and exhibitions showcasing technical innovations in puppetry.

Alongside performances, the festival hosts specialized panels, workshops, and discussions to pro-

vide participants with further insights into the art of puppetry. This year's festival will be held under the theme "White Dream of Friendship".

Since its inception in 1989, the Tehran-Mobarak Festival has established itself as a prestigious cultural gathering in Iran, attracting puppet theater troupes from around the world.

The festival not only showcases international talent but also promotes the rich tradition of puppet theater.

The 20th Tehran-Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival will conclude on January 2, 2025.

## Play about Joseph Stalin on stage in Tehran

TEHRAN-The play "Joseph" directed by Sara Daruforush had its first performance at Divar Art Home in Tehran on Tuesday.

For her latest work, Daruforush has chosen one of the plays by Scottish screenwriter and dramatist John Hodge titled "Collaborators" and renamed it as "Joseph" as it deals with the dictator of the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin, Honaronline reported.

Mehdi Alinejad, Mani Mohammadi, Yasaman Jorjani, Shahrouz Farhadieh, Sara Feli, Golnoush Imani, Yashar Broumand, Hanieh Ekhtari, and Negin Masjedi perform in the 90-minute play among others.

The 2011 play is about the surreal fantasy of a relationship between

two historical figures, Mikhail Bulgakov, the prominent Russian writer, and Joseph Stalin.

The play takes place from 1938 to 1940, when Stalin was implementing the Great Purge in which several million people were exiled, imprisoned, or executed.

It is a fictional device to examine the conflict experienced by a writer who is trying to portray a recognizable depiction of the human condition in a tyrannical world that systematically represses such expression.

Bulgakov did receive a phone call from Stalin out of the blue at an earlier stage in his career in 1930 in which he was favored with a new post. He knew

that the dictator admired his work and followed his output.

No formal collaboration between Stalin and Bulgakov existed but the figure of Stalin as a monster inside Bulgakov's mind existed, and this was reinforced physically through the NKVD, the interior ministry of the Soviet Union.

The story happens in Moscow, 1938; a dangerous place to have a sense of humor; and even more so a sense of freedom. Mikhail Bulgakov, living among dissidents, stalked by secret police, has both. And then he's offered a poisoned chalice: a commission to write a play about Stalin to celebrate his sixtieth birthday.

The play embarks on a surreal

journey into the fevered imagination of the writer as he loses himself in a macabre and disturbingly funny relationship with the omnipotent subject of his drama.

Hodge's blistering play depicts a lethal game of cat and mouse through which the appalling compromises and humiliations inflicted on any artist by those with power are held up to scrutiny.

John Hodge, 60, has written numerous works. "Collaborators," his first play, won the 2012 Olivier Award for Best New Play.

"Joseph" will remain on stage until January 4, 2025 at Divar Art Home, located at No. 72, Sepand St., Nejatollahi St.

## Bethlehem artist defends presence of Palestinian keffiyeh in Nativity scene after backlash

A Nativity scene made by artisans from Bethlehem was the source of controversy last week for including a Palestinian keffiyeh with the child Jesus in the manger — but according to the project's organizer, the headscarf was a last-minute decision meant only to represent Palestinians.

The keffiyeh was visible during the presentation of the Bethlehem Nativity to Pope Francis in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall on Dec. 7. By Dec. 11, four days later, the headscarf, manger, and Jesus sculpture had been removed from the scene without explanation, Catholic News Agency reported.

Amid the Israel-Hamas war, the black-and-white checkered keffiyeh has become a symbol for the Palestinian cause. But Johny Andonia, a 39-year-old artist from Bethlehem who led the project, said it is just a symbol to represent or show the "existence" of Palestinians.

Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, said the Vatican follows the tradition of placing the infant Jesus in the Nativity scene on the night of Christmas Eve. It is typical for the whole scene to be first presented to the pope before the Jesus statue is then removed, leaving

behind the empty manger until the official start of Christmas.

Andonia said he did not expect the scale of the reaction to the keffiyeh, which he also signed off on, after it was approved by people at the Vatican during the Nativity's installation on Dec. 5.

"It came about in a spontaneous way, actually, because we learned that the child baby Jesus has to be covered or even absent until December 24, and [the on-the-ground coordinator] suggested to cover it with a keffiyeh," the artist said.

"And they said no, no, not to cover him. And then he asked, can I put it then under [the child Jesus] and the people ... in charge at that time accepted laying the keffiyeh under the baby Jesus, and this is how it came about."

Andonia said he does not agree with commentary from some quarters that the keffiyeh indicates violence or the eradication of others. "It's only about recognition," he said. "This keffiyeh represents the people who had presented the Nativity scene." He added that he does not think the Vatican will put the keffiyeh back when the man-

ger and child Jesus are returned on Christmas Eve.

Andonia, who is a physical artist and painter, was born in Jerusalem but has lived all his life in Bethlehem. He is a teacher at Dar al-Kalima University College of Art and Culture in Bethlehem.

After being contacted in April 2023 by the Palestinian Embassy to the Holy See in Rome about the idea for a Nativity from Bethlehem to be featured at the Vatican, Andonia said he decided to reach out to local artisans to create the structure from traditional materials, which he said have deep roots in the area, especially olive wood and mother-of-pearl.

The round, the work of over 30 artisans from Bethlehem, also incorporates stone, ceramics, glass, felt, and fabric.

Some evidence shows that the use of olive wood in Bethlehem dates back to the fourth century during the construction of the Basilica of the Nativity, Andonia said. And Franciscan monks introduced the use of mother-of-pearl in craftmaking to the area in the 17th century. The Nativity is "a gift from the Bethlehemites," he said.