



# U.S. Holds an Old Deep Grudge Against Iran

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## Iran security chief meets Aliyev in Baku

TEHRAN – Ali Akbar Ahmadian, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, met with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on Wednesday.

The two officials emphasized strengthening cooperation across political, security, defense, and economic areas. They agreed to enhance economic relations, particularly focusing on energy and transportation corridors.

Ahmadian stressed Iran's commitment to removing obstacles and facilitating joint projects, aiming to bolster bilateral ties.

Aliyev highlighted the strong historical, religious, and cultural connections between the two nations, stating, "The relations between Iran and Azerbaijan over the past three decades have been excellent." He also expressed Azerbaijan's strong interest in utilizing the North-South Corridor and leveraging the capacity of the Persian Gulf through the Aghband transit route.

Further, Aliyev discussed his initiative for resolving South Caucasus conflicts within the "3+3" framework, advocating for regional cooperation to solve regional issues.

Both officials announced plans to establish a joint economic commission soon and expressed satisfaction with existing military cooperation, including joint military exercises. ▶ Page 2

## Iran's agricultural export to EAEU members increases 21%

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's agricultural export to the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has increased by 21 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 21, 2024), as compared to the same period of time in the previous year, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

As reported by the IRICA, Iran exported 594,491 tons of agricultural products worth \$467 million to the EAEU members in the nine-month period, indicating seven percent growth in terms of weight, year on year.

In mid-December, EAEU Minister of Trade Andrey Slepnev underscored the importance of the free trade agreement with Iran, citing the country's strategic position as a primary partner on the EAEU's southern borders and a key player in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INST).

In an interview with Izvestia, Slepnev highlighted Iran's achievements in import substitution, technological development, and resilience against sanctions.

Addressing the status of the agreement, which was signed a year ago, Slepnev noted that the ratification process has been completed in four EAEU member states. "We aim to finalize the agreement at the upcoming EAEU leaders' summit in Saint Petersburg at the end of December 2024, so it can take effect at the start of next year," he said. ▶ Page 4

## 'Baseless and contradictory': Iran rejects Macron's remarks on regional role

TEHRAN – Tehran has firmly dismissed recent allegations by French President Emmanuel Macron against Iran, labeling them as "baseless and contradictory."

The French president had said in a speech on Monday that Iran is the "main strategic and security challenge for France, Europeans, the entire region and beyond," citing its advancing nuclear program and alleged support for Russia in its war against Ukraine, claims that Iran categorically rejected.

On Tuesday, the spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry expressed regret that Macron has chosen to accuse Iran—a country committed to international law—while ignoring the apartheid regime of Israel, whose leaders are wanted by the International Criminal Court.

Esmail Bageqi pointed out that Israel poses a genuine and immediate threat to regional peace and stability, yet continues to enjoy unconditional support from the United States and certain European nations, including France. ▶ Page 2

## Wide political division over Lebanese presidential candidate

By Sondoss Al Assad

BEIRUT – On the eve of the session to elect the Lebanese president, it seems that General Joseph Aoun, the candidate of the international quintet will fail not only in the first round as he doesn't obtain the required 86 parliamentary votes, but also in the second round, which requires 65 votes. It is because his election will require a constitutional amendment in his capacity as commander of the Lebanese army.

Currently, there are three main candidates: the commander of the army supported by Washington and Riyadh; the acting director general of public security, Major General Elias al-Bissari, supported by the Amal Movement and Hezbollah blocs aka the "Shiite duo" and their allies; and the director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the International Monetary Fund, Dr. Jihad Azour, whose name has been re-proposed as an alternative candidate in the event the election of Aoun fails, as he does not seem capable of obtaining 40+ votes.

## Israeli soldiers continue to die in Gaza

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – More than 460 days after the U.S.-backed Israeli genocidal war on Gaza, the Palestinian resistance fighters continue to kill Israeli soldiers.

Despite reducing Gaza to rubble and the vast number of war crimes committed against the civilian population, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) have failed to eliminate the resistance fighters.

The IOF admitted on Wednesday that a soldier was killed by resistance fire in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza Strip, bringing the officially announced number of Israeli troops killed to 828 since October 7, 2023.

The slain soldier is Sergeant Ido Shamiatch, a member of the special forces in the Nahal Brigade, who was killed before sunrise on Tuesday, according to the IOF announcement.

On Tuesday, an IOF spokesperson announced the death of two soldiers, including a company commander in Battalion 932 of the Nahal Brigade, during battles in the northern Gaza Strip.

## Gaza: A living hell fueled by American weapons

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – Since Israel launched its war of genocide on Gaza in October 2023, United Nations agencies have frequently raised the alarm about the dire humanitarian situation in the besieged Palestinian territory.

In October last year, James Elder, spokesman for the United Nations children's agency UNICEF, said "Gaza is the real-world embodiment of hell on Earth for its one million children."

Some other UN officials have used the term "hell on earth" to describe the pain and suffering endured by Palestinians in the wake of Israel's US-backed war in the Gaza Strip.

The United States has fully endorsed Israel's actions in Gaza, offering consistent military assistance to the regime.

American politicians have turned a blind eye to the Israeli carnage in Gaza arguing that the regime has "a right to defend itself" in the face of attacks by Hamas fighters.

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## Kamal Sharaf honored in Tehran: a tribute to Yemen's artistic voice of resistance

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN – A tribute ceremony honoring Yemeni cartoonist Kamal Sharaf was held on Tuesday evening, culminating in the inauguration of his exhibition titled "Kamal Al-Fann" at the Art Bureau.

The event took place with the presence of notable figures including Iranian graphic designers and caricaturists Masoud Nejabati, Seyyed Masoud Shojai Tabatabai, and Maziar Bijani, as well as the secretary of the 15th Ammar Popular Film Festival Marzieh Hashemi, and Russian artists Alexandra Faldina and Alexander Faldin. ▶ Page 8



## Leader highlights PMF as key force in Iraq's national strength, tells al-Sudani it must be fortified

TEHRAN – Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has highlighted the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), as a key pillar of Iraq's national strength.

In a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani, held in Tehran on Wednesday, the leader called for concerted efforts to preserve and strengthen this powerful force amid ongoing challenges to the country's sovereignty and unity.

He remarked, "As you have noted, the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), or Hashd al-Shaabi, play a crucial role in safeguarding Iraq's strength. Efforts must continue to preserve and further reinforce this significant pillar of national resilience." ▶ Page 3

## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## Trump is aware insecurity in Iran means insecurity for entire region

Hassan Beheshtipour, an expert on foreign policy issues, tells Etemad that incoming U.S. President Donald Trump is well aware that military action against Iran will not work and even make the situation worse for America. He said: American officials in the first Trump administration tried to focus on internal differences in Iran and seek the collapse of the Iranian ruling system by creating disunity. However, when their plan failed in 2022 and the "maximum pressure" campaign did not work, they concluded they should go for the military option. However, according to many analysts, the military option will not succeed and will make the situation far worse for America. The reason for this is Iran's geopolitical situation as the insecurity of Iran will mean the insecurity of the whole region. Many believe that even if Iran changes its nuclear doctrine, America will not resort to military options. If Iran changes its behavior, America will welcome this change. But if they are forced to take military action, they will definitely do so. It should be said that Iran is not in a passive position in this regard.

### Jam-e-Jam: PM Sudani's different trip to Iran

In a note, Jam-e-Jam discussed Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's visit to Iran on Wednesday. It wrote: Considering the historical records and cultural affinities, friendly relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq are of special importance, especially in the current sensitive situation in which Syria is undergoing structural political changes and the crises threaten security in the region. Therefore, the visit of the Iraqi prime minister is of special importance both in terms of bilateral relations, as well as regional security issues and developments. There is speculation that the Iraqi Prime Minister carried a special message for Iran. But it seems that the main topic of this trip is the important developments in the region. Considering the current situation in the region, it must be said that maintaining the security of the region is of particular importance. Therefore, the special cooperation between these two important neighbors is of paramount importance in stabilizing the situation.

### Sobh-e-No: Comprehensive agreement indication of Tehran-Moscow deepening strategic ties

Sobh-e-No analyzed the strategic agreement

between Iran and Russia and said: President Pezeshkian plans to visit Russia to update the comprehensive agreement between Iran and Russia. A look at the importance of this document shows that this agreement is beyond bilateral cooperation and is a symbol of the growing strategic relations between the two countries. This document, in addition to paying attention to various economic, political, and security dimensions, carries a message to the international community about the formation of a new order that is defined based on the common interests of independent countries without the involvement of Western powers. The comprehensive agreement between Iran and Russia is approaching the signing stage as external pressure, especially from the West, has increased on both countries. The war in Ukraine and accusations that Iran is sending drones to Russia are among the challenges that are intended to reduce this agreement to a purely military and security issue. Iran has stated many times that its military cooperation with Russia dates back to before the Ukraine war and Tehran has no desire to back one side against the other.

### Keyhan: Iran as it is and as the enemy advertises

Keyhan devoted its editorial to the views of the enemies towards Iran and wrote: Many of us think that America, the usurper regime of Israel and England, who are the "enemies" of Iran and Iranians, see Iran as they say. What is being published today in cyberspace, some media outlets of the West and their affiliates in Iran about the power of Iran and the power of the resistance front tries to convey the ideal that Iran and other members of the resistance front are weak and in a defensive position compared to the past. They try to say that the domination system has become stronger than before and is in an aggressive position. The huge propaganda campaign shows the strong need of America, Israel, and the West in general for such an image of Iran and the resistance front. Enemies of Iran assess the Islamic Republic as powerful from various military, political, and even economic aspects, and based on this assessment, they adjust their real plan, which is to avoid a military conflict with the Islamic Republic, but they pretend as if they are ready for a conflict with Iran.

## Tehran, Moscow to sign landmark strategic agreement on Jan 17

TEHRAN – In an interview with Russian news agency Sputnik published on Wednesday, Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani announced that Iran and Russia are set to sign a comprehensive cooperation agreement on January 17.

Mohajerani noted that the groundwork for this pivotal agreement was laid during previous discussions, including the talks that took place during Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Kazan in October 2024.

The spokesperson emphasized key areas of cooperation with Russia, confirming that besides the signing of the strategic agreement, President Pezeshkian plans to visit Russia to focus on two other crucial issues.

Firstly, Mohajerani highlighted the North-South Corridor, which has seen notable advancements and will be a central topic of the discussions.

Secondly, she addressed the gas transfer project from Russia to Iran.

Both of these topics have been underscored and mutually approved by the parties, reflecting a shared commitment to enhancing bilateral partnership.

Discussing the October 2024 BRICS summit in Kazan, Mohajerani remarked, "Conversations were held with BRICS member countries to leverage these advantages, both for utilizing the North-South Corridor and positioning Russia as a pivotal market."

Highlighting the benefits of BRICS membership, Mohajerani pointed out that over 40% of the world's population is part of this intergovernmental organization, adding that the trade exchange within this group holds substantial value for all participants.



Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani during an interview with Sputnik in Tehran

On the topic of easing trade barriers for foreign investment in Iran, Mohajerani explained that there are two categories of countries: those within BRICS, where interactions are assessed under the BRICS framework, and non-BRICS countries, including some European nations.

She mentioned that a special task force has been established following direct orders from the Iranian President to analyze and mitigate investment barriers in key projects. This working group is actively identifying obstacles and striving to minimize them.

"Any country aiming to attract investors must ensure certain guarantees regarding the execution, repayment, and specifics of project implementation," Mohajerani concluded.

The forthcoming strategic agreement between Tehran and Moscow is poised to enhance economic ties and foster a cooperative spirit, further solidifying the two countries' shared positions on the global stage.

## Iran security chief meets Aliyev in Baku

From page 1 ▶ Ahmadian's visit to Baku was at Azerbaijan's invitation. He is reportedly next scheduled to visit Yerevan for discussions with Armenian officials, also at their invitation.

### Baku-Yerevan tensions

Iran's recent diplomatic engagement occurs amid escalating tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, primarily over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

This long-standing rivalry has intensified, with both countries accusing each other of military provocations and border infringements. Despite calls for de-escalation, the situation remains precarious.

Since independence, Azerbaijan and Armenia have been embroiled in multiple territorial disputes. A key turning point was in September 2023, when Azerbaijani forces took control of Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory recognized internationally as Azerbaijani, but previously governed by ethnic Armenians. This resulted in nearly the entire Armenian popula-



Iran's delegation led by Ali Akbar Ahmadian, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, during a meeting with Azeri President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on January 8, 2025

(approximately 100,000 people) fleeing the region.

Currently, as Yerevan and Baku pursue bilateral talks aimed at normalizing relations and addressing border issues, Armenian officials have expressed concerns that Azer-

baijan may be preparing for further military actions. Last December, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan noted that Azerbaijan had received proposals regarding two key unresolved issues but had not yet responded.

## Italian media says top officials in Rome have discussed release of imprisoned Iranian citizen

TEHRAN – Italian Justice Minister Carlo Nordio met with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Wednesday to discuss the potential release of Mohammad Abedini Najafabadi, an Iranian engineer currently imprisoned in Italy, according to a report by ANSA news agency.

According to ANSA, the meeting focused on the circumstances surrounding Abedini Najafabadi's detention and the possibility of his release. The Prime Minister's office also confirmed that the discussions were aimed at evaluating legal options and diplomatic avenues that could facilitate Abedini Najafabadi's return to his home country.

Abedini Najafabadi, an Iranian engineer and entrepreneur, has been imprisoned in Italy for three weeks on baseless charges put forth by Washington. His imprisonment reflects a pattern of the U.S. using Iranian nationals for political leverage.

### U.S. hostage-taking

On December 16, Abedini Najafabadi was arrested at Malpensa Airport by Italian authorities after arriving from Istanbul.

His arrest occurred upon U.S. order, which accused him of involvement in a 2024 drone attack Iraq's Resistance forces conducted against an illegal American base in West Asia.

Abedini Najafabadi has denied all charges, and officials in Tehran have condemned his detention as politically motivated. Iran's foreign ministry has summoned the Italian and Swiss ambassadors, warning of potential damage to bilateral relations due to Italy's alignment with provocative U.S. policies.

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei has described the detention as a form of hostage-taking, emphasizing that the accusations involve circumventing unilateral U.S. sanctions. He argued that fabricating legal grounds to detain Iranian citizens is illegal and a violation of human rights.

Abedini Najafabadi founded the Iranian company Sanat Danesh Rahpooyan Aflak (SDRA) in 2011,



Iranian citizen Mohammad Abedini Najafabadi has been jailed in Italy for the past three weeks over unfounded American allegations

specializing in precision measurement equipment, including navigation systems. In 2019, he established Illumove SA in Switzerland, which focuses on fusion-based navigation solutions.

Illumove SA, operating under Swiss governmental oversight, is fully transparent, with its operations publicly accessible. The U.S. says Abedini Najafabadi is responsible for the drone attacks because his company products allegedly made up some parts of the weapon deployed against the American base in West Asia.

### 'Case of Abedini and released Italian journalist separated'

Italy's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said Wednesday that Tehran had wanted the case of Cecilia Sala, the Italian journalist released by Iran after being arrested in the West Asian country last month, separated from that of Mohammed Adedini Najafabadi.

"The Iranians themselves separated the two (cases)," Tajani told Wednesday when asked about the possible impact of the meeting in Florida at the weekend between Premier Giorgia Meloni and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump

"In the meantime, let's enjoy the return of Cecilia Sala, a good journalist, to Italy," he added.

Sala was arrested after violating several Iranian laws. Her violations have not been disclosed to the public. She returned to Italy after "diplomatic efforts" took place, the Italian prime minister announced on X.

## 'Baseless and contradictory': Iran rejects Macron's remarks on regional role

From page 1 ▶ He highlighted that Israel has consistently engaged in military aggression and expansionism across the region while perpetuating occupation and acts of genocide in Palestine.

In response to Macron's criticism of Iran's nuclear program, Baqaei asserted that Iran's nuclear activities fully comply with international law and are conducted under the strict and continuous oversight of the International Atomic Energy

Agency.

He also dismissed claims of Iranian involvement in the Ukraine conflict, characterizing such accusations as irresponsible attempts to misrepresent reality.

Baqaei expressed surprise and regret over Macron's remarks about Iran's engagement with African nations.

He criticized countries with a history of violent colonialism in Africa for attempting to dictate

the actions of independent African states, urging them to abandon such outdated mentalities.

He underscored that Iran's relationships with African nations are built on mutual respect and recognition of their sovereignty and political independence.

These partnerships, he explained, adhere to the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, promoting friendly relations and cooperation to achieve shared benefits.

In a recent interview, Aliyev labeled Armenia a "fascist state," asserting that Baku may have no option but to "destroy" its neighbor's "fascist ideology."

Iran has consistently called for a peaceful resolution, urging both parties to engage in dialogue and avoid further hostilities. The Iranian government has also expressed concern for the humanitarian impact of the conflict on civilians.

Another point of contention is the proposed Zangezur Corridor, intended to connect Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan exclave to the rest of the country through Armenian territory.

The proposal has faced strong opposition from Armenia, which fears it could undermine its sovereignty. Iran has also opposed the Zangezur Corridor, viewing it as a threat to its territorial integrity and regional influence.

The corridor is designed to isolate Iran from land access to Armenia, dismantling borders that have existed for centuries.

## Iranian military to reopen investigation into 2020 Ukrainian plane crash

TEHRAN – The investigation into the Ukrainian plane crash in Iran five years ago is being reopened for a more thorough examination, prompted by identified deficiencies, according to the head of Iran's Armed Forces Judicial Organization.

Ahmad Reza Pourkhaghan announced on Wednesday that the Armed Forces Judicial Organization is undertaking a comprehensive re-evaluation of the case. Addressing reporters during a visit to the Astara Customs Directorate, Pourkhaghan stressed that Iranian authorities have consistently treated this matter with utmost priority since the beginning.

"Expert committees within our country have rigorously scrutinized every facet of the incident, and international experts, including those from Ukraine, have also traveled to Iran to contribute to the investigation," Pourkhaghan explained.

He further detailed that after exhaustive inquiries into the circumstances of the crash and the collection of statements from the victims' families, an initial verdict was rendered. However, following appeals from the plaintiffs, the Judiciary subsequently referred the case to Iran's Supreme Court for further review.

"The Supreme Court conducted a detailed assessment of the case, and in the process, noted several shortcomings in the initial investigation. As a result, the case has been sent back to the Armed Forces Judicial Organization for a more meticulous and comprehensive re-examination," Pourkhaghan clarified.

On January 8, 2020, Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 crashed shortly after taking off from Tehran, resulting in the devastating loss of all 176 passengers and crew members on board.

The aircraft was unintentionally struck by Iran's air defense system, which, under the intense pressure of heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington, mistakenly identified the civilian plane as a hostile military target. This occurred in the days following the U.S. assassination of Iran's top anti-terror commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.



Head of Iran's Armed Forces Judicial Organization Ahmad-Reza Pourkhaghan speaks to reporters on January 8, 2025.

Last year, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that Ukraine International Airlines (UIA) was negligent and solely liable for the Flight PS752 tragedy. The court found UIA failed to adequately assess risks associated with operating out of Tehran amidst escalating US-Iran tensions, specifically citing their knowledge of previous Iranian military actions and the recent assassination of a top Iranian general. Despite this awareness, UIA did not take reasonable steps to mitigate those risks, choosing to operate the flight as scheduled despite having initially considered alternatives like rerouting or cancellation.

### Political exploitation of a tragedy

Since the tragic plane crash, Western countries including Canada, Sweden, and the UK have been attempting to exploit the tragedy for political objectives by claiming that Iran downed the plane intentionally. While the outrageous assertion has never been backed by evidence or any logical explanation, the three countries alongside Ukraine referred the incident to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2023. The ICJ has never made a ruling on the case.

Families of the victims have been offered life-time benefits by Iran's Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs. The government has also been ordered to pay compensations separately.

Multiple military personnel have so far been sentenced to jail over the plane crash. The main defendant in the trial was the unnamed commander of the Tor M1 surface-to-air missile defense system that mistakenly shot down the aircraft.

# US holds an old deep grudge against Iran: Leader

TEHRAN – In a meeting commemorating the 1978 Qom uprising against the Pahlavi regime, held on its anniversary, January 8, 2025, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addressed thousands from Qom Province at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyah.

The Leader connected Iran's current stance against negotiating with the U.S. to the Islamic Revolution, arguing that U.S. hostility arises from the loss of political and economic advantages that resulted from the revolution.

He emphasized the necessity of drawing lessons from the uprising of the 19th of Dey (January 9, 1978), identifying the "relentless, substantial, and effective" efforts of media and social media activists to "tear down the veil of the enemy's illusion of power and to safeguard public opinion" as pressing needs of today.

Ayatollah Khamenei considered the 19 Dey uprising in Qom to contain various lessons and insights, underscoring that the most important lesson from that day is that it reveals what kind of Iran is that it reveals what kind of Iran Washington desires and prefers.

Highlighting President Carter's visit to Tehran in December 31, 1977, and his disingenuous commendation of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as well as Carter's portrayal of Pahlavi Iran as an "island of stability," Ayatollah Khamenei explained, "The Iran that Carter deemed desirable for America in 1977 was, in terms of foreign policy, entirely subservient to the U.S. and served to secure American interests. Domestically, it witnessed the severe suppression of all opposition movements, as well as any divergent viewpoints from the regime."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution remarked that, during that



period, the United States envisioned an ideal Iran characterized by immense oil revenues accompanied by stark economic stratification. In terms of science and technology, they desired a nation that remained underdeveloped, while culturally, they sought a society where corruption, promiscuity, and Western decadence would proliferate daily.

He emphasized that the uprising of the 19th of Dey freed "the ideal Iran for the US" from America's clutches. However, he noted that "the US still yearns for that vision of Iran, but just as Carter took this dream to the grave, so too will other Americans."

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, the victory of the Islamic Revolution created a crack in the concrete wall of Global Arrogance and shook the West's barrier. He added, "Another lesson of the 19th of Dey uprising is that we must safeguard our public opinion against enemy propaganda."

Referring to the publication of an insulting article against Imam Khomeini in a newspaper in January 1978, the Leader highlighted the role of propaganda utilized by the United States and the Pahlavi regime.

"They intended to silence the Zulfiqar of Imam Khomeini's

tongue, which, from near the sacred shrine of the Commander of the Faithful [Imam Ali], brought warmth and hope to people's hearts. However, the people of Qom, with vigilance and distrust of American and Pahlavi propaganda, thwarted that move."

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to the exponential increase in the use of propaganda tools by the United States to consolidate the outcomes of its military actions, saying, "In Gaza, they massacred tens of thousands of people, yet they could not eliminate Resistance with their [military] hardware. In Lebanon, they martyred a figure like Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah and other commanders, but Hezbollah was not eradicated and will not be eradicated."

In another part of his speech, the Leader described Iran as a "strategic pinnacle" in the world, endowed with valuable blessings such as natural resources and above-average human resources.

He said, "For several decades, starting around 80 years ago, Iran was essentially owned by America. But the Islamic Revolution freed the country from America's grip, and this is why they will not forget their resentment over the Islamic Revolution."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolu-

tion addressed questions raised by some individuals about why the Islamic Republic, despite its relations with European countries, refuses to negotiate or establish ties with the United States. He responded, "Pre-revolution Iran was under American ownership, but the Islamic Revolution liberated that enormous political and economic opportunity from US control. Therefore, their grudge toward the Revolution is [deeply rooted], and this differs significantly from European countries."

Ayatollah Khamenei described one of the primary demands of Global Arrogance, led by the United States, as ensuring their interests and considerations are factored into the decisions of other nations, including Iran. Stressing the dangers of yielding to such demands, he said, "Succumbing to America's excessive demand undermines democracy and the nature of democracy in the country." "The people have voted for officials to secure their own interests, not those of America. Therefore, decision-makers must focus solely on the interests of the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic and disregard the interests of America and the Zionists entirely, as they are fundamentally hostile to our nation and the Islamic Republic, wishing for the destruction of Iran."

He further pointed to the United States' failure to reclaim control over Iran despite significant efforts and costs over the past 46 years, calling this another reason for their grudge toward the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic. He remarked, "America has been defeated in this country and seeks to compensate for that defeat. As a result, they pursue enmity against the Iranian people in every way they can."

## Iranian police thwart armed attack on Zahedan station

TEHRAN – Iranian police in southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan province announced Tuesday that they had thwarted an attempted attack on a police station in Zahedan.

According to the province's police information center, "The armed assault on the Chashmeh Ziarat police station was met with failure thanks to the alertness of the officers."

The statement further elaborated that the attempt occurred Monday night, adding that the officers' swift and effective response ensured that there were no casualties or property damage.

"With their vigilance and superior firepower, the officers managed to repel the attackers, who chose to flee rather than face capture," the police center reported.

The attackers are now being pursued, the notice added. "These individuals are under pursuit and, with the cooperation of the local community, they will soon be identified, apprehended, and handed over to justice."

Sistan and Baluchestan Province has long been a target of foreign-backed terrorist outfits seeking to destabilize Iran.

Iranian forces have repeatedly thwarted such plots, showcasing the nation's resolve to combat terrorism and maintain its sovereignty and security.

The latest incident comes amidst a stepped-up anti-terrorism campaign by the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC).

The IRGC carried out a large-scale drill codenamed "Martyrs of Security" over several months, commencing in late October 2024. These operations, which also involved the Ministry of Intelligence and police forces, resulted in the elimination of at least three terror teams.

Authorities stated that one of those arrested is linked to the so-called Jaish al-Adl, the terrorist group that claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a police convoy in Taftan County in October 2024.

## Leader highlights PMF as key force in Iraq's national strength, tells al-Sudani it must be fortified

From Page 1 ▶ The Leader also expressed concern over indications that the U.S. is actively working to entrench its presence in Iraq, urging Baghdad to stand firm against such moves.

Ayatollah Khamenei characterized this presence as illegal and detrimental to the sovereignty and well-being of the Iraqi nation.

Iraq continues to grapple with terrorism backed by Western and Israeli forces and is pressing for the withdrawal of U.S.-led military forces from its territory, as mandated by a resolution passed in Iraq's parliament following Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani's assassination in Baghdad.

During the meeting, the Leader also lauded al-Sudani for his effective efforts toward ensuring Iraq's development and security.

Highlighting the deep ties between the two nations, Ayatollah Khamenei underscored that a secure and prosperous Iraq is not only beneficial to its people but also serves the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the discussion, Ayatollah Khamenei praised the Iraqi government's strong rapport with its people, describing unity among Iraq's diverse religious and ethnic groups as a vital foundation for the country's progress.

Turning to the region, Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the ongoing turmoil in Syria, attributing much of the instability to external interference.

"The involvement of foreign governments in Syria's crises is both evident and harmful," he said, calling for greater regional cooperation to restore peace and stability.

The meeting was attended by senior Iranian officials, including President Masoud



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani, in the capital Tehran, on January 8, 2025.

Pezeshkian, who welcomed the deepening bilateral discussions.

Prime Minister al-Sudani, in turn, expressed satisfaction with the talks, emphasizing his government's commitment to strengthening the strategic partnership between Iraq and Iran.

He noted that the agreements reached during his Tehran visit would further solidify the two nations' political, economic, and cultural ties.

Al-Sudani outlined the key pillars of Iraq's national strength, including its resilient people, the PMF, national unity, and the guiding role of religious authorities.

Addressing recent Israeli aggression in Gaza and Lebanon, he reaffirmed Iraq's unwavering support for the Palestinian and Lebanese people, as well as for resistance movements throughout the region.

Commenting on the Syrian crisis, the Iraqi Prime Minister reiterated his government's stance in favor of Syria's territorial integrity, national sovereignty, and the formation of an inclusive government that reflects the will of the Syrian people.

He also stressed the importance of regional solidarity in countering foreign interference and fostering sustainable peace.

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

### Iran's women's taekwondo coach Maddah resigns

TEHRAN – Iran's women's taekwondo head coach Minoo Maddah stepped down from his role.

Head of Iran taekwondo federation Hadi Saei said that Maddah has left the training for two weeks.

According to him, the new head coach will be introduced next week.

The media reports suggest that there was a quarrel between Maddah and her assistant Mahrouz Saei.

Under Maddah's leadership, Nahid Kiani claimed a silver medal in the 57kg and Mobina Nematzadeh seized a bronze in 49kg in the 2024 Olympic Games.

### Persepolis in negotiation with Julien Stéphan: report

TEHRAN – Persepolis football club has reportedly begun negotiation with French coach Julien Stéphan.

The 44-year-old coach has most recently worked as head coach of French club Rennes.

Stéphan is the son of France national team assistant manager Guy Stéphan and the brother of Guillaume Stéphan, also a former footballer.

Persepolis has parted company with Spanish coach Juan Carlos Garrido in late December and is negotiating with the coaches for the vacant seat.

Persepolis has been previously linked with Portuguese Jose Vitor dos Santos Peseiro, former Croatia coach Slaven Bilic, ex-Dortmund trainer Edin Terzic, former Bayern Munich head coach Niko Kovac, ex-Real Madrid coach Rafael Benitez and Foolad coach Yahya Golmohammadi.

### Khatoon learn fate at AFC Women's Champions League 2024/25 Knockout Stage

TEHRAN – The eight remaining teams discovered the pathway to glory following the conclusion of the AFC Women's Champions League 2024/25 Knockout Stage draw at AFC House on Wednesday.

The race to be the first team to lift the prized trophy served up interesting ties across the four match-ups.

Group A winners Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC of Korea Republic were drawn to play Iran's Bam Khatoon FC.

Group C winners and AFC Women's Club Championship 2023 champions Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies of Japan will face Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC of China PR.

Australia's Melbourne City FC, who topped Group B with a perfect record, will take on Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team of Chinese Taipei.

Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC, who finished second in Group C, will host Abu Dhabi Country Club of the United Arab Emirates.

The single leg quarter-final ties will be played on March 22 and 23 while the Semi-finals and Final – all single-leg ties and to be played at a centralized venue – will be on May 21-24.

#### DRAW RESULT

Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC (KOR) v Bam Khatoon FC (IRN)

Melbourne City FC (AUS) v Taichung Blue Whale Women's Football Team (TPE)

Urawa Red Diamonds Ladies (JPN) v Wuhan Jiangda Women's FC (CHN)

Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC (VIE) v Abu Dhabi Country Club (UAE)

### Young Paralympics medalist Rahimi gifts his father a truck

TEHRAN – Iran's para taekwondo athlete Zahra Rahimi has surprised her father, gifting him a Volvo truck.

She won Iran's first silver medal in the 2024 Paralympic Games. The 16-year-athlete lost to Mongolia's Ulambayar Surenjav 5-2 in the final match of k44-52kg.

Rahimi was the youngest member of Iran Paralympic delegation.

Rahimi has bought a truck for her father with the prize and bonuses she earned for the silver medal.

"I have a dream to wave Iran's flag in every competition and I am sure it will happen. I will do my best in the upcoming competitions to make my dream come true," she had previously said in an interview with Tehran Times.

"I prepare for the 2025 Asian Youth Para Games and Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games," Rahimi added.

### Iranian teams to host football matches

TEHRAN – Iranian football clubs and the national team have been reportedly allowed to host opponents in their home matches.

Iran has not hosted any match since the match between Sepahan and Tajikistan's Istiklol in Isfahan's Fooladshahr Stadium in early October in the Asian Champions League.

The other Iranian teams and national team could not host on their home soil and had to play their matches in the neutral country.

Tractor can host Al-Khaldiya of Bahrain on February 18 in Tabriz's Yadgar-e Imam Stadium.

### French forward Bifouma on Persepolis radar

TEHRAN – Persepolis football club are determined to sign French forward Thievy Guivane Bifouma Kouloussa in the January transfer window.

The 32-year-old player joined Iranian team Esteghlal Khuzestan in August and has stolen the show in the Iranian league.

Foolad and Tractor have also shown interest in signing Bifouma.

Bifouma has played in Greek side A.E. Kifisia, Turkish teams Bursaspor and Sivasspor, Spanish teams Espanyol and Granada and English team West Bromwich Albion.

Bifouma currently plays for Congo national football team and has scored 16 goals in 41 matches for the African team.

He has played for France U20 and U21 teams.

### Nazari Juybari named Esteghlal GM

TEHRAN – Ali Nazari Juybari was named general manager of Esteghlal football club on Wednesday.

He replaced Farshid Samei in the Tehran-based football club.

Nazari Juybari has previously worked in Esteghlal as executive director.

He was also acting president of the Esteghlal from May to June 2010.

Esteghlal spends a critical season. The Blues sit 10th in the Iran 16-team table.

Esteghlal are the oldest Iranian professional football club based in Tehran that compete in the Persian Gulf Pro League.

The club were founded in 1945 as 'The Cyclists' and they are the first team to reach 1,000 points in the Persian Gulf Pro League.

## 4.4m tons of goods transited via Shahid Rajaei special economic zone

TEHRAN- As announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), 4.4 million tons of goods were transited from the customs point of Shahid Rajaei Special Economic Zone during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20–December 21, 2024).

Shahid Rajaei Special Economic Zone is located in 23 km to the west of Bandar Abbas (the port city which is the center of Iran's southern Hormozgan province) and is stretched to the north of Qeshm Island and Hormoz Strait. It has a marine relation with more than 80 internationally known ports and they exchange goods with each other.

Enjoying the most modern container terminals and port equipment, Shahid Rajaei port accounts for 85 percent of the total loading and unloading at the Iranian ports.

Given its significant role in the country's import and export of products as well as transit and transshipment via Iran, the development of Shahid Rajaei Port has been among the most important development projects in the country.

As announced by the IRICA head, transit of commodities through Iran has increased by 31 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian year.

Foroud Asgari said that 16.5 million tons of goods were transited via the country in the mentioned nine-month period.

The head of the International Affairs Center of the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development has recently announced the achievement of the record of 20 million tons of transit via Iran by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Amin Taraffo' also said: "To achieve the goals of the Seventh National Development Plan, which is transit of 40 million tons of commodities via the country per year, we must reach the transit of three million tons per month, which is now 1.5 million tons; of course, our capacity is estimated to be more than this figure."

The continuous trend of recent transit records via the country and the increasing interest of governments, traders, and those active in transport sectors from neighboring, regional, and extra-regional countries in the transit and logistics situation of the Islamic Republic of Iran indicate the fruitfulness of the transformational approach of the gov-



Shahid Rajaei Special Economic Zone port, with emphasis on the development of all-round economic relations with neighbors.

As stated by the former Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash, the "Iran Way" initiative made by the current Iranian government, lets the neighboring countries use Iran as a route or a solution that facilitates their access to international waters.

Iran Way initiative is the gateway to Iran's land of transit opportunities, the minister has underlined.

As previously announced by the Transport Ministry, 10.8 million tons of commodities were transited through the country in the Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20, 2023).

Iran is one of the countries with a special status in trade and transit relations due to its strategic location and special geography, as the country is the passage of several important international corridors.

Considering its geographical location, Iran can play a significant role in the transit of goods in the region and benefit a lot from its status in this due.

Paying attention to upstream documents, especially the country's development plans, and the government's decision to develop transit, paying special attention to infrastructure development, reducing transit time, making it cheaper to cross Iran, and making more advantages over competitors, due to the short path for customers, can lead to facilitating the development of transit so that the country can reach the desired growth in this due.

## 'Accessing new export markets a necessity in petchem industry'

TEHRAN- The head of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said that accessing new export markets is a necessity in the country's petrochemical industry.

"All available capacities in the country should be used for market development and diversification of export markets with the aim of expanding exports", Hassan Abbaszadeh said in a meeting on Tuesday.

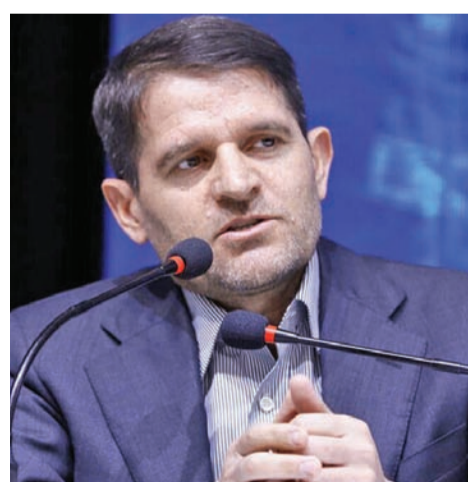
"Convergence and continuous interaction to identify new markets can facilitate the process of international cooperation", the official emphasized.

According to the NPC head, petrochemical industry plays a vital role in promoting Iran's status in the international economy.

Abbaszadeh wrote in a message on the occasion of the National Petrochemical Industry Day: "Today, this industry is not only the supplier of an important part of the domestic needs of the country, but with its powerful presence in the world markets, it plays a vital role in maintaining and improving Iran's position in the international economy."

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.

# Iran's agricultural export to EAEU members increases 21%

From Page 1 ▶ Previously, the European Union accounted for over 40 percent of the EAEU's trade, with the Global South comprising less than half. "Today, the share of European partners has fallen by about 2.5 times, while trade with the Global South continues to grow. By the end of 2024, we expect it to account for 75 percent of our trade turnover," Slepnev added.

In early December, Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said Iran's exports to Eurasian countries have grown by 2.5 times since the country signed a preferential trade agreement with the EAEU four years ago, highlighting the success of its trade policy.

Dehghan Dehnavi credited the exponential growth to reduced tariffs introduced through the agreements signed between the



two sides.

Iran and EAEU also signed a free trade agreement on December 25, 2023, in St. Petersburg, Russia, aiming to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers and facilitate economic and trade interactions. Once fully implemented, 87 percent of tariff codes for commercial goods between Iran and EAEU member states will drop to

zero.

Under President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration, Iran has emphasized strengthening ties with Eurasian countries to enhance access to global markets. This strategy has translated into tangible growth, with the latest figures from Iran's Customs Administration revealing a 16 percent rise in exports to EAEU

nations in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20–August 20). During this period, the export volume reached 2.2 million metric tons, reflecting a 35 percent year-on-year growth.

Iran also participated in the EAEU's annual meeting held on September 30 and October 1 in Yerevan, Armenia, with a high-level delegation comprising both public and private sector representatives. During the meeting, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref reiterated the country's commitment to expanding bilateral and multilateral economic relations with EAEU member states.

The success of the free trade agreement underscores Iran's strategy to integrate more deeply into the regional economy and strengthen its presence in international markets.

## Iran-China non-oil trade stands at \$24b in 9 months

TEHRAN - The value of non-oil trade between Iran and China stood at \$24 billion in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 – December 21, 2024), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Foroud Asgari said that importing non-oil goods worth \$11 billion from Iran, China was the first destination of Iranian products in the mentioned nine-month period.

He also announced that by exporting non-oil products valued at \$13 billion to Iran, China was the second source of import for Iran in the first nine months of the present year.

Hossein Eyvazlou, a member of the executive board of Iran's National Development Fund (NDF), has announced plans for collaboration with China in the field of foreign investment in Iran.

Speaking at a press conference on January 4, Eyvazlou highlighted the importance of attracting foreign capital to boost Iran's economic projects, emphasizing the role of strategic partnerships with countries like China.

Details on the scope and nature of the cooperation were not disclosed, but it is expected to focus on key sectors that align with Iran's long-term development goals.

On December 20, 2024, a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) representative announced that the Chinese investors are prepared to fund the construction of combined-cycle power plants in Iran's energy-rich Khuzestan province to help address the country's energy imbalance and boost regional economic development.

Zhao Bin He, the Executive Director of SCO's Iran Office, made the remarks during a meeting with Khuzestan's governor and local religious leaders. "We are here to pay our respects to provincial authorities and outline China's plans for strengthening economic and trade ties, with a particular focus on Khuzestan," Zhao said.

He highlighted the historical and enduring relationship between Iran and China, describing it as built on mutual respect, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange.

## Four reasons predicting jump in Iran-Russia trade in 2025

TEHRAN- The ambassador of Iran in the Russian Federation mentioned four reasons for predicting the jump in trade between Iran and Russia in 2025.

Kazem Jalali pointed to the upcoming talks between the presidents of the two countries, the implementation of the next steps of the bilateral monetary and banking agreement, the beginning of free trade of Iran with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and geopolitical conditions as the areas for the growth of trade between the two countries.

In early December 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin highlighted the stability and reliability of trade and economic relations with Iran, expressing optimism about further growth in bilateral trade volumes.

Speaking at the plenary session of the 15th VTB Russia Calling!

Investment Forum in Moscow, themed "The Future of Capital and the Capital of the Future," Putin lauded ongoing projects between the two nations in logistics, energy, industry, and security.

"The North-South Corridor is operational, and the volume of transportation along this route is steadily increasing," Putin said, referring to enhanced cooperation in transportation.

Iran and Russia have initiated the implementation of two major transit-logistics projects aimed at enhancing trade routes and reducing cargo transport times. The projects include the Ulyanovsk-Astara rail corridor and the Volga-Caspian Sea river route, which are expected to cut delivery times from 21 days to seven.

According to a report in early December 2024, the inauguration ceremony was attended by the

governor of Ulyanovsk, Iran's Consul General in Kazan, and officials from India, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, as well as managers from logistics companies, including the Iranian-Russian Salyanka port. The projects aim to expand trade fleet capacity and increase economic and transit exchanges between Iran and Russia.

Iranian Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref has announced Tehran and Moscow's strong determination to strengthen bilateral relations to the maximum level, Shana reported.

Aref made the remarks during a meeting with the visiting Russian Minister of Energy Sergei Tsivilev in Tehran in mid-November.

As there are considerable capacities in both countries for boosting cooperation, it is important that the two sides enhance trade exchange and im-

plement the agreements on cooperation, Aref noted.

It is an indication of the strong will of both sides to foster ties as they continue consultations, especially during the current global and regional situation, the vice president said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran says that the all-out and long-term cooperation with Russia is of paramount importance, he added.

For his part, the Russian minister of energy said there are several grounds for deepening cooperation between his country and Iran.

The exchange of meetings between the two sides' senior officials will facilitate the deepening of relations, he underlined.

# Israeli soldiers continue to die in Gaza

Ex-Israeli Vice PM Ramon says Gaza war “represents a resounding strategic failure”

From page 1 ▶ Israeli media also reported that a soldier had been killed in the Gaza Strip and another had sustained serious injuries.

On Wednesday, the Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, in coordination with the al-Nasser Salah al-Din Brigades, announced it had “targeted a Zionist enemy command and control center in Juhor al-Dik village (south of Gaza City) with standard 60mm mortar shells in response to the occupation regime’s crimes against our people.”

The IOF is widely believed to have destroyed the village last year to construct the Netzarim Corridor, which has split Gaza in half.

On Sunday, Israeli media reported five casualties among the IOF who were transferred from the Gaza Strip due to an explosive device detonation. They were reported to have sustained severe injuries.

Experts believe the Israeli regime is hiding the real number of fatalities in Gaza.

The armed wing of Hamas, the al-Qassam brigades, published a video showcasing the seizure of several IOF drones east of Rafah city in the southern Gaza Strip.

The footage shows the quadcopter drones containing footage of Israeli positions and equipment.

Al-Qassam Brigades also released footage of its fighters



targeting Israeli forces entering Jabalia, north of the Strip.

As the Palestinian resistance continues to confront the IOF, the former head of the Israeli Security Council, Giora Eiland, has said “Israel decided that military pressure alone would achieve the war’s objectives, and this was a grave mistake because military pressure is the strategy Hamas has been preparing for over 15 years.”

Yossi Yehoshua, the military affairs analyst for the Israeli i24NEWS channel, admitted that “it is very difficult to dismantle Hamas’ military wing.”

Yehoshua also spoke about facing a “dilemma in the Gaza Strip,” noting that “Israel has been unable to establish an alternative authority to Hamas there on the one hand, and on the other, it has to wait for a prisoner exchange deal,” adding that “the deal is not close at the moment.”

The Israeli military analyst also stated that the IOF Chief of Staff, Herzi Halevi, “made it clear that the army does not intend to withdraw from the Gaza Strip quickly.”

At the same time, “the political leadership must decide whether the army will enter Gaza City.”

Yehoshua previously acknowledged that Hamas “succeeded in rebuilding its capabilities, recruiting new fighters, and doubling its firepower, while Israel remains stuck in a complex situation that is difficult to escape from and is waiting for a deal to be finalized.”

Former Israeli vice prime minister, Haim Ramon, recently highlighted “the depth of failure in the Gaza Strip,” after the “inability to achieve the main objective of the war, which was to overthrow Hamas’ rule and eliminate its military capabilities.”

In an article in the Israeli newspaper Maariv, Ramon pointed out

that Hamas’ military strength is still operational, and its civilian rule still extends throughout the Gaza Strip, despite facing heavy strikes and the death of both Yahya Sinwar and Esmail Haniyeh.

The former minister stated that Hamas “still controls all areas not occupied by the Israeli army, retains a large military force, holds 100 prisoners, and conducts effective combat against Israeli forces.”

He also highlighted Hamas’ ability to launch rockets at Israel, saying, “Even this week, rockets continued to fall from Gaza, as if we hadn’t fought there for 15 months.”

Ramon emphasized that the war in Gaza “represents a resounding strategic failure,” explaining that this failure “was the result of a wrong strategic plan and the inability of both military and political leadership to draw lessons and adopt an alternative strategic plan.”

Israeli warplanes, drones and artillery fire continue to kill civilians in Gaza, most of them women and children.

On Wednesday, the Gaza Health Ministry announced another 51 Palestinians had been killed and 78 others injured over the past 24 hours.

This means the total number of registered deaths by the ministry in Gaza since October 7, 2023, has reached 45,885. The total number of injuries registered by the ministry has reached 109,196.

## Gaza: A living hell fueled by American weapons



All hell will break out. I don’t have to say any more, but that’s what it is,” Trump said in remarks at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

Israel has turned Gaza into a “hell on earth” by employing a comprehensive range of weaponry throughout the Gaza Strip, including US-supplied bunker-buster bombs.

Israeli airstrikes and ground offensives have destroyed much of Gaza. The Israeli army has also bombed and stormed hospitals where patients and civilians, including women and children, have taken refuge.

Israel has pushed Gaza to the brink of famine as it stands accused of using starvation as a weapon in its genocide against the Palestinians.

With less than two weeks remaining until Trump is scheduled to be inaugurated for his second term, his ominous warning of “hell” for Gaza appears ironic.

This irony stems from the fact that Israel has employed all available weaponry, including American-made arms, against the population of Gaza. Meanwhile, some analysts have viewed

Trump’s threat as a potential indication of imminent US military involvement in Gaza.

Trump’s warning to Hamas, regardless of his intended message, has exposed the imperialistic tendencies of the United States.

More than 1,100 people were killed and about 250 others were taken captive following a surprise military operation by Hamas in southern Israel on October 7, 2023 which was followed by Israel’s brutal war on Gaza. Dozens of the captives still remain in Gaza.

Hamas has expressed readiness to reach a ceasefire with Israel to end the Gaza conflict and release the captives.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition have undermined negotiations for a ceasefire. Netanyahu is prolonging the war while Trump is blaming Hamas.

Trump wants to make Palestinians subservient to his demands. However, his aspirations are likely to remain unfulfilled, as the Palestinians have consistently demonstrated their resilience against coercion.

## Wide political division over Lebanese presidential candidate

From page 1 ▶ According to the Lebanese constitution, which is derived from the French constitution, the quorum for electing the president in the first round is two-thirds. In the following rounds of voting, it is half plus one.

This was previously repeatedly confirmed by Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, who said, “The constitution stipulates that the President of the Republic is elected by two-thirds in the first round, while in the second round, he is elected by an absolute majority.”

Amos Hochstein, the US envoy to West Asia, had stated that General Aoun is the closest to the internationally required specifications, linking aid to Lebanon to the political reform process.

Meanwhile, Reuters has revealed that the Biden administration would transfer \$95 million in military aid allocated to Egypt to Lebanon “to professionalize the Lebanese Armed Forces, enhance border security, combat terrorism, and meet security requirements resulting from the change of power in Syria.”

During his meeting with a group of representatives from various parliamentary blocs in the presence of US Ambassador Lisa Johnson, Hochstein reiterated his support for the election of a president who would have the support of the Arab and international communities, saying: “Joseph Aoun is a figure we know well. If you support his candidacy, he will have broad international support and acceptance.”

However, Berri’s response was as sharp as that to Saudi envoy Yazid bin Farhan, confirming to Hochstein that General Aoun “does not enjoy consensus; that there is a problem regarding the constitutional amendment [for his candidacy]; and that Aoun is not the figure capable of formulating understandings with the political forces in the country.”

Speaker Berri told Hochstein that there is a significant group of Lebanese supporting candidate Elias al-Bissari and that the latter’s election does not require a constitutional amendment.

In the meantime, informed sources said that the visit of Jean-Yves Le Drian, the French envoy to Beirut, “cannot be counted on to change anything.”

For his part, after his plan to fly the quorum of the session failed in the event the “Shiite duo” was able to elect their candidate by half plus one during the successive sessions, Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces, has continued to find a way out, as various MPs informed him that they did not intend to withdraw because the currently proposed candidates do not provoke the five-member committee, especially at this time, when Lebanon needs Western and Arab assistance.

Despite the clear support for electing the army commander, Geagea rebelled against Saudi dictates by telling Yazid bin Farhan, the Saudi envoy, that he would not elect a candidate who wanted to “impose himself by force.”

Obviously, Geagea’s position is not related to

his position as the army commander, but rather to what he sees as his best opportunity to reach the presidency.

Geagea has recently been claiming that the condition for accepting Aoun’s nomination is dependent on the approval of the “Shiite duo,” since it is not possible for him to obtain 86 votes without them and without the votes of independent MPs close to them, in addition to the MPs of the “Free Patriotic Movement.”

In his statement, Geagea said, “If the resistance team changes its opinion, publicly and clearly, by officially announcing the nomination of General Joseph Aoun, we are ready to look carefully into this matter.”

According to MP Gebran Bassil, head of the “Free Patriotic Movement,” the election of the army commander is “unconstitutional,” calling for not allowing outsiders to impose candidates because it is “an insult to the MPs.”

Bassil expressed his fear of any event “that may be security-related” that would lead to the disruption of the election session.

In parallel, sources have been leaked that the “Shiite duo” and the “Free Patriotic Movement” are in coordination regarding the election of General Al-Bissari in the second round.

Apparently, Thursday, which marks the 13th session, will not end the 800+ days of presidential vacuum. Hence, it will be postponed until after Trump’s inauguration on Jan 20.

## Trump will not rule out force to take Panama Canal, Greenland

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump refused on Tuesday to rule out using military or economic action to pursue acquisition of the Panama Canal and Greenland, part of a broader expansionist agenda he has promoted since winning the Nov. 5 election.

Trump, who takes office on Jan. 20, also floated the idea of turning Canada into a U.S. state, said he would demand far higher defense spending from NATO allies and promised to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America.

Still two weeks away from taking office, Trump has begun outlining an aggressive foreign policy with little regard to diplomatic considerations or the concerns of U.S. allies.

Asked at a press conference at his Florida resort whether he could assure the world he would not use military or economic coercion as he tries to gain control of the Panama Canal and Greenland, Trump said, “No, I can’t assure you on either of those two. But I can say this, we need them for economic security.”

Trump criticized American spending on Canadian goods and military support for Canada, saying the U.S. derives no benefits from doing so, and called the border between the two countries an “artificially drawn line.”

He suggested he would impose tariffs on Denmark if it resists his offer to purchase Greenland, which he said is vital to U.S. national security. Shortly before Trump’s comments, his son Don Jr. arrived in Greenland for a private visit.

Denmark has said Greenland, a self-governing part of its kingdom, is not for sale.

“I don’t think it’s a good way forward to fight each other with financial means when we are close allies and partners,” Denmark’s Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said late on Tuesday in response to Trump’s comments.

**Canada says: ‘we will never back down’**

Canada’s minister of foreign affairs, Melanie Joly, said on X, “President-elect Trump’s com-

ments show a complete lack of understanding of what makes Canada a strong country. Our economy is strong. Our people are strong. We will never back down in the face of threats.”

Panama’s top diplomat also pushed back on the incoming U.S. leader’s threat to retake the key global waterway, which the U.S. had built and owned before handing over control to the Central American nation in 1999.

“The only hands that control the canal are Panamanian and that’s how it will continue to be,” Foreign Minister Javier Martinez-Acha told reporters on Tuesday.

Ambassador Daniel Fried, a retired U.S. diplomat now with the Atlantic Council think tank, said Trump’s comments painted a picture of national power as territorial expansion and compared him to a “19th century imperialist.”

Seizing Greenland, Fried said, “would destroy NATO, because it would make us no different than Vladimir Putin,” Russia’s president. Trump’s promise to rename the Gulf of Mexico echoed his previous vow to revert the name of Denali, the highest mountain peak in North America, to Mount McKinley. Former President Barack Obama changed the name of the Alaskan mountain in deference to Native Americans.

Mexican Economy Minister Marcelo Ebrard, who is expected to play a key role in looming U.S.-Mexico trade issues, appeared to dismiss Trump’s call to rename the shared body of water later on Tuesday.

“Today I’d tell you if we saw each other in 30 years, the Gulf of Mexico will still be called the Gulf of Mexico,” he said, adding that the Mexican government would not get drawn into the debate.

Typically, the U.S. Board of Geographic Names sets geographic names, though presidents have also renamed geographic features via executive action.

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

## ICIR: Obliteration of healthcare system in northern Gaza puts civilians at grave risk

GENEVA (ICRC) – Repeated hostilities in and around hospitals have obliterated the healthcare system in northern Gaza, putting civilians at an unacceptably grave risk of going without life-saving care.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reiterates its urgent call for the respect and protection of medical facilities in line with international humanitarian law. This protection is a legal obligation and a moral imperative to preserve human life.

Hospitals are a lifeline for those wounded or sick in conflict. Al-Awda Hospital – previously supported by the ICRC with supplies – is now absorbing more pressure as one of the few functioning medical facilities in northern Gaza. The Kamal Adwan and Indonesian hospitals are now completely inoperable. For months, these medical facilities have struggled to provide care for patients as ongoing

hostilities have damaged hospitals and endangered or harmed staff, patients, and civilians.

No patient can expect their medical needs to be fully met today. The influx of patients, caregivers, and displaced civilians seeking shelter creates a situation that medical personnel cannot solve. The increasingly dangerous situation comes in addition to more than a year of insufficient provision of medical equipment and supplies, fuel, food, and specialized healthcare capacities.

The ICRC remains committed to supporting healthcare services wherever possible, which includes doing what we can to ensure the protection of the medical responders and civilian access to healthcare, as well as facilitating movements of medical personnel and equipment.

## ICRC president urges sustained humanitarian assistance to Lebanon

BEIRUT (ICRC) – Mirjana Spoljaric, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), visited Lebanon, where humanitarian needs remain immense following the latest escalation of hostilities.

“Civilians cannot afford for the ceasefire to lapse, plunging them back into heavy fighting that would bring more death and destruction,” said President Spoljaric. “Maintaining the ceasefire is essential for families to return home, rebuild their lives, and for humanitarian assistance to reach those in need.”

Lebanon faces extensive humanitarian challenges, with widespread destruction exacerbating existing economic and social crises. Thousands remain displaced, struggling with limited access to healthcare, essential services, and livelihoods. These challenges exist across the region, including catastrophic conditions in Gaza and significant needs in Syria, stretching the ability of humanitarian

organizations to respond.

“The scale of destruction and the staggering humanitarian needs in Lebanon could have been significantly mitigated if the parties to the conflict had fully adhered to the rules of war,” President Spoljaric said. “International humanitarian law still applies and is unequivocal: civilians must be protected, and their access to humanitarian aid guaranteed.”

In Lebanon, the ICRC works to create conditions that enable people to return home safely. This includes supporting livelihoods, repairing and safeguarding essential infrastructure, and increasing awareness about the risks of unexploded ordnance. Additionally, the ICRC provides healthcare services, relief items, and other essential support to individuals in need. Much of this work is carried out in collaboration with the Lebanese Red Cross and other partners.

## 9th Intl. Fajr Festival of Handicrafts opens call for entries



TEHRAN - The 9th International Fajr Festival of Handicrafts, known as Sarv-e Simin, is set to take place in Tehran from February 21 to 25.

The event, themed "Consensus and Cultural Diversity," will showcase exquisite handicrafts and traditional artworks from master artisans and designers from all corners of Iran and beyond.

Organizers highlight that the festival aims to create a unique platform for the competitive display of the finest handcrafted works. "The event underscores creativity, innovation, and the use of high-quality materials, positioning itself as both an inspiring competition and a model for artistic excellence worldwide."

The primary section of the festival, Fine Handicrafts, is set to feature exceptional works evaluated on criteria such as craftsmanship, aesthetic appeal, and cultural significance.

Artisans are invited to register on the festival's official website and submit high-quality images along with detailed descriptions of their entries.

Referring to the Judging and selection process, the evaluation process for the festival consists of three rigorous stages.

For an initial selection, judges review submitted images to shortlist entries. Shortlisting does not guarantee exhibition eligibility.

The next stage is physical review in which shortlisted works are physically examined to verify consistency and quality. Only verified

works are displayed at the festival.

And finally, a panel of judges scores the displayed works based on set criteria, selecting twenty finalists. Winners are announced at the closing ceremony.

The festival will grant two exclusive awards for international participants: the international award which is €700 and the Sarv-e Simin Trophy, as well as the Honorable Mention which is €400, and a Certificate of Merit.

Organizers say that the Fajr International Handicrafts and Traditional Arts Festival has gained a reputation for being a meeting point for artisans, cultural experts, and enthusiasts, showcasing the diversity and beauty of traditional arts.

The event is intended to highlight traditional skills passed down through centuries. It also seeks to inspire future generations to embrace these time-honored practices while facilitating new economic opportunities for artisans.

According to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Iran's annual handicraft exports currently stand at about \$250 million, with an additional \$250 million in informal "suitcase" exports. However, the global market for handicrafts is valued at \$770 billion, underscoring a significant opportunity for growth.

Currently, a selection of 13 cities and three villages in Iran have been registered by the World Council of Handicrafts as "world cities of handicrafts".

## Ancient tomb of royal physician Teti Neb Fu discovered in Saqqara

A team of French and Swiss archaeologists working in the ancient burial ground of Saqqara, outside Memphis in Egypt, has discovered a significant find. They excavated the tomb of Teti Neb Fu, a doctor to the royal family who served during the reign of King Pepi II, during the Sixth Dynasty of ancient Egypt. The tomb is believed to have been built around 4,000 years ago. It provides us a glimpse of what was considered advanced medicine back then as well as how science and magic were intertwined in ancient Egyptian society.

Teti Neb Fu was not a typical healer. Among his many titles were Chief Palace Physician, Priest and "Magician" of the Goddess Serket, Chief Dentist and Director of Medicinal Plants. His expertise in both medicine and magic illustrates how ancient Egyptians viewed physical and spiritual healing as interrelated. As Chief Dentist and Director of Medicinal Plants, Teti Neb Fu likely played a crucial role in developing innovative, less invasive surgeries, drug-based treatments, and early methods to fix teeth. His title, "Magician of Serket," named for the goddess of venomous beasts, also suggests that he knew extensively how to deal with snake and scorpion bites, knowledge revered in ancient Egyptian medicine.

The tomb is a mudbrick mastaba structure with beautifully detailed carvings, painted walls, and inscriptions detailing Teti Neb Fu's legacy. The painted false door, rendered in bright colors and detailed engravings, represents an opening to the worlds of the living and the dead. The ceiling, which is painted in red and designed to appear like granite

stones, adds to the burial site's magnificence.

Dr. Philippe Collombert, who leads the French-Swiss archaeological mission, explained that preliminary studies suggest the mastaba was likely looted in ancient times. However, the walls remain intact.

The tomb contains a stone sarcophagus with hieroglyphs carved into it spelling out Teti Neb Fu's name and titles. This discovery, and the tomb's lavish decorations, confirm he held a significant place in the royal court.

Saqqara, located about 25 miles southwest of Cairo, is often described as an "open-air museum" because of its rich history. It is the burial place of kings, officials, and holy people of Egypt's ancient dynasties. The tomb is part of a larger excavation project, which seeks the burial places of state officials who served under King Pepi II. The sites are near King Pepi II's burial complex and the tombs of his queens.

The French-Swiss team has been digging in this area since 2022. Their earlier finds include the mastaba of Vizier Weni. His long autobiographical inscriptions provide useful historical records of the Old Kingdom.

The tomb of Teti Neb Fu reflects both the advanced medical knowledge of the ancient Egyptians and the significant role magic played in their healing methods. The ancient Egyptians knew how to deal with heart problems, care for teeth, and even treat mental health issues such as dementia and depression. Mixing these methods with spiritual rituals shows their all-round approach to health.

(Source: Archaeology News)

# Late Ayatollah Taleqani's house registration plate unveiled at Tehran ceremony

TEHRAN - In a ceremony held on Tuesday evening, the registration plate for the late Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani's historic house was officially unveiled, marking its inclusion on Iran's national cultural heritage list.

The event, hosted at the National Museum of Iran, also inaugurated a special exhibition featuring rarely-seen photographs of Ayatollah Taleqani.

The event was attended by Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, along with officials, historians, researchers, and members of Taleqani's family.

The exhibition, which showcases 50 rare photographs from various stages of Ayatollah Taleqani's life, will remain open to the public until January 19.

Speaking at the ceremony, Salehi-Amiri highlighted the significance of preserving the memory of influential figures like Taleqani.

"This is neither a political nor a promotional gathering but an effort to introduce the younger generation to great personalities of our nation," he stated, emphasizing the importance of bridging generational gaps in understanding Iran's cultural heritage.



The minister described Taleqani's house as more than a historical structure, calling it a "narrator of events" that holds spiritual and cultural significance.

Salehi-Amiri described Taleqani's house as more than a historical structure, calling it a "narrator of events" that holds spiritual and cultural significance.

"This house is a part of Tehran's identity and has witnessed pivotal moments in history," the minister added.

Prominent historian and researcher Mohammad-Mehdi Jafari also addressed the gath-

ering, stressing the duty to safeguard such invaluable heritage. "Taleqani's house was a sanctuary for the people during the Shah's era [before the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution].

It stands as a material symbol of his legacy and a testament to his role in uniting people," Jafari remarked.

He further highlighted the importance of preserving Ta-

leqani's personal library, which contains books and documents of historical value.

Jafari urged the ministry to assist in returning any removed materials to the library so they can be accessible to scholars and the public.

Cultural heritage expert Eskandar Mokhtari also reflected on Taleqani's enduring impact. "There is a street named after Taleqani in every city I have traveled to so far."

"His house is not only architecturally significant but also a site of monumental historical events that brought people together under his leadership," Mokhtari stated.

Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani, a revered theologian, reformer, and advocate for democracy, played a significant role in the movement against Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last Shah of Iran.

According to organizers, the preservation of his residence and the exhibition of his photographs aim to honor his legacy and inspire future generations.

## UNESCO-registered Yazd: incentive packages proposed to preserve historic city

TEHRAN - A member of the Yazd City Council has emphasized the need to introduce incentive packages aimed at restoring and maintaining traditional mud-brick homes within the UNESCO-registered Historic City of Yazd.

Fakhr-al-Sadat Khamesi, speaking to Mehr news agency on Tuesday, highlighted Yazd as one of Iran's most significant cultural heritage and tourism destinations, known for its unique historic fabric that attracts both domestic and international visitors.

"Introducing incentive packages could be an effective strategy for preserving the historic texture of Yazd," Khamesi stated.

She elaborated that these packages might include financial facilities, grants, technical consultations, and tax exemptions for the owners of historic buildings.

According to Khamesi, offering such incentives would encourage homeowners to undertake the restoration and rehabilitation of their properties, thereby preventing further deterioration of these invaluable structures.

She also stressed the importance of educational initiatives for property owners and contractors, focusing on the principles of restoration and historic preservation.

"These training programs can significantly enhance the quality of restoration work," she said.

In addition to financial and educational support, Khamesi called for simplifying legal and administrative procedures to ob-



A view of Dadmehr Eco-lodge, a meticulously restored house from the Qajar era, located in Yazd.

tain restoration permits.

Yazd is a living testimony 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.

## Ancient antiquities recovered in western Iran

TEHRAN - Sixteen ancient artifacts, dating back to the first and second millennia BC as well as the Islamic era, have been discovered and seized by authorities in Khorramabad, Lorestan province.

On Wednesday, second brigadier general Yahya Elahi, the Lorestan Police Chief, stated that the operation followed a tip-off about individuals illegally storing historical objects in their private residence in Khorramabad.

"Following the report, the case was prioritized, and police forces, in coordination with judicial authorities, were dispatched to the location," Elahi explained.

During the search, officers uncovered 16 historical items that are believed to originate from the first and second millennia BC and the Islamic period.

The police chief also confirmed that three suspects were arrested during the operation.

The confiscated artifacts and the suspects were handed over to the relevant judicial authorities for further investigation.

"These artifacts are a vital part of our cultural heritage," Elahi emphasized.

"The police will take a firm stance against individuals at-



tempting to exploit the nation's historical and cultural identity for illegal profit."

Close to the border with Iraq in western Iran, Khorramabad serves as the capital of Lorestan province.

# Cuba is Iran's top Latin American partner in health sector: official

TEHRAN –Cuba is one of the countries in Latin America with the highest level of cooperation with Iran in different fields, including the health sector, according to an official with the health ministry.

"Thanks to advanced technologies in Cuba, the two countries have benefited from collaborative partnership in the health sector such as developing Hepatitis and PastoCovac vaccines," IRNA quoted Ali Jafarian as saying.

The official made the remarks on Tuesday while addressing the coordination meeting of the 19th Joint Economic Committee Meeting which is scheduled to be held from February 4 to 7 in Havana, the capital of Cuba.

"Currently the two countries are working together to manufacture pneumococcal vaccine, that's why the 19th Joint Economic Committee Meeting is hosted by the health ministry," the official added.

During the meeting, Mohammad-Hossein Niknam, the deputy health minister for international affairs, highlighted that following the 10-year agreement reached last year, the joint meeting has gained more importance, particularly in economic and political sectors.

"So far, besides the main document, seven other documents related to organizations have been finalized, and four more documents are being reviewed. Also, a list of joint projects in the health sector has been prepared."



During the meeting, the representatives of the stakeholder organizations and bodies presented their opinions and considerations about their own documents.

The participants also stressed the need to follow up on the agreements concluded by private sectors during the Havana International Exhibition in 2024.

The exchange of business delegations, the development of financial models to meet the Cuban markets' needs, and the opening of a credit line for the private sector's activities were among other issues that were

emphasized.

## strategic ties

In December 2024, Jafarian pointed to the status of Cuba as a political partner in the South American region and said that collaboration between Iran and Cuba is considered to be a strategic relationship.

In October 2024, Niknam and the Cuban ambassador to Tehran, Alexis Bandrich Vega, discussed ways to foster cooperation between the two countries.

The officials attended a coordinating 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.

## Japan remains committed to support Iran in hosting Afghan refugees

TEHRAN –Japanese ambassador to Tehran Tadaki Tsukada has highlighted the Japanese government's determination to support Iran in hosting Afghan refugees.

Referring to the high number of Afghan refugees residing in Iran and the astronomical costs in different fields including education, health, and treatment, Tsukada has announced Japan's readiness to provide educational services to the Afghan refugees living in Iran, IRNA reported.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with Nader Yar-Ahmadi, the head of the National Organization for Migration, in Tehran on Wednesday.

Lauding Iran's efforts in hosting refugees, the Japanese official stressed the importance of boosting collaborative efforts between the two countries, as well as attracting other international organizations' support to be able to address the problems, particularly the issue of drug abuse and addiction.

Yar-Ahmadi, for his part, announced the country's readiness to cooperate with Japan in the mentioned areas.

The official went on to say that "we expect Japan, along with other countries, to provide more humanitarian services to refugees, particularly, in infrastructure areas such as health and education.

Highlighting that there is no more capacity for face-to-face education of foreign nationals in the country, Yar-Ahmadi asked Japan's ambassador to cooperate with the country to implement a virtual educational program for refugees in Iran.



## Japan enhances healthcare, education for refugees in Iran

Japan's contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Iran boosts the country's policies that allow Afghan refugees access to education and healthcare services.

Japan has been a leading supporter of UNHCR's activities in the country for over a decade, particularly in the areas of education and healthcare for refugees, the UNHCR website announced in a press release on July 10, 2024.

The Government of Japan continues supporting UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, through its Supplementary Budget, and Partnership Grant Aid amounting to over US 4 million dollars, which helps Afghan refugees access health care in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This generous funding will allow UNHCR to enhance access to quality education and healthcare services for Afghan refugees through Iran's national

educational and healthcare systems.

It reaffirmed Japan's continued commitment to ensuring accessible and affordable health services for the most vulnerable Afghan refugees in Iran.

It will also support the construction of public schools benefitting both Afghans and Iranians alike.

Building on its long-standing partnership, Japan also provided critical support of USD 1.2 million to UNHCR's programs for Afghan refugees in Iran last year, which helped strengthen the national health care system and services for refugees.

"We are profoundly grateful to the people and Government of Japan for this vital support towards Afghan refugees in Iran," said Yumiko Takashima, UNHCR Representative in Iran.

"This contribution will help UNHCR maintain critical health interventions and preserve Iran's inclusive policies that allow refugees to access national health services."

Tsukada reiterated Japan's commitment, saying, "As a responsible international actor, Japan prioritizes responsibility-sharing to ease the burden on host communities.

Through partnerships like this with UNHCR, we aim to fulfill our global duties by supporting refugees and host communities across Iran."

Iran hosts one of the world's largest refugee populations, with an estimated 3.8 million Afghan refugees and those in refugee-like situations who have access to national services under Iran's inclusive policies.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Army to set up five field hospitals nationwide

TEHRAN – The Iranian Army will set up five field hospitals in the country to offer services to COVID-19 patients, IRIB reported on Thursday.

A 120-bed field hospital built by the Army, equipped with advanced medical devices to provide services to the people and medical staff, was inaugurated on April 24 in Isfahan province.

This field hospital is equipped with an ICU ward, ventilators, cardiac monitoring systems, oxygen generators, and resuscitation rooms, which offer services to coronavirus patients.

The Army, as it is present in various fields, can provide significant services to those infected with the pandemic with all its might, Abdollah Mousavi, Commander-in-Chief of the Army said.

## اعلام ساخت پنج بیمارستان صحرائی ارتش در کشور

فرمانده کل ارتش جمهوری اسلامی ایران دستور ساخت پنج بیمارستان صحرائی ارتش در کشور را صادر کرد.

به گزارش خبرگزاری صدا و سیما، امیر سرلشکر عبدالرحیم موسوی تاکید کرد: ارتش همان گونه که در زمینه‌های مختلف حضور داشته می‌تواند با تمام توان خود خدمات قابل توجهی به بیماران کرونایی ارائه دهد.

بیمارستان صحرائی ۱۲۰ تختخوابی ارتش مجهز به دستگاه‌های پیشرفته پزشکی برای ارائه خدمات به مردم و کادر پزشکی، چهارم اردبیشهر در اصفهان راه اندازی شد.

این بیمارستان صحرائی با تمام نیازمندی‌ها از جمله «آی. سی. یو.» و ونتیلاتور، مونیتریگ قلبی، دستگاه اکسیژن ساز، و اتاق احیا به بیماران کرونایی خدمات ارائه می‌دهد.

## No HMPV cases reported in Iran: health minister

TEHRAN –According to Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi, there has been no report of human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in the country so far.

Regarding the surge in HMPV cases in China which has prompted concerns over the entry of the virus into the country, the health minister highlighted that "we are regularly checking cases in laboratories on a daily basis. No cases of the virus have been detected in Iran," ISNA reported.

On Tuesday, Hossein Kermanpour, an official with the health ministry, said that HMPV diagnostic kits are used for the detection of the virus, and the results are monitored daily.

It is logical to be ready to address the virus if needed, but there has been no report of HMPV cases in the country. However, the health systems are fully prepared, the official noted.

HMPV is not a new virus, discovered in 2001, it belongs to the Pneumoviridae family, which also includes Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). However, serological studies suggest that the virus has been present in humans for over 60 years and is globally distributed.

HMPV have cold-like symptoms including cough, runny nose, and mild fever. Rarely, the virus causes severe lower respiratory tract conditions, including bronchitis, pneumonia, and asthma exacerbations.

"China is undergoing an increase in the number of infectious cases with severe respiratory symptoms, particularly affecting children and the elderly. However, it should be noted that there is nothing to worry about," IRNA quoted Amiris Ramezani, the secretary of the association of infectious and tropical diseases experts, as saying on Tuesday.

"Several factors, including mycoplasma pneumonia, metapneumovirus, influenza, and new strains of coronavirus, as well as winter have contributed to the rise in cases of severe respiratory disease detected in China," she highlighted.

### No global health emergency on HMPV

The World Health Organization (WHO) has not flagged the outbreak of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in any country as a health emergency, so there is no need to worry, an official with the ministry of health, has said.

The official made the remarks on Sunday following the recent reports and social media posts suggesting that the virus is spreading rapidly across China. Some claim that hospitals and crematoriums are overwhelmed by the influx of pa-

tients.

Videos circulating online show crowded hospitals, with users reporting multiple viruses, including Influenza A, HMPV, Mycoplasma pneumoniae, and Covid-19, as the culprits behind the surge in respiratory illnesses.

Reports indicate that the spike in HMPV cases has led to a notable increase in sudden deaths, particularly affecting individuals aged 40 to 80.

HMPV can cause both upper and lower respiratory diseases in people of all ages, with young children, older adults, and those with weakened immune systems being most vulnerable.

"According to the International Health Regulations (IHR), if a disease is widespread in a region, it must be reported to the World Health Organization, then the organization will determine whether or not a particular event constitutes a public health emergency of international concern," health ministry's website quoted Qobad Moradi as saying.

Observing personal hygiene, wearing masks, and washing hands continuously can greatly contribute to the control and prevention of infectious diseases, particularly respiratory and seasonal diseases, he noted.

HMPV often causes symptoms similar to the common cold, including cough, fever, stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, wheezing, shortness of breath, and rashes.

However, the risk of severe illness is higher for people who are younger than five or older than 65, with those cases taking longer to recover from. Unlike Covid-19, there is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for HMPV; treatment primarily involves managing symptoms.

Like other similar viruses, HMPV usually spreads from person to person through droplets from coughing and sneezing, through human contact such as hugging or kissing, and through touching surfaces and objects contaminated with the virus and then the mouth, nose or eyes.

Experts caution against the use of antiviral drugs to treat HMPV. In an interview with the state-backed National Business Daily, a respiratory expert in Shanghai warned against blindly using antiviral medications, as no vaccine exists for HMPV, and its symptoms often resemble those of a common cold.

In 2023, HMPV cases were reported in the Netherlands, Britain, Finland, Australia, Canada, the US, and China.

## IRCS ready to provide relief services to quake-hit Nepal

TEHRAN –The head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has announced readiness to assist people affected by the recent earthquake in Nepal.

An earthquake with a 7.1 magnitude at a depth of 10 kilometers struck near the Tibet-Nepal border on Tuesday morning; it was followed by multiple aftershocks.

The epicenter was about 75 kilometers from Mount Everest and the border with Nepal.

At least 126 died, 188 were injured on the Tibetan side, and thousands of houses were leveled.

IRCS head Pir-Hossein Kolivand in a message to the head of the Nepal Red Cross Society Umesh Prasad Dhakal expressed sorrow over the catastrophic earthquake writing "In this challenging situation, on behalf of the Iranian Red Crescent Society and myself, I would like to express my condolence to you, your colleagues in the Nepal Red

Cross Society, and earthquake-affected people and convey our sympathy with those lost loved ones. We are ready to send the medical and relief teams to assist humanitarian operations in Nepal."

### IRCS is a top organization

In September 2024, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) project manager, Faisal Mahboob, lauded the capabilities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) as outstanding.

The official said he was really impressed by the capacity and the wide range of activities carried out by the IRCS.

"The International Federation will support the activities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society to commence a new phase of collaboration with the society," Mahboob added, the IRCS website reported.



## Siberian gulls wintering in Shiraz

Every year with the arrival of winter, Siberian seagulls migrate to the southern city of Shiraz. The presence of these birds creates a beautiful and attractive scene for the citizens.



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JANUARY 9, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Shunning a person who is attracted by you is a sign of your misfortune, and your inclination towards another who ignores you is a sign of your abjectness.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times » Noon:12:11 Evening: 17:29 Dawn: 5:46 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:14 (tomorrow)

## Sofia MENAR Film Festival to show 19 movies from Iran

TEHRAN-Nineteen films from Iran will attend the 17th Sofia MENAR Film Festival, which will be held in the capital of Bulgaria from January 17 to 30.

The Iranian films will be screened in various sections including the Main Program, MENART Biting Docs, Short Film Selection, and Exclusive: Iranian Films on 35 mm, Mehr reported.

The Main Program section will show six films from Iran including "In the Arms of the Tree" written and directed by Babak Khadjepasha, "Little White Fish" by Mohammad Wahaj and Mohammad Abdollahi, "Maestro" by Emad Hosseini, "Green Plum Season" by Ali Bayat, "This Controllable Crowd" by Mohammad Ojani, "Soodabeh" by Mohammad Ali Sajjadi.

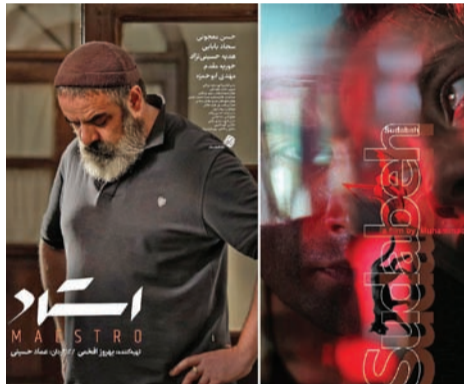
There will be eight Iranian films in the Short Film Selection including "Son" by Saman Hosseinpour, "Footprint" by Mustafa Alami, "The School Principal" by Mikael Dayani, "Penniless Cinema" by Ali Arefnasab, "Provided" by Soheil Rahimi, "Boycott" by Amin Rafiee, "Dombra Scream" by Ghiam Shirazi, and "The Wild Man" by Mohammad Reza Maei.

"Broken Bones" by Alireza Memariani will be the only Iranian film shown in the MENART Biting Docs section.

Exclusive: Iranian Films on 35 mm is the special section of the upcoming edition of the festival, which will screen four acclaimed movies by two globally-renowned filmmakers Majid Majidi and Reza Mirkarimi.

The section will show "The Color of Paradise" and "Baran" are the two films by Majidi as well as "So Close, So Far" and "As Simple as That" by Mirkarimi.

Sofia MENAR Film Festival makes Bulgarian audience familiar with the culture and traditions of the Islamic world. The program of the festival presents the best of the West, East, and Central



Asia and North Africa cinema productions, including feature films, documentaries and short projects.

A lot of accompanying events are organized within the frames of the festival. These events are particularly selected and bound up with the countries of the region, representing traditions and customs of the ethnic groups that inhabit its lands.

The festival is held every year in January. MENAR is organized by "Pozor" as one-of-a-kind Balkans' largest cultural event representing Muslim world and its traditions.

With its 16 editions from 2009 to 2024, the festival has presented more than 1,000 titles to the Bulgarian audience – film productions shot in Asia and Africa.

The term MENAR, for "Middle East and North Africa Region," is an acronym often used to cover an extensive area, stretching from Morocco to Iran, including the majority of both West Asian and Maghreb countries.

Moreover, menar in Arabic language means lighthouse, light tower, guiding light. It has got into use into Bulgarian language, by means of Ottoman Turkish language by way of minare word, meaning the tower, which illuminates the path.

## Cartoon of Day



Children in Gaza Are Dying of Cold  
Cartoonist: Mikail Çiftçi from Turkey

# Kamal Sharaf honored in Tehran: a tribute to Yemen's artistic voice of resistance

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- A tribute ceremony honoring Yemeni cartoonist Kamal Sharaf was held on Tuesday evening, culminating in the inauguration of his exhibition titled "Kamal Al-Fann" at the Art Bureau.

The event took place with the presence of notable figures including Iranian graphic designers and caricaturists Masoud Nejabati, Seyyed Masoud Shojai Tabatabai, and Maziar Bijani, as well as the secretary of the 15th Ammar Popular Film Festival Marzieh Hashemi, and Russian artists Alexandra Faldina and Alexander Faldin.

The family of martyr Mostafa Mohammad Mirzai, the only Iranian martyr buried in Yemen, and the family of martyr Hasan Irlu were also in attendance.

Speaking at the ceremony, Shojai Tabatabai said that Kamal Sharaf's works represent a significant contribution to the resistance front.

"I had the fortune to collaborate with him on a joint exhibition held in Iraq along the Arbaeen pilgrimage route."

He emphasized the technical merit of Sharaf's art, stating, "Although his works may appear simple at first glance, they are technically profound. He is one of the few artists whose style is easily recognizable."

Shojai Tabatabai added, "This artist pays special attention to the theme of resistance; he cannot overlook the events transpiring in Gaza and Lebanon, and this concern is reflected in his artworks."

Abdulrahman Rajeh, the head of the Yemeni community in Iran also expressed gratitude to the organizers of the Ammar Festival and the Art Bureau for arranging the commemoration and exhibition, while thanking the Islamic Republic of Iran for inviting Kamal Sharaf and supporting Yemen's resistance.



"Yemen has gone through several tumultuous years, and many unfortunate events have occurred there," he said.

"Sharaf is among the few Yemenis who have ventured into the art of resistance caricature, and he has even received a degree of artistic recognition from Abdul Malik al-Houthi, with his art gaining prominence following the Al-Aqsa Storm," he noted.

Representing the Yemeni Embassy, Rajeh stated, "We are ready to collaborate with Iran in all fields of art."

Marzieh Hashemi, secretary of the Ammar festival, briefly discussed the impact of art in the resistance movement, asserting that "the language of art speaks volumes. Every artist in the resistance axis has a duty to articulate the reality of genocide."

"Despite the years, many communities remain unaware. Over these years, humanity was expected to advance, yet infants in Gaza freeze in the cold. Hospitals have been at-

tacked, but no one has raised their voice," she added.

"This is the current state of Palestine, and it is our duty to work in this regard. We must send messages worldwide, fostering connections among artists to communicate a powerful message to the world. We are tasked with quenching people's thirst for truth through art. Art and media play a vital role in wars and awaken the masses. When people awaken, the world transforms."

For his part, Kamal Sharaf stated, "I am experiencing conflicting emotions at this moment; a mix of sadness and joy. Joy for participating in this ceremony and sorrow due to the ongoing situation in Palestine and Gaza."

"The world not only watches the atrocities of the last 15 months but also aids the oppressors in their crimes," he remarked.

Sharaf explained his approach to the art of resistance caricature, "I began my art of caricature 20 years ago. Caricature has always held a special place for me, not merely as

a means of journalism or financial gain, but as an art form to express my beliefs. I have always seen myself as a soldier in the battle."

He quoted Imam Khomeini (RA), stating, "He said that America is a great devil, and I have a strong faith in that. I feel like a soldier fighting against the enemy, considering the art of caricature a form of jihad."

"I have tried to be industrious and make good use of my art; like a bullet that must hit its target at the right moment," he mentioned.

"Caricature is a language that artists around the world understand regardless of their spoken language."

Moreover, the exhibition "Kamal Al-Fann" was inaugurated in the presence of the attendees.

Furthermore, the exhibition "Kamal Al-Fann" was inaugurated in the presence of the attendees.

The exhibit features 120 pieces by Yemeni artist, revolving around the theme of resistance.

## 19th International Resistance Theater Festival wraps up

TEHRAN- The 19th edition of the International Resistance Theater Festival came to an end on Wednesday in Arvand Free Trade Zone, in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Winners in various categories were announced during the ceremony, which was attended by a number of artists, cultural officials, officials from the Basij Organization and various other managers from Khuzestan province, Mehr reported.

This edition of the festival introduced a special award named after Ismail Haniyeh, chief of the political bureau of the Palestinian Resistance Movement Hamas.

The award was presented to the performances "W.C.N.S.N.F." directed by Mehdi Ruzbahani; "My

Tired Legs," directed by Mokhtar Mohammadi; and "Sign," directed by Rezvan Parsa.

The jury awarded a certificate of appreciation, a medal, and a cash prize to Mokhtar Mohammadi for directing "My Tired Legs."

Speaking at the ceremony, Mohammad Kazemtabar, the festival's secretary provided an overview of the event's proceedings. He stated that a new path is beginning, marking its completion at this time. This year's festival has presented four sections to enthusiasts, including competitive stage theater, playwriting competitions, street theater, and seminars.

He emphasized that this edition aimed to bring a fresh perspective to the realm of resistance

theater compared to previous years, suggesting that this festival should be viewed as the start of a new journey.

Kazemtabar expressed hope for overcoming shortcomings and continuing on the right path. In this regard, he expressed gratitude to all friends and colleagues in the festival's executive committee and the esteemed individuals in Khuzestan, while requesting forgiveness for any deficiencies.

The 19th International Resistance Theater Festival was organized by the Theater of Revolution and Sacred Defense Association and the Cultural Foundation for Revayat-e Fat'h in Tehran and various cities across the country.

## Iranshahr Theater hosting "A Doll's House, Part 2"

TEHRAN-Iranshahr Theater in Tehran is hosting the play "A Doll's House, Part 2" written by the American playwright Lucas Hnath.

Mohsen Alikhani has directed the 80-minute play, which has Negar Takhtkeshha, Pardis Jalali, Hamideh Rajabzadeh, Sara Alaghmand, Mahmoud Bagheri, and Sajjad Hosseini in the cast.

Originally written in 2017, the play

picks up after Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play "A Doll's House" concludes. Hnath's play, set in 1894, concerns Nora, who had left her family and then returns after 15 years. The play examines the rules of society and gender.

In the final scene of Ibsen's 1879 groundbreaking masterwork, Nora Helmer makes the shocking decision to leave her husband and children and begin a life on her own. This cli-

mactic event—when Nora slams the door on everything in her life—instantly propelled world drama into the modern age.

"A Doll's House, Part 2" begins with a knock on the door — the same door that was slammed shut 15 years earlier when Nora exited at the end of Ibsen's play. Nora has returned, and it is she who is knocking. After leaving her husband, children, and the nursemaid, Nora became

a successful feminist novelist. The reason for her return is to finalize a divorce from Torvald; she needs him to sign the legal papers. Nora is questioned about what she has been doing, and the family and the nursemaid express their recriminations of her.

The play will remain on stage at the Iranshahr Theater, located in Artists Park on North Mousavi St., Taleqani St., through January 20.

## Francis Lathom's gothic novel "The Midnight Bell" at Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the gothic novel "The Midnight Bell" written by Francis Lathom has been released in the Iranian book market.

Maryam Mahdavi has translated the book and Qoqnoos Publishing House has brought it out in 346 pages, IRNA reported.

The book was first published anonymously in 1798 in London and has, on occasion, been wrongly attributed to George Walker. It was one of the seven "horrid novels" lampooned by Jane Austen in her novel "Northanger Abbey".

Subtitled "A German Story, Founded on Incidents in Real Life," it concerns the quest of the hero, Alphonsus Cohenburg, to regain his estates and stolen identity after his parents are murdered by his villainous uncle. The young man becomes a soldier, then a miner, before marrying his true love

Lauretta, only to see her kidnapped by bandits.

The last third of the book is set in the quintessentially gothic Copenhagen castle and features tales of ghostly apparitions, who turn out to be diabolical Roman Catholic priests, another common gothic trope. The midnight bell of the title calls the villainous monks to their dark meeting place.

One of the greatest of all Gothic novels, "The Midnight Bell" features a blend of fast-paced action and spine-tingling suspense, pervaded throughout by a tone of profound melancholy.

Suspicion is a significant theme in "The Midnight Bell," as Count Cohenburg's suspicion of his wife's infidelity is the direct cause of the murder that starts the book's plot. Additionally, the novel ends with Alphonsus warning his children of the dangers of suspicion.

Lathom explores ideas of inheritance, beyond any references to material wealth, as "The Midnight Bell" is concerned with children's inheritance of the sins of their parents.

Francis Lathom (1774-1832) was a British gothic novelist and playwright. In 1795, he published his first novel, "The Castle of Ollada," a Gothic romance indebted to Ann Radcliffe's "The Mysteries of Udolpho" (1794) and "Walpole's The Castle of Otranto" (1764).

Lathom would go on to publish many more Gothic novels, all with sensational titles such as "Astonishment!!!," "The Fatal Vow," "The Unknown," and "The Impenetrable Secret, Find it Out!"

But Lathom was not only a Gothic novelist: about half his works are works of contemporary satire or attempts at fiction in the mode of Walter Scott.