



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