

## Why Is Western Media Constantly Lying About Mojtaba Khamenei?

Washington Post becomes the latest outlet to spread blatant lies about the Leader's son



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A citizen takes a selfie with Mojtaba Khamenei during the annual Quds Day rally in Tehran, May 31, 2019

## Iran-Russia agreement to include new emphasis on territorial integrity

TEHRAN – Iranian Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, announced on Saturday that the new comprehensive strategic partnership agreement between Iran and Russia explicitly includes respect for each other's territorial integrity.

During an interview with an Iranian news agency, Jalali emphasized, "We expect our partner countries to respect our territorial integrity," highlighting that this commitment is clearly outlined in Article Three of the agreement which is poised to be signed later this month. ▶ Page 2

## Resistance remains indispensable in Lebanon, says Iranian envoy

TEHRAN – Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, has dismissed claims that the election of Joseph Aoun as Lebanon's president signifies a defeat for the Resistance.

Speaking on the Jahan-e Emrooz program, Amani characterized such assertions as misguided illusions, asserting that the Resistance remains a central force in Lebanese politics. He underscored that, while Joseph Aoun was not the Resistance's preferred candidate, the process demonstrated the Resistance's influence, as no president could be elected without its agreement.

"Some are attempting to frame the agreement reached as a loss for Hezbollah, but this interpretation is inaccurate," Amani said.

The ambassador elaborated that the Resistance played a decisive role in shaping the presidential outcome, highlighting that electing a president without its consent would have been impossible. ▶ Page 2

## "Yahya's Prophecy" exhibit showcases stories of resilience in war refugee camps

TEHRAN – A photo exhibition titled "Yahya's Prophecy" has opened in Qazvin, offering a unique and immersive experience that combines imagery, text, and sound.

The exhibition delves into the realities faced by Lebanese refugees in Syria, particularly in the war-torn areas, during the Israeli attacks.

The exhibition showcases the remarkable work of Mahsa Alviri, the first female photographer from Qazvin to document life in conflict zones, specifically in Syria and Lebanon, where she engaged with Lebanese war refugees through interviews and visual storytelling. ▶ Page 8

## Will US, co-conspirators force Israel to leave from Lebanon's lands after appointing Aoun?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON – On his first working day after being elected president, President Joseph Aoun called for binding parliamentary consultations next Monday to name the prime minister-designate to form the next government.

External pressures, however, suggest that Najib Mikati will keep the post until May 2026, the date of the next parliamentary elections.

During his visit to Beirut, Yazid bin Farhan, the Saudi envoy, had reportedly made clear the prime minister that Riyadh and the five-member committee favour.

The five-member committee includes representatives of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, the US and France.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah-Amal Movement duo, in addition to the Marada Movement and the Socialist Party would apparently nominate Mikati unlike the Free Patriotic Movement, the Lebanese Forces and the Kataeb Party.

## Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi faces smear campaign

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Amid fluid regional developments, a media-driven propaganda campaign has been waged against Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi, also known as the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

Some Iraqi satellite channels have tried to join the bandwagon against the Hashd al-Shaabi.

Fabrications against the PMU's dissolution have long circulated on social media platforms but Iraqi satellite station al-Rasheed took the disinformation campaign to another level.

In a news broadcast, the TV station ran a report based on an alleged informed source about meetings between Iran's IRGC Quds Force Commander General Esmail Qaani, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, and several PMU commanders.

According to an "informed source", General Qaani entrusted the decision regarding the future of the Iraqi PMU to the Iraqi government and asked the commanders to act in line with the official stance of the Iraqi government. The meetings reportedly lasted only a few hours.

## Waterloo on the horizon: Israeli military on brink of collapse

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – The fundamental reason behind Israel's inability to avert the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, has remained the major elephant in the room.

On Friday, an Israeli opposition politician reopened old wounds by asking the Israeli military Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi to step down.

Gadi Eisenkot, a member of Israel's Knesset with the opposition National Unity party, demanded that Halevi, resign along with "those who had a role on October 7, from division commanders and their counterparts to the prime minister".

Speaking to Israeli media, Eisenkot, who served as the 21st Chief of Staff of the regime's army from 2015 to 2019, said Halevi "will not be forgiven" for the "giant failure" in preventing the Hamas attack dubbed the Al-Aqsa Storm.

Eisenkot was also the war cabinet observer of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's emergency unity coalition who stepped down along with cabinet minister Benny Gantz in June.

▶ Page 5

## Iran's export to Eurasian countries rises over 20%

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's foreign trade with member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reached \$2.704 billion in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 – December 21, 2024), according to the head of Iran's Customs Administration (IRICA).

Foroud Asgari, speaking to IRNA's economic correspondent, provided details on Iran's exports and imports with EAEU countries.

He stated that Iran's exports to the EAEU amounted to approximately \$1.494 billion, reflecting a 20.79 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

He added that the weight of exports during this period was estimated at 3.857 million tons, marking a 21.69 percent rise year-on-year. ▶ Page 4

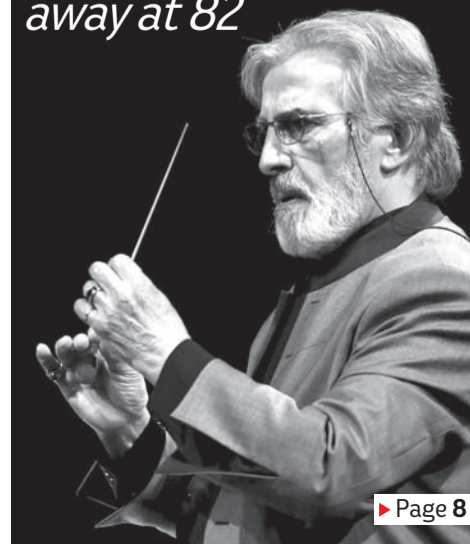


## Iran announces readiness to help victims of LA wildfires

TEHRAN – The head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), Pirhossein Kolivand, has announced the country's readiness to dispatch humanitarian aid to assist the people affected by the wildfires in Los Angeles.

In a message to Cliff Holtz, the CEO of the American Red Cross, Kolivand offered condolences and expressed sympathies, saying, "Widespread fires in Los Angeles, which has demolished houses, threatened lives, and turned the scenic landscape into ashes, has affected the whole world, particularly responsible and sympathetic people. ▶ Page 7

## Renowned Iranian composer Fereydoon Shahbazian passes away at 82



▶ Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The need to prepare for U.S.'s psychological warfare

In a note, Jam-e-Jam emphasized the importance of preparing to counter America's psychological warfare against Iran. The article argued that the most intense confrontation between Iran and the United States is not economic, political, or military but psychological. Consequently, all sectors of society must actively engage in this ongoing battle. The United States, the article claimed, is leveraging psychological operations to achieve its objectives, attempting to propagate the notion that development and progress are unattainable unless Iran reverts to its past relationship with America. The article stressed that the warning from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on this matter is both insightful and urgent, urging vigilance against such tactics. It concluded that America's ultimate goal is to dominate Iran, and any compliance with U.S. demands would contradict the interests and aspirations of the Iranian people. Capitulation to U.S. pressures, it warned, would fail to satisfy public expectations.

Ham Mihan: Negotiations must not delay people's lives

In an interview with Ham Mihan, Abdolreza Farajirad, a geopolitics professor, discussed the importance of addressing Iran's membership in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). He highlighted that joining FATF could provide a way for Iran's banking system to overcome restrictions related to money laundering and other financial hurdles. Farajirad noted that even if Iran reaches a nuclear agreement with the West, issues within the banking system and financial exchanges would persist as long as the country remains on the FATF blacklist. "Countries will not engage with us if we are blacklisted," he explained. He argued that advancing negotiations with the West could improve prospects for resolving the FATF issue. Farajirad also criticized the politicization of FATF within Iran, where it has become entangled in foreign policy debates and domestic political rivalries. He warned that inaction on this front would harm relations with even friendly nations. "The lives of the people should not be delayed by negotiations," he concluded, stressing the need for pragmatic solutions.

CIA director acknowledges Iran's peaceful nuclear stance



TEHRAN – During a Friday interview with NPR, CIA Director William Burns addressed supposed concerns about Iran's civilian nuclear program, stating, "We do not see any sign today that any such decision has been made" regarding Iran developing a nuclear weapon.

He added, "We obviously watch it intently."

This admission by one of the top intelligence figures in the U.S. highlights a crucial aspect often ignored by Western media: Iran's steadfast commitment to the peaceful application of nuclear technology.

Echoing the perspective shared by the CIA Director, several U.S. and Western authorities, including National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, have similarly acknowledged the absence of any evidence indicating that Iran has a nuclear weaponization program.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has issued a fatwa

Arman-e-Melli: Iraqi PM's mediating role in Tehran

In a commentary, Arman-e-Melli analyzed Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani's visit to Tehran, highlighting his growing influence as a key regional politician. The piece noted Iraq's efforts to mediate the Iran-Saudi conflict and al-Sudani's outreach to the new Syrian government as evidence of his emerging stature. Al-Sudani's trip to Iran drew significant speculation, with many questioning whether he carried messages from the United States regarding Iran's activities in Iraq, particularly concerning the Hashd al-Shaabi forces. The editorial suggested that Sudani likely sought to reconcile Iranian support for Iraqi Resistance groups with U.S. concerns, aiming to prevent friction with Washington while preserving the role of Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq's security landscape.

Siasat-e-Rooz: West's plot to divide Iran will fail

Siasat-e-Rooz dedicated its editorial to exposing the West's false ambitions to divide Iran, arguing that such schemes will ultimately fail. The piece accused the United States and Israel of exploiting Turkey to further their agenda, noting that Ankara is unlikely to play a decisive role in Syria's future. The West, the editorial stated, has used support for Kurdish groups in the region to implement its divisive policies, which will also have repercussions for Turkey. However, it asserted that Iran is well-equipped to counter such separatist agendas, thanks to the awareness and unity of its people and leadership. The piece criticized Turkey's approach to regional issues, particularly its Pan-Turkism policies, which have sometimes worked against Iran's interests, such as in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the proposed Zangezur Corridor. While emphasizing Iran's past demonstrations of friendship to Turkey, the editorial called for Ankara to clarify its position and warned that trust in Turkey's current policies is diminishing. The editorial concluded with a firm statement: "The policy of separatism will not succeed in Iran. Both the people and the government are resolute in resisting such attempts."

Resistance remains indispensable in Lebanon, says Iranian envoy

From page 1 ▶ "The Resistance is an integral part of Lebanon's political fabric. Recent developments in Syria further confirm that removing the Resistance from Lebanon is unfeasible. The U.S., Saudi Arabia, and France cannot move forward in Lebanon without coming to terms with the Resistance," he stated.

Amani also explained that the Resistance and its supporters engaged in dialogue with Joseph Aoun during the election process, ultimately reaching a mutually beneficial agreement.

"Joseph Aoun became Lebanon's president only after an agreement was reached with representatives of the Resistance," Amani emphasized. "This sends a strong message to the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and France that unilateral actions will not succeed, and consensus is essential."



Amani also highlighted the broader alliance of Resistance groups, including Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, and Christian factions, which regard the Resistance as vital for Lebanon's stability and survival. He pointed to the impact of regional developments, particularly in Syria, as evidence of the Resistance's enduring importance. "Our as-

essment is that the Resistance cannot be sidelined or eliminated in Lebanon," he declared.

Addressing Joseph Aoun's political orientation, Amani stressed that the new president is not anti-Iranian.

He commended Hezbollah and the Resistance for their strategic approach to the elec-

tion, which involved careful calculations and negotiations. "After the initial round of parliamentary voting, Resistance supporters engaged in constructive talks with Joseph Aoun, reaching an understanding that their concerns would be accounted for in his presidency," Amani noted.

The Iranian ambassador recently met with President Joseph Aoun to discuss the next steps in Lebanon's governance.

Aoun secured 99 out of 128 votes in Lebanon's deeply divided parliament, with support from across the political spectrum, including Hezbollah legislators and their rivals. Following his election as president on Thursday, Aoun, who had served as the 14th commander of the Lebanese armed forces since 2017, formally stepped down from his military role.

Iran-Russia agreement to include new emphasis on territorial integrity

From page 1 ▶ This clause underscores the importance of maintaining sovereign rights and national independence, which was absent in the 2001 agreement between Tehran and Moscow.

This reassurance follows several years of concerning remarks by Russian officials regarding three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf. In July 2023, a statement released during a Russia-Persian Gulf Cooperation Council meeting appeared to question Iran's sovereignty over the islands of Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs. This immediately prompted Iran to summon the Russian ambassador for a swift diplomatic response.

Concerns further intensified in December 2023 when Russia seemed to endorse the UAE's baseless claims during the 6th Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum, triggering strong objections from Iranian officials.

They reiterated Iran's indisputable right to these territories, with the late Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and other prominent figures in Tehran affirming the islands' historical and legal status as integral parts of Iran.

A new era of cooperation

Revealing new details about the upcoming agreement, Ambassador Jalali stated



that it comprises a preamble and 47 articles.

It is due to succeed the comprehensive cooperation agreement signed in 2001, which was ratified by the Iranian Parliament, expired in 2021, and was extended until 2026.

"Today's relations have significantly expanded compared to 24 years ago, necessitating an update," Jalali noted.

According to the ambassador, Iran prepared the draft, and after consultations and revisions with Russia, finalized it over approximately three years.

Jalali highlighted the extensive reach of the agreement, noting that in addition to emphasizing territorial integrity, it encompasses political and economic interactions, regional initiatives, and both bilateral and multilateral efforts.

Additionally, the agreement addresses energy cooperation, reflecting the significant energy resources of both nations.

When questioned about the similarity between this agreement and Russia's recent security pacts with Belarus and North Korea, Jalali clarified, "This agreement is different; Russia has defined partnerships in certain areas with those countries that we are not deeply involved in."

He stressed Iran's commitment to independence and self-reliance, stating, "We are not keen on entering into bloc politics."

Jalali concluded by noting that the agreement would be submitted to the Iranian Parliament for approval, following the process adopted in 2001.

This contrasts with the Iran-China 25-year agreement, signed in 2021, which was not subject to parliamentary approval, making the pact with Russia notably different in terms of legislative oversight and public disclosure.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian is scheduled to visit Russia on January 17 to hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and other high-ranking officials to sign the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement, further solidifying the ties between the two nations.

Iran Army launches 'Eqtedar 1403' air defense drill



TEHRAN – Iran's Army began the "Eqtedar 1403" air defense drill on Saturday night, a major military exercise aimed at bolstering the country's defense capabilities.

Spearheaded by the Army's Air Defense Force, this comprehensive maneuver will take place across key regions, including air defense zones in the western and northern parts of the country.

Under the operational command of the Joint Air Defense Base of Iran, the drill will integrate efforts from the Army's Air Defense Force and the Air Force.

The exercise is designed to simulate realistic battlefield conditions, providing an opportunity to test a variety of advanced, domestically produced air defense systems.

These systems will engage in countering a range of threats, in-

cluding aerial assaults, missile strikes, and electronic warfare tactics.

By recreating such scenarios, the drill aims to evaluate and enhance the readiness of Iran's air defense forces in responding to potential external threats.

All U.S. interests in region are within reach: Army commander

Brigadier General Kioumars Heydari, Commander of Iran's Army Ground Forces, stated that all U.S. interests within the region are well within the reach of Iran's military forces.

Speaking at the official ceremony for the handover of command at the Regional Army Headquarters in southwestern Iran, Heydari emphasized the Army's readiness to act decisively if necessary. (See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

IRGC unveils new underground missile base used during Operation True Promise II



TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has unveiled an advanced underground missile base, referred to as a "missile city," amidst escalating tensions with the Israeli regime.

The expansive facility, housing some of Iran's most sophisticated projectiles, was unveiled by Major General Hossein Salami, IRGC Chief Commander, and Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, according to a report by Tasnim news agency on Friday.

Footage of the missile city, broadcast on national television, showcased a range of high-tech missiles, including the Emad,

Qadr, and Qiam models, all of which operate on liquid fuel. However, for security reasons, 90 percent of the base's sections remain undisclosed to the public.

These advanced missiles played a central role in Iran's high-profile military operations, "True Promise I" and "True Promise II," carried out in April and October 2024, targeting Israeli military positions. Describing the site as a "dormant volcano buried in the heart of the mountains," the national TV report emphasized the base's rapid deployment capability, stating, "This volcano can erupt in the shortest time possible." (See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

# Why is Western media constantly lying about Mojtaba Khamenei?

Washington Post becomes the latest outlet to spread blatant lies about the Leader's son

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – The Western media's gaze, it seems, is perpetually fixed on Iran, with a particular fascination for the country's most important official, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

The Washington Post published an article Friday riddled with baseless claims, including that Ayatollah Khamenei is ill and that his son, Mojtaba Khamenei, has been chosen as his successor by Iran's "clerical elders." The article's claims are easily debunked.

As evidence for its claims, the Washington Post cites another unsubstantiated article from Iran International, a notorious anti-Iran TV channel funded by Israel with a well-documented history of fabricating information about Iran and its officials. Moreover, a basic understanding of Iran's constitution reveals that the next leader is not chosen by "clerical elders" but by an assembly of figures elected by the Iranian people every eight years.

The Leader's past statements and actions also demonstrate his opposition to his children entering politics, much less succeeding him. Further supporting this, Ayatollah Mahmoud Mohammadi Araghi, a member of the Assembly of Experts, has stated that the Leader rejected a request from a number of assembly members to consider one of his sons for future leadership positions.

The Tehran Times, through its sources, has verified that Ayatollah Khamenei remains resolute in his opposition to any of his sons' succession, and the Assembly of Experts is respecting that.

**Western media's obsession with Ayatollah Khamenei**

The Washington Post's recent



article is the latest in a long line of false stories about Iran's Leader published over the past two decades. In a particularly egregious example of misinformation, many Western outlets,

**One factor behind the Western media's focus on denigrating Iran's Leader through misinformation about his son is Ayatollah Khamenei's consistent success in frustrating Western attempts to subjugate the country**

including the New York Times, claimed in 2022 that Ayatollah Khamenei had passed away. These outlets, however, appear determined to perpetuate falsehoods, despite the repeated exposure of their lies.

But what lies beneath the surface of this constant scrutiny? Are these merely misguided journalistic endeavors, or are they, as Dr. Parviz Amini, a politics professor and political analyst, suggests, a carefully constructed narrative reflecting the underlying anxieties and strategies of Western policymakers? In an insightful conversation with the Tehran Times, Amini peeled back the layers of media discourse to reveal a complex interplay of power, perception, and political maneuvering.

"Think of it this way," Amini began, "media outlets with close ties to governments are less like neutral observers and more like strategic lenses through which you can glimpse

the true thoughts and policies of those in power." In this light, the incessant coverage of Ayatollah Khamenei, focusing on his health, his inner circle, and even his potential successor, becomes far more than just news reporting. It's a meticulously crafted portrait, designed to convey a particular message.

For Amini, the obsession with Ayatollah Khamenei stems from his pivotal role in Iran's political landscape. "The Leader is an important pillar of Iran's ruling system," he explained, "He's the force that guides it through complex challenges and unifies diverse factions within the political sphere." In this way, the Leader is not just a figurehead, but rather a symbol of Iran's resistance to external pressures,

and a challenge to the existing world order.

Amini argues that the West has recognized Ayatollah Khamenei as a major obstacle to their agenda. "They understand that he's a bulwark against their plans," he stated, "and that's why they relentlessly seek to disparage him, hoping to weaken his position within the country."

During his 35 years as Iran's leader, Ayatollah Khamenei has successfully weathered storms few leaders in history have had to navigate their country through. Attempts to carry out a coup, spread terrorism in the country, plunge the country into chaos by igniting and fueling violent riots, cripple the country's economy through sanctions, force the country to silently take violations of its sovereignty and integrity, and obscure its alliances have all failed in the past decades. This might be one reason why Western politicians who control the media are personally fixated on weakening him, as he makes them remember all their failures.

This theory extends to the Western media's frequent focus on the Leader's son, often falsely claiming he is the heir apparent. Amini sees this as a calculated effort to sow discord and undermine Iran's democratic succession process. "It's another job at Iran's political system," he emphasized. "While our constitution clearly outlines that the next leader is selected by the Assembly of Experts, a process demonstrated in 1989 after Imam Khomeini's passing, the West continues to peddle this narrative of a dynastic succession." The goal, he posits, is to discredit the legitimacy of Iran's institutions, fostering an image of an undemocratic state.

## Regional rivalries and resource battles: Iran's struggle for water rights in Afghanistan

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – The relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the interim Taliban government in Afghanistan are far from straightforward. Despite deep ideological and religious differences, both countries maintain ties based on a complex web of regional interests and power dynamics, a context that is often oversimplified in Western analyses.

This article seeks to delve into these relations, avoiding the pitfalls of what Afghan anthropologist Anila Daulatzai refers to as the "discursive occupation of Afghanistan." According to Daulatzai, the prevailing narrative is reduced to two limited approaches: one that attributes the conflicts to local culture as a deterministic explanation, and another that links all the violence in the country to the "fundamentalist Islam" of the Taliban. This perspective, often used to justify external interventions, overlooks Afghanistan's historical and political complexity, perpetuating a superficial and biased understanding.

Relations between Iran and the Taliban have been marked by a pragmatic approach from Tehran, especially after the first period of the Taliban regime. In 1998, following the capture of Mazar-e-Sharif, the group's image in the Islamic Republic was tainted by the brutality of the massacre of ethnic minorities, such as Hazaras, Tajiks, and Uzbeks, allegedly carried out by the Taliban in the city. That same year, the Taliban attacked the Iranian consulate and murdered 11 diplomats and the correspondent for IRNA, Mahmoud Saremi, nearly triggering an Iranian invasion. Though the Taliban rejected involvement in the attack, the situation was only averted through UN mediation.

This episode, whose memory remains vivid in Iran, helped shape the view of the Taliban as a sectarian group, focused on a Eurocentric notion of the nation-state and with a clear ethnic perspective in its politics. However, it is crucial to avoid falling into racial stereotypes



that portray the Taliban as a "rural insurgency" driven solely by the conservative and predominantly Pashtun south.

Relations between Iran and the Taliban were profoundly influenced by the Mazar-e-Sharif massacre, which shaped Iranian policy towards the group until the U.S. invasion in 2001. During this period, the Taliban were viewed by Tehran as an anti-Shia threat. In 2002, Iran played a key role in the Bonn conference to address the "Afghan crisis," marking the beginning of a political pragmatism towards the Taliban regime.

Despite the discourse generated by the massacre, Iran attempted to approach the less hostile factions within the Taliban, seeking a non-aggression agreement. One example of this approach was the opening of a Taliban political office in the Iranian city of Zahedan in 2012. However, these diplomat-

ic efforts were poorly received by the Iranian public, who still considered the Taliban a threat. Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs defended the need to prevent what was perceived as a potential "genocide" against the Hazara population, the Afghan Shia minority.

Iran's strategy of reaching out to the less sectarian factions of the Taliban failed, as it did not succeed in allowing these factions to prevail over the more radical elements of the group. Meanwhile, in 2014, the United States made its plans for withdrawal from Afghanistan public. In September of that year, an agreement was signed between the Afghan government and the U.S. that allowed for the continued presence of 10,000 American troops after the completion of the "combat mission" in January 2014.

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

## SPORTS

### Iran's Safdarian wins gold at 2025 UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup

TEHRAN – Mohammadreza Safdarian of Iran claimed a gold medal at the 2025 International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) Ice Climbing World Cup.

The Mongolian climber Kherlen Nyamdao sat second and Iran's Mohsen Beheshti Rad finished in third place in the men's speed.

A total of 118 athletes from 18 countries around the world participate in the competition, including 27 ice climbing players representing South Korea.

The competition is being held in Cheongsong, South Korea.

### Sports events in Tehran canceled due to air pollution

TEHRAN – All sports events on Sunday in Tehran have been postponed due to air pollution.

The decision has been made by the Tehran Air Pollution Emergency Committee to protect public health during the peak of pollution.

The Iranian capital and several other cities have been hit by severe air pollution over the past two months, forcing schools and universities to rely on remote learning.

According to Tehran's pollution control authority, air quality index (AQI) has reached an unhealthy level.

### Reza Mohajeri no longer Shams Azar coach: official

TEHRAN – Shams Azar football club have officially parted ways with their head coach Reza Mohajeri.

Mohajeri was named Shams Azar coach in October as Saeid Daghighi's replacement but failed to meet the expectations.

Under his leadership, Shams Azar sit 15th in 2024-24 Iran Professional League (IPL)'s 16-team table.

Former Esteghlal Khuzestan coach Sirous Pourmousavi and ex-Havadar coach Mehdi Rahmati are shortlisted to lead the Qazvin based football club.

Shams Azar are scheduled to play Esteghlal on Jan. 20 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

### Foolad defeat Ajman in friendly Match

TEHRAN – Foolad football team defeated Emirati side Ajman 2-1 in a friendly match Friday night.

Amirmasoud Sarabadani and Amin Ghaseminejad were on target for the Iranian team.

The match was held in Dubai, where Foolad holds training camp.

Foolad, headed by Yahya Golmohammadi, is a favorite to win Iran football league for the third time.

The Ahvaz-based team sits fourth in the table, four points adrift of leader Tractor.

Foolad is scheduled to play one more friendly match in its training camp.

### Esteghlal complete signing of Joel Kojo: official

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football club officially completed the signing of Joel Kojo on Saturday.

The Ghanaian born, who won 2024 player of the year award of Kyrgyzstan, has joined the Iranian team on a 3.5-year deal.

The 26-year-old striker has joined Esteghlal from Dinamo Samarqand of Uzbekistan.

Kojo has played 23 times for Kyrgyzstan national team and scored 10 goals.

Esteghlal were supposed to sign him in the summer but the but the agreement fell apart.

Esteghlal, headed by Pitso Mosimane, are 10th in the 16-team Iran football league.

### Woman taekwondo practitioner Kiani undergoes surgery

TEHRAN – Iran's woman's taekwondo practitioner Nahid Kiani underwent surgery on Saturday.

She suffered a finger injury during Iran's league competition.

Kiani won a silver medal in the 2024 Olympic Games in the women's taekwondo -57kg.

She lost to South Korean player Kim Yujin of the Republic of Korea 2-0.

Kiani was released from the hospital after the surgery.

### Team Melli drop in world beach soccer ranking

TEHRAN – The Beach Soccer Worldwide National Teams ranking December 2024 update marked the final ranking update of the year, with position changes in both the men's and women's ranking.

In the women's ranking, Ukraine climbed three places in the table into second place, while Switzerland moved up one spot into 12th position in the ranking.

Towards the top of the men's ranking, Spain's strong recent performances saw them move into fourth, as Belarus climbed to fifth. Iran national team dropped two spots to sixth.

### Tractor set sight on signing Ibrahim Bayesh

TEHRAN – Iranian football club Tractor have reportedly set their sight on signing Iraqi midfielder Ibrahim Bayesh Kamil Al-Kaabawi.

Bayesh currently plays at Saudi Arabian team Al-Riyadh.

Tractor lead Iran football league and is going to win the title for the first time.

Bayesh, 24, is a member of Iraq national team and has played 53 times for the Lions of Mesopotamia and scored seven goals.

### Iran handball team lose to Iraq: friendly

TEHRAN – Iraq national handball team edged past Iran 22-21 in a friendly match on Saturday.

The match was held at the Handball Hall in Tehran.

Team Melli, headed by Spanish coach Rafael Guijosa Castillo, had defeated the Iraqi team 37-24 in its first match on Thursday.

Iran had played two friendly matches with Iraq in Baghdad in November.

Guijosa, 55, experiences his second stint in the Iran national team. He helped Team Melli win a bronze medal in the Asian championship in Bahrain in 2014.

### Persepolis defeat Chadormalou in friendly

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team defeated Chadormalou 6-0 in a friendly match on Saturday.

In the match held in Tehran's Shahid Kazemi Stadium, Ali Alipour (two goals), Alireza Khodadadi (two goals), Isa Alekasir and Oston Urunov were on target for Persepolis.

Persepolis prepare for the match against Sepahan in Iran's Super Cup.

The match will be held on Friday in Arak's Imam Khomeini Stadium.

## Loading, unloading of goods increase 52% in Bushehr port



By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- As announced by a provincial official, the loading and unloading of goods in Bushehr port, in the southwest of Iran, rose 52 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 past year.

Mohammad Shakibi-Nasab, the director-general of the Ports and Maritime Department of Bushehr province, said that five million tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded in Bushehr port during the nine-month period.

He also mentioned the growth of loading and unloading of container goods in the first nine months of this year, and said that 53,000 TEUs of container cargoes were unloaded and loaded in Bushehr port during the mentioned time span, showing 35 percent growth year on year.

All of these activities have made Bushehr port more prosperous and created jobs and increased the income of this port, the official further highlighted.

As previously announced by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), the country's ports handled nearly 175 million tons of cargo in the first nine months of the present year.

During this period, 20.83 million tons of oil goods and 39.55 million tons of non-oil goods were unloaded, bringing total unloading operations to 60.38 million tons. Cargo loading operations included 58.84 million tons of oil goods and 55.77 million tons of non-oil goods, totaling 114.61 million tons, IRNA reported.

Combined loading and unloading operations amounted to 174.99 million tons, with 79.67 million tons of oil goods and 95.32 million tons of non-oil goods.

Additionally, Iran's ports handled 2.33 mil-

lion TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of containers during this period, reflecting a 14 percent increase compared to 2.05 million TEUs in the same period last year.

The growth in container operations highlights increased efficiency and rising trade volumes at Iranian ports.

Iran's ports have a total nominal capacity of over 260 million tons per year, allowing them to handle a wide range of oil and non-oil commodities. Key ports, such as Shahid Rajaei Port in Hormozgan Province, account for a significant portion of the country's trade activity due to their advanced infrastructure and strategic location along international shipping routes.

Investments in port infrastructure have further enhanced the efficiency of loading and unloading operations, reducing turnaround times for vessels.

The PMO has emphasized the importance of increasing port capacity to accommodate growing trade volumes and support Iran's economic development goals. Upgrades in equipment, digitalization of operations, and expanded storage facilities are part of ongoing efforts to optimize port efficiency.

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.

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play a significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition to facilitating the loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

It is worth mentioning that Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in five years.

Vafapour highlighted ongoing initiatives to improve efficiency in the cement industry, such as using additives to enhance productivity and reduce energy consumption.

These measures, he stated, could increase output by at least 20 percent without the need for new facilities, aligning with environmental goals and energy conservation efforts.

Despite its achievements, the cement sector faces significant challenges, including energy supply disruptions.

"Over 30 cement kilns across the country are currently idle," Vafapour said, emphasizing the need for immediate government intervention to address energy imbalances.

He also warned of declining clinker reserves, which have fallen below strategic levels. "Cement is a time-sensitive commodity; it cannot be stockpiled. Production must align with consumption," he said.

The industry has also been hit by financial strain, as operational costs remain steady despite production slowdowns.

the National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC), the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC), Arvandan Oil and Gas Company, and the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), the event is hosting 284 domestic companies from 15 provinces across Iran.

The four-day exhibition showcases the latest domestically manufactured equipment for the oil industry.

## Iran's cement industry achieves 90 million-ton capacity

TEHRAN – Iran's cement production capacity has reached 90 million tons annually, with 85 percent of the required machinery and parts manufactured domestically, according to Majid Vafapour, head of the Cement Industry Employers Association.

Speaking to IRIB, Vafapour described cement as a cornerstone of Iran's construction and infrastructure sectors.

He noted that Iran ranks eighth globally in cement production, although its position has fluctuated between sixth and seventh in previous years.

"We are fully self-sufficient in meeting domestic demand for cement and export the surplus," Vafapour said.

However, he pointed out that reduced activity in national infrastructure projects due to funding constraints has led to higher exports.

"If international challenges are resolved and domestic projects regain momentum, the current 90-million-ton capacity could be fully utilized for domestic consumption," he added.

## 15th Khuzestan oil equipment exhibition kicks off

TEHRAN – The 15th Specialized Exhibition on Manufacturing Oil Industry Equipment in Khuzestan opened on Saturday, January 11 in Ahvaz, Shana reported.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition was participated by senior oil industry officials including Hamid Bovard, the head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

Organized by key industry players, including

# Iran's export to Eurasian countries rises over 20%

From Page 1 ▶ Russia, Armenia, and Kazakhstan were the primary destinations for Iran's exports.

Asgari noted that Iran imported goods worth \$1.209 billion from the five EAEU member states in the nine-month period, a 19.16 percent decrease compared to \$1.495 billion in the same period last year.

The weight of imports stood at 1.626 million tons, representing a significant 45.3 percent decline year-on-year.

Russia accounted for the majority of Iran's imports, with a value of approximately \$1 billion and a weight of 1.491 million tons. Kyrgyzstan had the smallest share in Iran's imports.

The Eurasian Economic Union, an intergovernmental economic bloc, comprises Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia, with Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Cuba as observer members.

The EAEU was established in



2014, and its most recent summit was held in early January in St. Petersburg, Russia, where members approved Iran's observer status in the bloc.

Iran and EAEU have recently strengthened their economic ties by signing a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This agreement, finalized on December 25, 2023, aims to eliminate customs duties on nearly 90 per-

cent of goods traded between Iran and EAEU member states, significantly enhancing trade flows and economic cooperation.

The FTA builds upon a prior interim agreement that had been in place since October 2019, which covered a limited range of 360 commodity items. The new agreement expands this scope considerably, with expectations to boost total trade to \$18-20 billion over

the next five to seven years. Notably, Iran's average import tariff, previously at 30 percent, will be reduced to 4.5 percent, resulting in annual savings of approximately \$380 million in duties. Similarly, tariffs on Iranian goods entering EAEU markets will decrease from an average of 6.6 percent to 0.8 percent.

The EAEU views this agreement as a strategic move to deepen economic integration with Iran. The FTA is anticipated to come into effect in early 2025, following the finalization and communication of the agreement by the end of January 2025.

This development is part of a broader effort by both Iran and the EAEU to enhance regional economic cooperation and reduce trade barriers. The agreement is expected to facilitate increased market access, diversify export portfolios, and strengthen economic resilience amid global economic challenges.

## Chinese ambassador highlights Khuzestan's unique potential in solar power production



TEHRAN – The Chinese Ambassador to Iran Cong Peiwu emphasized Khuzestan Province's unique potential in various sectors, including solar power generation, and its capacity to leverage renewable energy for electricity production.

Speaking on Saturday during a meeting with the Governor of Khuzestan in Ahvaz, Cong expressed his satisfaction with the opportunity to explore the province's capabilities. "I hope this visit fosters deeper connections between Khuzestan and China," he remarked.

Cong highlighted the long-standing cultural, historical, and friendly ties between Iran and China, likening them to the ever-flowing Karun River. He described bilateral exchanges as bridges of cooperation, akin to Ahvaz's White and Black Bridge.

The ambassador noted that Khuzestan's resources in both traditional and emerging industries, particularly in green economy and renewable energy, present significant opportunities for collaboration between Iran and China.

He also underlined Khuzestan's favorable conditions for agricultural development, describing the prospects for bilateral cooperation in this area as promising. Additionally, he identified waste management and the export of high-quality aquatic products as key areas for potential partnership.

He further suggested organizing training programs and fostering scientific exchanges to deepen educational ties between the two countries.

The ambassador expressed optimism about advancing Iran-China cooperation, particularly in Khuzestan, through continuous and aligned efforts. "With relentless commitment from both sides, we can elevate collaborations to new heights," he concluded.

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.

"Khuzestan's strategic position in south-

west Iran and its vast economic potential make it a key player in enhancing Iran-China relations," Zhao added. "With access to the Persian Gulf and proximity to strong regional economies, Khuzestan offers exceptional opportunities for port infrastructure development and maritime transport."

Zhao reiterated China's readiness to actively participate in developing Khuzestan's infrastructure, expanding port capacity, and exploring joint projects in energy, industry, and agriculture.

It is worth mentioning that the Chinese ambassador had also visited Hormozgan province, in south of Iran, last month.

A meeting between Hormozgan economic operators and Cong Peiwu, was held in mid-December to explore opportunities for economic, cultural, and trade cooperation between the two nations.

Speaking at the meeting, Mohammadreza Safa, head of the Hormozgan Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the province's investment potential in maritime and mining industries, saying: "We hope the challenges facing Hormozgan's economic operators will be resolved. Our request is to facilitate visa issuance for business and tourism professionals to streamline processes."

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

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

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

He noted that diplomatic ties, strengthened since 1971, reached a milestone with the 25-year cooperation agreement signed in 2016.

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

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

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

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

The Chinese envoy acknowledged external pressures on China-Iran relations, asserting their resilience. "The ties between our two countries are stronger than ever. We do not support financial warfare of any kind. The fu-

ture of Iran-China cooperation is bright, with economic, cultural, and trade relations as top priorities," he stated.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Cong Peiwu on October 15, 2024, Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati emphasized the importance of implementing the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) signed between Iran and China.

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

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

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

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

In late September 2024, Hemmati had also met and held talks with Chinese Minister of Finance Lan Fo'an, during which the two sides emphasized the implementation of the two countries' long-term strategic partnership plan.

From page 1 ▶ The media focus on dissolving the PMU did not even merit a response from the state military institution itself nor the Commander in Chief of Iraq's Armed Forces, the Office of Prime Minister al-Sudani.

Experts familiar with the Iraqi security apparatus told the Tehran Times that it isn't surprising to see the Arab state's most instrumental defense forces are being targeted by media networks, pushing for a foreign agenda amid regional developments recently.

The role of this disinformation campaign is to create an environment hostile against the PMU both inside and outside Iraq.

There are several factors behind the establishment and role of the PMU, which renders the allegations against it void and laughable to an extent.

The PMU was established in the summer of 2016 following a Fatwa by Iraq's highest religious authority, Ayatollah Sayyed Ali al-Sistani.

The Fatwa was for anyone capable of carrying arms to volunteer and help national security following the collapse of the U.S.-trained army and fight the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group that had occupying large swathes of Iraqi territory.

There is no question that Iranian military advisors, at the invitation of the Iraqi government, helped train, arm, and take part in battles involving the newly established PMU,



essentially putting their lives at risk.

That is the extent of Iranian involvement.

Suggesting otherwise is to "pollute public minds and those in the region that the PMU is not a national force serving Iraqi interests", experts highlighted.

As the PMU grew into a critical security force safeguarding the capital, Baghdad, along with all other towns and cities, the Iraqi Parliament rushed to integrate the units under the Iraqi Armed Forces.

One expert pointed out that media reports implying Iran's General Qaani rules over the PMU, deciding whether it can be dissolved or lay down its arms, failed a long time ago in the "disinformation war waged by the West, its regional and local puppets".

#### Why now?

Such reports have resurfaced as

Iraq's neighbor Syria faces a transition from its long-term ruler, President Bashar al-Assad, to mixed groups, many with fighters wanted in Iraq for terrorist activity.

Disbanding the PMU at any time would be unimaginable, but especially at this critical juncture when Iraq has significantly boosted its security presence on the border with neighboring Syria amid concerns of instability spilling over to Iraq.

Nevertheless, the PMU has had very strong ties with consecutive Iraqi governments since its establishment in June 2014.

Had it not been for the popular forces, there would not have been a government in Baghdad today. The units sacrificed the most men from all classes of society on the front lines against Daesh terrorists to ensure the security of Iraq.

The salary and pensions of its

soldiers are paid by the central government, and it answers to the Iraqi Commander in Chief.

Furthermore, the PMU operates in many regions of Iraq to counter terrorism activity while also providing other security and welfare services.

Disbanding the units, which make up the fabric of Iraqi society, is one of the most ludicrous ideas thrown about by those executing the agenda of the Israeli regime and its staunchest supporter, the United States.

The PMU has a quota system, which means there are more Sunnis in the force than there are in the regular army.

Likewise, there are more soldiers from the Iraqi Christian community and other minority groups serving in the PMU than the regular army.

Experts explain the irony is that this is the complete opposite of neighboring Syria where minority groups are yet to see any representation in national security.

Experts note it is completely normal for two neighbors, Iran and Iraq, to cooperate on matters related to security affairs, and this would naturally involve trips between top security officials from both sides.

Nevertheless, analysts say this anti-PMU propaganda campaign is short-term until it raises its dark Western-backed mission again, once Iraqi national security interests come under threat from regional instability.

## Los Angeles inferno switches direction, anger rises over fire response



The largest of the raging wildfires that have devastated parts of Los Angeles was reported to have shifted direction on Saturday, triggering more evacuation orders and posing a new challenge to exhausted firefighters. Six simultaneous blazes that have ripped across Los Angeles County neighborhoods since Tuesday have killed at least 11 people and damaged or destroyed 10,000 structures. The toll is expected to mount when firefighters are able to conduct house-to-house searches, Reuters reported. The fierce Santa Ana winds that fanned the infernos eased on Friday night. But the Palisades Fire on the city's western edge was heading in a

new direction, prompting another evacuation order as it edged towards the Brentwood neighborhood and the San Fernando Valley foothills, the Los Angeles Times reported. The fire, the most destructive in the history of Los Angeles, has razed whole neighborhoods to the ground, leaving just the smoldering ruins of what had been people's homes and possessions. Budget cuts to the fire department in Los Angeles have hampered efforts to take more effective measures to put out the fires. This has caused growing anger and resentment among American citizens against the federal government.

## Will US, co-conspirators force Israel to leave from Lebanon's lands after appointing Aoun?

From page 1 ▶ Several prominent Sunni figures have expressed their dissatisfaction with Samir Geagea, the head of the Lebanese Forces, nominating MP Fouad Makhzoumi to head the government. They affirm that it is unacceptable for a Christian leader to impose the nomination of the prime minister.

Since the 1990s, after the end of the civil war and the signing of the Taif Agreement, political sectarianism has given the presidency of the republic to the Maronites; the speaker of the parliament to the Shites; and the post of prime minister to the Sunnis.

Although the Taif Agreement has not distributed ministries among the sects, customs imposed the rotation of the 4 sovereign ministries (foreign affairs, interior, finance, and defense) among the four major sects (Maronites, Sunnis, Shiites, and Orthodox). Legally speaking, when customs are repeated, "they acquire the force of a legal basis."

Before heading to Damascus, ending a 13-year official rift between the two states, Mikati had noted that Lebanon's new cabinet must be able to implement Aoun's roadmap to save the country.

Mikati, the first Lebanese official to meet the new Syrian government, had already contacted Ahmed al-Sharaa (al-Julani) about a month ago, but he obviously postponed the visit until he received Riyadh and Washington's approval.

Meanwhile, the families of the anti-Takfiri martyrs have expressed their resentment over Mikati's ignorance of al-Julani's crimes in Lebanon, especially in early August 2014, when his gunmen attacked Lebanese army positions in Aarsal, on the northeastern Lebanese border with Syria, killing about 20 soldiers and kidnapping others, along with various assassinations and terrorist bombings in various Lebanese regions.

Currently, a more serious challenge looms, i.e. the ongoing Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement, especially since the enemy under the pretext of avoiding a repetition of the October 7 scenario, is following an expansionist doctrine aiming at securing a wide buffer zone on its borders.

An article in Maariv has recalled Zionist theorist Ze'ev Jabotinsky's suggestion that "the only way that will make the Arabs agree to recognize the right of the Jews to establish their state is by building a huge iron wall."

The article added: "In order for Israel to perpetuate its existence, the most important lesson learned after October 7 is the need to create buffer zones behind our borders, like the security belts that were recently established in Gaza, southern Lebanon and the eastern Golan Heights," noting that the move "will require massive investment in: combat means; technological capabilities; and human development."

In turn, Amir Avivi, an Israeli reserve brigadier general, spoke at length to Channel 7 on "the threat posed by Hezbollah," recalling the statement of Hezbollah's Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem that "if Israel continues its attacks and breaches the ceasefire, Hezbollah will respond."

Avivi claims the reason Tel Aviv has not asked its colonial settlers to return to the northern occupied Palestinian territories "is that the situation is still fragile and completely unstable. It is not clear whether the ceasefire will continue. It is difficult to assess the situation."

Avivi linked the developments mainly to "Trump's return to the White House," acknowledging the Israeli occupation of "many areas beyond the border fence."

Whilst Lebanon's ministries of foreign affairs

and agriculture has asked the country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations to file a complaint before the UN Security Council condemning the Israeli ongoing attacks on the Lebanese agricultural sector, as a provocative video has gone viral revealing the Israeli army's theft of old olive trees from southern villages.

Hebrew reports revealed that "it is likely that Israel will not allow the southerners to return until next March, after the settlers return to their settlements."

As the five days set by the Lebanese Army to deploy forces in the western sector came to an end, the enemy did not just procrastinate in withdrawing, but continued its violations, carrying out bombings in Al-Jabin and Aita al-Shaab. It also launched a raid on the vicinity of Tayr Dibba, killing five citizens and wounding others. It then continued targeting fire engines, which collided with a car, leading to the killing of two other citizens.

Amos Hochstein, the US envoy to West Asia, has not guaranteed that the occupation regime's violations of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 would stop, but rather justified—like Jasper Jeffers, the US general who heads the committee—what the enemy is blatantly committing.

Commenting on the election, Walla claimed that the process is "a major achievement for the pro-Western camp in Lebanon and a blow to Hezbollah and the pro-Iranian bloc in the region," pointed out that delaying the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon "could harm Aoun shortly after he takes office."

Walla quoted a senior US official as stating that "if Israel does not withdraw and violates the (ceasefire) agreement, it will find itself in conflict with the international community... The Israelis will soon receive a message that they must come to terms with reality and that there is no chance to remain in Lebanon."

## Waterloo on the horizon: Israeli military on brink of collapse



Gadi Eisenkot has urged military chief Herzi Halevi to resign over his inability to prevent the Al-Aqsa Storm

From page 1 ▶ More than 1,100 people were killed and about 250 others were taken captive when Hamas carried out the surprise military operation in southern Israel. Dozens of the captives still remain in Gaza.

The Al-Aqsa Storm was followed by Israel's war of genocide on Gaza. The Israeli army has killed more than

46,000 Palestinians in Gaza since launching the onslaught. But it has failed to eliminate Hamas and return the remaining captives.

Meanwhile, the Israel army's Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Amir Baram notified Halevi in a letter on Friday that he would resign.

"Under the current state of affairs, my ability to contribute as deputy chief of staff is limited, and I have no intention of serving in this position for three or four full years... Of course in the future, I am willing to fill any role required in the defense establishment," Baram said.

Relations between Halevi and Baram have been somewhat strained amid the Gaza war, despite denials from their offices, that's according to the Times of Israel.

Baram's letter has been construed as a veiled criticism of Halevi who has already indicated he would resign from the military over his role

on failing to prevent the Al-Aqsa Storm.

Baram has been seen as a potential successor to Halevi for several years. His letter now indicates his intention to pursue the position of chief of staff following Halevi's resignation.

The Israeli army has been shaken by a wave of high-profile military and security resignations since Hamas conducted the Al-Aqsa Storm.

The Hamas operation exposed Israel's extreme vulnerability.

Le Monde wrote in October 2023 that the Israeli army's defenses "collapsed like a house of cards" after Hamas launched the operation.

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel had presented its army as invincible.

But the Hamas attack shattered the image of Israel's invincibility.

The Al-Aqsa Storm has increas-



The Israeli army's Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Amir Baram locks horns with Herzi Halevi over the regime's military failures

ingly exposed Israel as a paper tiger.

The wave of resignations and calls on senior Israeli military officials to step down are just a smokescreen to divert attention away from the regime's degradation.

Israel will ultimately meet its Waterloo in the face of rising resistance; it is merely a question of time before this occurs.

## Syrian intelligence says it foiled ISIL attempt to blow up Shia shrine

Syrian authorities have foiled an attempt by ISIL (ISIS) fighters to blow up a revered Shia shrine in a Damascus suburb, state news agency SANA reported. Intelligence and security forces "succeeded in thwarting an attempt by ISIL to carry out a bombing inside the Sayyida Zeinab shrine," a source within Syria's intelligence agency told SANA on Saturday, adding that several people have been arrested. "The General Intelligence Directorate is utilizing all its resources to

confront all attempts to target the Syrian people in all their diversity," the intelligence official told SANA. The interior ministry posted pictures of four men it said were members of an ISIL cell who had been arrested in the countryside outside the capital. It also published images of equipment allegedly seized from the suspects, including smartphones, two rifles, three explosive devices and several hand grenades.

## Who's afraid of America first?

To many countries in Europe, the return of Donald Trump to the White House is seen as a momentous, almost apocalyptic, shift that is likely to disrupt alliances and upend economic relations. Meanwhile, American adversaries such as China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia anticipate that the incoming administration will mark an opportunity to advance their anti-Western agendas. Yet there is another region of the world, one that includes many U.S. allies, partners, and friends, that views Trump's return more calmly.

Across a large part of Asia, from Japan and South Korea in the north, through Southeast Asia—the linchpin connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans—to the Indian subcontinent in the south, a second Trump administration does not arouse the same strong emotions that it does among many in the West. For these countries, there is far less concern about Trump's autocratic tendencies and contempt for liberal internationalist ideals. The region has long conducted relations with Washington on the basis of common interests rather than common values. Such an approach fits neatly with Trump's transactional foreign policy because it involves balancing mutual benefits rather than sustaining the liberal international order. Indeed, much of Asia views the liberal order with ambivalence. When Asian countries talk about a "rules-based order," the phrase tends to carry significantly different meanings than it does in the West.

For Asia, far more than a radical deviation from existing U.S. foreign policy, Trump's return to power amplifies and accelerates a trend that has been underway since the Vietnam era. The United States is not in retreat and has not embraced isolation. Instead, it is expanding the geographic scope of the approach that U.S. President Richard Nixon first introduced in East Asia during the Cold War, by unilaterally redefining the terms of its global engagements and by becoming more circumspect about when and how it

gets involved internationally. Having dealt with such a United States for almost half a century, Asia is not unduly agitated about a second Trump administration. This is not to discount important concerns in the region, including about tariff policies and Taiwan. But it does mean that Asian countries are more accustomed to Trump's transactionalism, and their experience holds important lessons for other U.S. partners and allies as they adjust to Washington's recalibration of the way it works with the world.

#### Hesitant hegemon

For many Asian states, Trump's "America first" approach echoes the strategy Washington has used toward much of Asia for more than five decades. In 1969, as he attempted to disengage the United States from an unwinnable war in Vietnam, Nixon unveiled a new strategy aimed at U.S. allies, partners, and friends in the region. "Except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons," Nixon said, in announcing that summer what came to be known as the Nixon Doctrine, "the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that [military defense] will be handled by, and responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves."

As Nixon saw it, the Vietnam War was a sobering lesson for American policy. Rather than getting dragged into other Asian quagmires, Washington would maintain stability as an offshore balancer, without deploying troops on the ground. This meant that the United States would provide a nuclear umbrella of extended deterrence, as well as a military presence centered on air and naval bases in Japan and Guam, but countries in the region—with the partial exception of South Korea because of the unique threat from North Korea—would be expected to provide for their own security. No longer could they count on Washington to directly intervene as it did in Vietnam.

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

## Zayandeh-Rood's revival underlined as national heritage



TEHRAN – Isfahan province's deputy governor-general for political and social affairs, Ayoub Darvishi, has reaffirmed efforts to restore the Zayandeh-Rood River as a national and tourism heritage site.

Speaking on Friday at a regional tourism development meeting held in the ancient city of Delijan, Darvishi emphasized the critical importance of the river for the Central Iranian Plateau and its potential to boost tourism and address environmental challenges in the region.

Darvishi highlighted that drought has severely impacted the Central Plateau, leading to the drying up of Zayandeh-Rood, historically considered the lifeline of the area.

"We are committed to reviving this river as a national and tourism asset," he stated, adding that tourism represents the most viable path to overcoming Isfahan's environmental crises.

The meeting, which brought together representatives from Isfahan, Semnan, Markazi, and Qom provinces, was part of a broader initiative to create a "golden rectangle" tourism hub aimed at fostering domestic and international tourism.

Darvishi noted that such gatherings provide an opportunity for mutual understanding and collaboration, paving the way for sustainable tourism growth.

He also stressed the importance of identifying and promoting lesser-known attractions, stating, "By recognizing and introducing these hidden gems, we can create significant cultural and economic capital, contributing to sustainable development."

Over the past couple of decades, a temporary release of water, primarily intended to meet agricultural demands, has renewed profound cultural and historical connections for the people of Isfahan.

For residents and visitors alike, the river is a living narrative of the city's history and a testament to its resilience.

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

Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons.

It is filled with many architectural wonders, such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

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

## First vice president highlights private sector's role in tourism development

TEHRAN – Mohammad Reza Aref, Iran's First Vice President, stressed the critical role of the private sector in fostering tourism growth during a meeting with hoteliers and investors in the tourism sector on Saturday.

The event, held at the conference hall of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, brought together a number of key stakeholders to discuss challenges and opportunities in the industry.

Aref highlighted tourism as a vital economic pillar, second only to the oil industry in its potential for revenue generation. "Tourism is an invaluable asset, with over one million heritage structures and sites representing an irreplaceable spiritual and economic capital," he said, emphasizing the government's commitment to achieving an 8% economic growth target.

The official noted that realizing this goal requires robust public-private partnerships, with tourism playing a significant role.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the vice president acknowledged shortcomings in addressing anti-Iran narratives and called for



stronger efforts to counteract "Iranophobia." He urged influential figures to take an active role in reshaping global perceptions of the country.

During the meeting, investors and hoteliers voiced their concerns, including bureaucratic hurdles, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient support for tourism-related projects.

Their suggestions ranged from streamlining regulations to offering incentives such as energy subsidies, tax relief, and financial sup-

port for constructing residential and commercial facilities alongside hospitality establishments.

Aref underscored the need for government collaboration with the private sector to overcome long-standing economic challenges. He reaffirmed the administration's strategy of simplifying processes for private investors and emphasized the importance of mutual respect and cooperation.

Moreover, Aref highlighted the potential of health tourism and urged the development of com-

prehensive plans to address issues such as expanding accommodation capacity, improving transportation infrastructure, and modernizing the aviation fleet. "Facilitating private sector participation and removing barriers are essential tasks for the government," he said.

Aref called for enhanced training programs for tour guides, addressing concerns about their professionalism raised by foreign tourists.

The session also featured remarks from Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, who praised private sector contributions, including the execution of 2,700 tourism projects. Salehi-Amiri highlighted the sector's commitment and called for continued government support to unlock its full potential.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 28 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

## Tehran to host tourism festival dedicated to children and young adults

TEHRAN – A tourism festival and exhibition dedicated to children and young adults will take place from June 9 to June 13, at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran.

The event, themed "Expanding the Tourism Market with Children," aims to promote tourism dedicated to younger generations, according to festival secretary Kambiz Aqaei.

The festival will bring together a diverse range of participants, including child-friendly tourism facilities, recreational centers, hotels, eco-lodges, amusement parks, themed attractions, tour operators, and nature tourism organizers.

These exhibitors will showcase their services and achievements to industry professionals and

families interested in youth-focused travel opportunities.

Highlighting the need for new experiences and entertainment for children, Aqaei stated, "Today's children and teens seek fresh activities, opportunities to explore new destinations, and the thrill of discovering unseen places."

He expressed concern over the growing trend of inactivity among urban children, often confined to apartments and digital spaces, emphasizing the importance of outdoor and cultural tourism to counteract this lifestyle.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Aqaei underscored the role of children in shaping the future of the nation, calling for greater attention to their needs within the tourism industry.



Some experts believe that tourism for children and adolescents is a neglected topic in tourism research, despite the importance of a child's life trajectory up to the age of 18 in terms of the psychological and social impact it has on their formation of subjectivity.

## Ilam handicrafts exhibit showcased in Iraq's Wasit Governorate



TEHRAN – A three-day exhibition showcasing the traditional handicrafts and arts of Iran's Ilam province went on show in Iraq's Wasit Governorate, located southeast of Baghdad near the Iranian border.

The event, which began on Thursday, highlighted a wide range of handcrafted products

emblematic of Ilam's rich cultural heritage, according to Farzad Sharifi, the provincial tourism chief.

The exhibition features various crafts, including kilims, jajims, felt products, pottery, marquetry, woodturning, and handmade dolls, among other unique items. Sharifi noted that the event aims

to introduce Ilam's distinctive handicraft traditions to a broader audience in Iraq.

"This exhibition is the result of extensive discussions and coordination led by the Governor of Ilam to promote the province's handicrafts in Wasit. It serves as a platform to showcase the exceptional skills and artistry of Ilam's artisans," Sharifi stated.

The official also emphasized the broader significance of the event, highlighting its role in fostering cultural and civilizational ties between the two neighboring countries. "This exhibition contributes to strengthening cultural and cooperative relationships between the two regions, offering an opportunity to deepen mutual understanding and collaboration," he added.

Natural beauty, historical significance, and cultural heritage, make Ilam an increasingly attractive destination for tourists. The cultural richness of Ilam is reflected in its vibrant traditions and customs.

The local population, known for their warm hospitality, often wear colorful traditional clothing, particularly during festivals and special occasions. The province's folklore and music are integral parts of its cultural identity, providing unique and immersive experiences for visitors.

Ilam's handicrafts, including intricate carpets, textiles, and pottery, are highly regarded. These artisanal products not only make for memorable souvenirs but also offer insights into the region's artistic heritage.

## Divers recover ancient shipwreck that sank 2,600 years ago off the coast of Spain



who led the excavation project, in a July 2024 statement.

"The wreckage has survived for centuries, but now it is time to roll up our sleeves and ensure that we can continue to enjoy this asset of cultural interest."

For many years, the wreck had been covered by a protective metal box. But a group of experts who studied the wreck site between 2017 and 2019 found that the metal box was sinking and threatened to crush the shipwreck.

In the summer of 2023, archaeologists began to formulate a plan to raise the shipwreck from the seafloor.

They spent 560 hours diving at the wreck site to make detailed diagrams of its many cracks and fissures.

"It is more reasonable to rescue the ship, treat it and exhibit it in a museum for people to enjoy it, rather than worrying every time a big storm arrives," de Juan told Reuters' Emma Pinedo in June 2023.

Between September and November 2024, a team of 14 divers carefully brought the wooden shipwreck to the surface, piece by piece.

Now, those fragments are going to a lab at the Museum of Underwater Archaeology in Cartagena for conservation and reconstruction. That work is expected to take at least four years, reports El País' Virginia Vadillo.

To preserve the ship, experts will start by removing the salt from each of the pieces, per El País. Next, they will apply resins to help fill in some of the places where the wood has rotted away.

They will then freeze-dry the pieces before reassembling the ship.

(Source: smithsonianmag.com)

Archaeologists have raised a 2,600-year-old shipwreck from the waters near southeastern Spain.

Divers initially located the vessel in 1994, according to CBS News' Emily Mae Czachor. The 27-foot-long wreck, which had been carrying a load of lead ingots when it sank, was discovered near the town of Mazarron.

Known as the Mazarron II, the ship was located just six feet beneath the surface of the Mediterranean, roughly 200 feet away from a beach called Playa de la Isla.

It was covered in sand, which helped keep it hidden for centuries.

More recently, changes along the coastline—including coastal construction and shifting sea currents—made the wreck site more vulnerable.

"The wreckage can no longer remain where it is because its sand protection is now disappearing," said Carlos de Juan, an archaeologist at the University of Valencia

## Airlines extend travel waivers due to LA wildfires

Airlines have extended travel waivers for Los Angeles airports as wildfires continue to burn in the area.

American Airlines, United Airlines, Southwest Airlines, JetBlue Airways, and other carriers that serve the area have waived fees for flight changes for travelers booked to Los Angeles while the city grapples with power outages, water shortages, and conservation, as well as the outright damage of more than 10,000 homes and other structures.

On Friday, the area's airports were operating normally, according to flight-tracking platform FlightAware, but parts of the city were still in the grip of the wildfires. Power outages were reported across Los Angeles County and local residents in the decimated Pacific Palisades area were told to boil or use bottled water. Parts of the county were also still under evacuation orders as firefighters sought to contain the fires.

American Airlines on Friday said travelers booked to or from Hollywood Burbank Airport, Los Angeles International Airport, Ontario International Airport and John Wayne Airport, which serves Orange County, can rebook without paying a change fee or fare difference if they can fly as late as Jan. 20.

Southwest said the wildfires could affect service to those airports and that customers can rebook within 14 days of their original travel dates without additional charges. It said customers could also change their trips to other California cities: Palm Springs, Santa Barbara and San Diego.

Meanwhile, a Delta Air Lines executive on Friday said sales of flights to Los Angeles, one of the carrier's busiest hubs and a generator of high-value business and leisure travel, have declined.

"We monitor sales on a daily basis by geographic region, and we have seen a decline in

sales, not a wholesale reduction or an uptick in cancellations, but a decline in sales during this period," Delta's president, Glen Hauenstein, said on an earnings call, in which the airline also said it had otherwise strong travel demand across its network.

"As soon as the period ends, we can probably put a wrapper around how much we thought that cost us. But I don't think it's going to be significant to the quarter, hopefully not."

Hauenstein said, however, that there is often an uptick in demand after natural disasters because of rebuilding.

"Our hearts go out to everybody in Los Angeles affected by this," he said. "But from a long-term airline perspective, we faced hurricanes, we faced flooding, we faced all that. And usually, the impacts are in the beginning phases, followed by a recovery phase."

(Source: CNBC)

# Land subsidence, waste management main environmental challenges: head of DOE

TEHRAN –According to the head of the Department of Environment, Shina Ansari, controlling land subsidence and improving waste management are the two critical issues the country is facing.

Indiscriminate extraction of underground water reserves, and failure to restore aquifers over the previous decades have led to land subsidence in the country, IRNA quoted Ansari as saying.

Successful global experiences in overcoming land subsidence show that land subsidence can be prevented by managing groundwater consumption, restoring aquifers, treating wastewater, and changing agricultural methods, the official noted.

Considering the extent of land subsidence across the country, which threatens national assets and leads to many environmental issues, the official proposed preparing a set of multifaceted and comprehensive national regulations on land subsidence.

These regulations will cover various sectors such as water, agriculture, industry, urban development, constructions, historical monuments, power and fuel lines, water and sewage.

The official also highlighted that inefficient waste management is one of the other important issues that result in significant environmental problems in Iran.

Improper management of municipal waste, improper waste disposal, poor separation practices as well as recycling contribute to negative environmental impacts on the country. It causes about 870 trillion rials (about 1.28 billion dollars) in damage to the environment and natural resources



annually.

Due to the lack of mechanized waste transportation systems, a significant portion of the municipality's budget is allocated to the first part of the waste management process, that is collection, which is not done properly, either.

Presently, 75 percent of produced municipal waste in the country is landfilled, of which 93 percent is disposed of in unsanitary dump sites.

The official proposed reviewing and updating waste management law which has been passed for over 2 decades. Ansari also the parliament members to support the administration in addressing these problems.

## Landslide a main challenge

In August 2024, Ansari said landslides, and lack of water resources are being turned into significant challenges and concerning issues that require national consensus to be addressed effectively.

As water scarcity due to climate change intensifies, the landslide occurs, as well, Ansari stated. Nevertheless, there are different ways to address these problems

like changing the agricultural cultivation practices.

Also, issuing licenses to water-consuming industries in arid and critical areas should be prohibited while implementing development plans should be highlighted.

Transboundary issues such as water rights and sand and dust storms can be followed up on by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she added.

The official went on to stress that the cooperation and participation of people are essential in addressing environmental challenges.

## Strategic plan on waste management

The Department of Environment in cooperation with the ministries of industry, energy, oil, agriculture, and health, is obliged to develop a national strategic plan for waste management by the end of the first year of the seventh five-year national development plan that is March 20.

The strategic plan will focus on modifying the production and consumption patterns, minimizing waste production, and promoting waste segregation at source.

Large industries such as cement and steel are obliged to utilize solid fuels to meet part of their energy needs, particularly in peak demand.

Also, the Ministry of Energy is required to guarantee the purchase of the electricity generated from waste, and the Ministry of Oil is required to guarantee the purchase of or the issue of a sale license for liquid fuels produced from waste.

Moreover, the Ministry of Agriculture is required to guarantee the purchase of organic fertilizers made from recycled waste.

According to Mehdi Khadem-Sameni, an official with DOE, some 445 thousand tons of urban, rural, medical, agricultural, and industrial waste are generated per day, equalling 164 million tons per year, leading to land, water, and air pollution.

Converting waste into fertilizer and energy, using standard waste incinerators, and modern methods such as digesters and pyrolysis are among the known strategies used in the world for handling waste, but these methods do not exist in the country, he added.

The current methods used in the country for waste management are old, the official noted, regretting that up to 80 percent of the waste that can be recycled to be used for different purposes is discarded.

"Out of around 600 waste management centers across the country, just four to five are standardized. In other words, some 96 percent of the waste is just dumped in landfills."

## Iran announces readiness to help victims of LA wildfires



TEHRAN –The head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), Pirhossein Kolivand, has announced the country's readiness to dispatch humanitarian aid to assist the people affected by the wildfires in Los Angeles.

In a message to Cliff Holtz, the CEO of the American Red Cross, Kolivand offered condolences and expressed sympathies, saying, "Widespread fires in Los Angeles, which has demolished houses, threatened lives, and turned the scenic landscape into ashes, has affected the whole world, particularly responsible and sympathetic people.

Watching painful scenes and people suffering from smoking inhalation are more than television images for us, these are calls to action.

Curbing destructive blazes has shown to be beyond local capabilities, requiring global efforts to end the crisis.

The rapid spread of flames due to prolonged fire extinguishing operations is not only a threat to human life, but also to the future of the earth and the environment.

We assure you that you are not alone in these tough moments. Relying on our extensive experiences in dealing with natural and man-made disasters, we are ready to dispatch our specialized quick response teams, rescue equipment, and committed and trained personnel to the site.

Our commitment to the principles of philanthropy and high Islamic and human values, and adherence to the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, have led us to rush to your aid, regardless of borders, cultures, and languages.

We believe that we can reduce the depth of this disaster only with global cooperation and solidarity.

We are ready to work along with other relief forces to restore peace to the place and people surrounded by fire and grief.

Saving human lives, alleviating the sufferings of those injured, and instilling hope in hearts is our highest mission.

We are sure that by collaborating and sharing experiences, we can bring a brighter future to the people who are caught in the merciless flames of fire, and terminate this crisis."

The first fires in Los Angeles erupted on Tuesday. A series of destructive wildfires in the greater Los Angeles area have killed at least 11 people. The true death toll is not known, authorities said, as fires destroyed entire streets and more than 12,000 structures, and 153,000 people are under evacuation orders.

Dry conditions and powerful winds fed at least five blazes, causing unprecedented damage in highly populated areas not known for fires. Officials anticipate fierce winds to return Monday.

## MOU signed for using AI in medical treatment



TEHRAN – The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology and Tehran University of Medical Sciences have signed a memorandum of understanding to use artificial intelligence for medical treatment purposes.

The agreement which was inked on Saturday aims to promote the targeted support of the knowledge-based ecosystem in the field of health with a focus on omics and genomics studies, cell therapy in endocrinology and metabolism, person-centered medicine with artificial intelligence tools for prevention, prediction, diagnosis, and treatment, and finally innovation in the commercialization of products and services, ISNA reported.

Statistics have shown noticeable cost savings, about 40 percent, using artificial intelligence in health in advanced countries. In some specific cases, like breast or lung cancers, artificial intelligence can lower healthcare costs by 80 percent, hence knowledge-based economy should aim to utilize AI to save healthcare costs, IRIB quoted Mostafa Qaemi, the secretary of the Biology Development Headquarters, as saying.

## Developing smart healthcare document

Smart University of Medical Sciences (SMUMS) has compiled a smart healthcare document, which is currently in the final stages of approval.

Once approved, the document is a valuable step taken towards digital transformation in the country's healthcare system, Hassan Bakhtiari, the SMUMS president, said in December 2024.

The SMUMS research center is a suitable place for conducting applied research and recruiting medical researchers. The center can also help develop treatment and reduce treatment costs, he noted.

Highlighting that most of the regional countries are pioneers in artificial intelligence, he

said: "Iran needs to strengthen its position in the artificial intelligence sector in the region."

AI plays a key role in the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of diseases. It also improves the quality of medical services.

Bakhtiari went on to say that by using AI technology, the development of medical services in disadvantaged and rural areas can be put on the agenda.

Telemedicine is one of the areas in which AI can help establish health justice by providing access to advanced medical services in remote areas, he added.

On December 3, 2023, late President Ebrahim Raisi issued an executive order for the establishment of the 'National Steering Committee and the National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Center'.

Creating a complete and stable chain of ideas to market in AI, benefiting from AI for the economic progress of the country, planning to achieve a leading and sustainable position among the countries of the world, as well as identifying and nurturing talents in the field of AI are among the most important tasks of the national AI center.

## National Clean Air Week to be marked



TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) is planning to observe the National Clean Air Week from January 18 to 22, with the theme of 'National determination for clean air with renewable energy'.

Every year, January 19 is marked as the National Clean Air Day in Iran. It highlights the main factors in maintaining air quality, as well as the significance of public involvement in protecting the environment.

This year, the days of the week are named as follows.

Saturday, January 18, 'Clean Air Day'

Sunday, January 19, 'Energy and Environment'

Monday, January 20, 'Clean Air Law, and Environment'

Tuesday, January 21, 'Monitoring, New Technologies, Environment'

Wednesday, January 22, 'Transportation and Environment'

Air pollution is the second leading risk factor for death, causing around 8.1 million premature deaths annually from conditions such as stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections.

As the biggest environmental health risk of the time, it also exacerbates climate change, causes economic losses, and reduces agricultural productivity.

It knows no borders – everyone has a responsibility to protect our atmosphere and ensure healthy air for all.

In August 2024, Shina Ansari, head of the DOE, stressed that adopting proper policies and monitoring their implementation is the main responsibility of the department of environment to deal with air pollution.

## National Clean Air Week to be marked

Monitoring their implementation is the main responsibility of the department of environment to deal with air pollution.

"Decommissioning of worn-out cars, improving the quality of fuels, and vehicles, developing public transportation, providing resources, and reducing industrial emissions are among the key factors to deal with air pollution," Ansari highlighted.

However, air pollution as a major challenge in large and industrial cities cannot be tackled in a short time, she added.

The International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies is observed annually on September 7 highlighting the significance of raising public awareness at all levels, as well as promoting and facilitating actions to improve air quality.

On September 7, 2024, the day was celebrated with the theme of 'Invest in Clean Air Now'. It emphasized the urgent need for stronger partnerships, increased investment, and shared responsibility to combat air pollution.

## Clean Air Law

Air pollution is one of the main concerns of the government; Therefore, all organizations are obliged to act based on the Clean Air Law.

The Clean Air Law, enacted in July 2017, was supposed to be a solution to ease air pollution across the country. Still, the air is severely polluted, as the responsible bodies neglect their legal duties to implement the law.

The law has defined responsibilities for the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Environment, the police, the municipality, the National TV, and some other organizations.

In this regard, according to the three-year plan of the Ministry of Oil, which was presented to the Department of Environment, the amount of sulfur in diesel fuel is supposed to be reduced to a great extent, in order to meet the national standard.

The importance of having clean air is such that a week in the country is named after the Clean Air Week.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Over 950 earthquakes rattle Iran in a month

TEHRAN – Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran, recorded more than 950 earthquakes across the country over the past calendar month Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21).

Two earthquakes of more than 4 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the country by the National Seismological Center, the largest of which occurred on May 17, with a magnitude of 5.5 near Sankhast in northeastern North Khorasan province, which left 25 injured.

Statistically, 883 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, and 64 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4, also, 8 quakes with magnitudes 4-5 have occurred.

Also, 3 earthquakes with magnitudes 5-6 shook the country.

## ثبت بیش از ۹۵۰ زمین‌لرزه در اردیبهشت‌ماه

شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری وابسته به موسسه ژئوفیزیک دانشگاه تهران در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۹۵۸ زمین‌لرزه را ثبت کردند. این زمین‌لرزه‌ها در نواحی مختلف ایران و نواحی مرزی رخ داده و توسط شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری ثبت و تعیین محل شده‌اند. در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۱۱ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بیش از ۴.۰ در داخل کشور توسط مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری به ثبت رسیده است که بزرگ‌ترین آن‌ها در تاریخ ۱۴۰۰/۰۲/۲۷ با بزرگی ۵/۵ حوالی سنخواست واقع در استان خراسان شمالی، رخ داده‌است.

از لحاظ آماری ۸۸۳ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی کوچکتر از ۳، تعداد ۶۴ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۳ و ۴، تعداد ۸ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۴ و ۵ و تعداد ۳ زمین‌لرزه با بزرگی بین ۵ و ۶ بوده‌است.



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## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*He who accepts the opinions of the clear-sighted, will recognize mistakes and prevent them in time.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:13 Evening: 17:31 Dawn: 5:45 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:14 (tomorrow)

## Palestine Museum US launches NFT collection in support of Gaza artists

The Palestine Museum US in Connecticut has entered the NFT (non-fungible token) marketplace this week, launching a collection on the platform OpenSea featuring work by the Gazan artist Mohammed Alhaj from his "Displacement" series.

The collection kicked off with an image of an 80cm by 100cm painting in acrylic that was shown in Gaza City in 2020 and at the Venice Biennale in 2022. A poignant take on the plight of many Palestinians, it features displaced figures wandering through uncertain terrain, The Art Newspaper reported.

While there are individual artists in Gaza who sell their work as NFTs, such as Maysa Youssef, and the Ramallah-based artist Khaled Jarrar who began working with NFTs in 2021, this collection marks the first time a museum has initiated an NFT program in Gaza.

"By venturing into the NFT market, the museum is not only embracing the digital art realm but also providing a platform for artists like Mohammed Alhaj to showcase their work globally," Faisal Saleh, the Palestine Museum US's director, said. "The NFT version of 'Displacement' allows art enthusiasts and collectors to own a unique digital representation of this profound piece, all while supporting the talented artist behind it."

The collaboration, Saleh added, "not only showcases the talent and creativity of Palestinian artists but also paves the way for a new era of digital art consumption that transcends borders and barriers". He noted that it "also highlights the resilience and creativity of Palestinian artists, even in the face of adversity".

The 42-year-old Alhaj has dealt with his share of adversity. A week after Hamas terror attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 and the beginning of Israel's retaliatory strikes, he was forced to flee his home in Gaza City and seek refuge in Khan Yunis. He and his young family lived in a tent

there through March 2024.

Incredibly, throughout this ordeal, Alhaj kept on working, producing a series of pencil and ink drawings documenting the plight of his people. Some of these were smuggled out of Gaza, and others sent as digital images that were printed and exhibited at the Palestine Museum US's exhibition in Venice during the 2024 Biennale.

In March 2024, a friend from Gaza City called Alhaj to relay the news that his art studio and 20 years of work had been destroyed by the Israel Defense Forces' bombing. "My studio was right behind Al-Shifa hospital," Alhaj says.

Since then, he has fled to a safer area in central Gaza, where he and his family live at his father's home. He is now starting to rebuild his oeuvre from scratch. Some of his work is in safe keeping at the Palestine Museum US, the Palestinian Museum in Bir Zeit and in private collections in Europe. "I have no studio here," he says, "and it's very crowded, but my art is my lifeline."

Alhaj, who has worked in a variety of media including sculpture, says he is inspired by artists like the Palestinian Sliman Mansour and Iraqi Mohammed al Ghani. In spite of harsh conditions in Gaza, he continues to produce new work in pencil, pen, ink and watercolors.

The subject of his new works continues to be the displacement of his people and their ongoing plight. His fragmented landscapes evoke a lost homeland, and his figures are caught in an urgent sense of motion, evoking the current situation as well as the war and displacement of 1948.

Alhaj hopes that the new NFT collaboration with the museum will help preserve the art that remains in Gaza. "Perhaps we Palestinians need it now," he said, suggesting that NFTs might be an ideal medium for artists in war zones. "Especially after my colleagues and I lost so much of our work due to the ongoing bombing and destruction."

## Cartoon of Day



Children At War

Cartoonist: Javier Cubero Torres from Cuba

# Renowned Iranian composer Fereydoon Shahbazian passes away at 82



TEHRAN- Fereydoon Shahbazian, a celebrated Iranian composer and musician, passed away in a Tehran hospital on Saturday, due to severe respiratory issues. He was 82.

Born on June 11, 1942, Shahbazian grew up in a musical household; his father, Hossein Shahbazian, was a highly regarded violinist.

Under his father's encouragement, Shahbazian delved into music, establishing a robust foundation that would shape his illustrious career.

He started his formal education at the Higher Conservatory of Music, excelling in violin under the tutelage of notable instructors, including Ataollah Khadem Misagh and the Russian violinist Serge Khutsif.

By the age of 17, Shahbazian had made a name for himself as a

member of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra.

His talent and dedication opened numerous doors, leading him to collaborate with various orchestras, including the Radio Golha Orchestra.

He became the leader of the radio choir and symphony orchestra in 1966.

Shahbazian's influence extended to the realm of film and television music, where he composed soundtracks for numerous Iranian films and series.

His significant contributions began in the 1980s, when he partnered with producer Ali Moallem Damghani to form the Music Council of Radio and Television, a body responsible for the oversight and promotion of pop music in Iran.

His works include soundtracks for acclaimed films including "Horse" by Masoud Kimiai, "Dad-Shah" by Habib Kavosh,

"Mirza Kuchak Khan" by Amir Qavidel, "The Last Supper" by Fereydoon Jeyrani, "A Man, A Bear" by Masoud Jafari Jozani and "Autumn" by Rasoul Sadrameli.

In addition to his film work, he served as the conductor of the National Orchestra of Iran from September 2016 until March 2019.

His tenure was marked by a commitment to elevating Iranian classical music and modernizing its presentation to contemporary audiences.

However, following his resignation, he continued to be involved in music consul activities, providing guidance to the Roudaki Foundation until his resignation in May

2019.

Shahbazian's artistic journey was punctuated by numerous accolades, recognizing his immense talent and contributions to the Iranian music landscape.

He received several nominations for Best Composer at prestigious events, including the Fajr Film Festival and the Cinema House Festival, achieving significant awards like the Forough Farrokhzad Award for Best Composer.

Beyond the accolades and recognition, Shahbazian's legacy lies in the profound impact he made on the Iranian music scene, nurturing countless musicians and composers.

His ability to blend traditional Persian music with contemporary elements set a benchmark for future generations, making his work timeless and influential.

## "Yahya's Prophecy" exhibit showcases stories of resilience in war refugee camps



TEHRAN- A photo exhibition titled "Yahya's Prophecy" has opened in Qazvin, offering a unique and immersive experience that combines imagery, text, and sound.

The exhibition delves into the realities faced by Lebanese refugees in Syria, particularly in the war-torn areas, during the Israeli attacks.

The exhibition showcases the remarkable work of Mahsa Alviri, the first female photographer from Qazvin to document life in conflict zones, specifically in Syria and Lebanon, where she engaged with Lebanese war refugees through interviews and visual storytelling.

"Yahya's Prophecy" comprises 100 photographs and 17 narratives, illustrating the harsh realities faced by Lebanese refugees during the Israeli attacks on Syria.

Centered around the theme of how influential figures like Yahya Sinwar, a symbol of resilience, were nurtured and educated within the refugee camps, the exhibition explores

themes of self-esteem, faith, and patriotism.

Alviri's goal was to comprehend how prominent resistance figures, such as Yahya Sinwar and Ismail Haniyeh, are fostered and raised in the midst of adversity.

Through her interactions with these families, Alviri gained a profound understanding that everyone, regardless of age, embodies heroism.

This insight highlights the extraordinary resilience and strength exhibited by the Lebanese community in Syria.

She returned to Iran less than 20 days before the Syrian government fell, making her the last Iranian woman photographer who managed to travel to Syria.

A 20-minute documentary of Alviri's journey is currently in the editing process, and the team plans to convert the smaller narratives into a book.

The exhibition is a testament to Alviri's dedication to sharing the stories of these remarkable individuals and communities.

Located in Qazvin, "Yahya's Prophecy" is a multifaceted exhibition that combines photography, video, audio, music, and text. By presenting the message in an accessible and engaging manner, the exhibition allows visitors to grasp the essence of the narrative in a short span of time, with thoughtful framing and curation.

The exhibition was officially inaugurated on January 6 and will remain open for 20 days. It offers a rare opportunity for visitors to im-

merse themselves in the inspiring stories of resilience and strength exhibited by the Lebanese community in Syria.

Yahya Sinwar (1962-2024) was a Palestinian politician who served as the chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau from August 2024 and the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip from February 2017 until his martyrdom in October 2024.

Sinwar lost his life in a confrontation with Zionist occupation forces in Gaza.

Sinwar is recognized as the architect of the 7 October attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm.

Born in Khan Yunis, Gaza, Sinwar earned a BA in Arabic Studies from the Islamic University of Gaza. An early member of Hamas, established by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in 1987, he became immersed in anti-occupation activism during his university years.

Throughout the 1980s, he faced multiple imprisonments, ultimately being sentenced to four life terms in 1988 for his alleged involvement in attacks against Israeli forces.

During his incarceration, Sinwar mastered Hebrew and translated banned autobiographies of former Shin Bet leaders, indicating a commitment to education and preparation for future leadership.

Released in 2011 as part of a prisoner exchange deal for Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, Sinwar quickly rose through Hamas ranks. In 2021, he was re-elected and played a significant role in the Al-Quds Sword war.

## Persian performance of "Molly Sweeney" to be staged in Dubai

TEHRAN-The Persian performance of the play "Molly Sweeney" written by the Irish dramatist Brian Friel and directed by Iranian theater director Morteza Mirmontazami will be staged at the Zabeel Theater in Dubai, the UAE on January 28.

The 90-minute play, which has Saber Abar, Ali Sarabi, and Elham Korda in the cast, was previously performed at Vahdat Hall in Tehran last November, ILNA reported.

A two-act play, "Molly Sweeney" tells the story of its title character, Molly, a woman blind since infancy who undergoes an operation to try to restore her sight.

The play tells Molly's story through monologues by three characters: Molly, her husband Frank, and her surgeon, Mr. Rice.

This play is about Molly Sweeney who constructed for herself an independent life rich in friendships and sensual fulfillment, and her ill-fated encounter with two men who

destroy it and cause her madness: Frank, the man she marries who becomes convinced that she can only be complete when her vision is restored, and Mr. Rice, a once-renowned eye surgeon who uses Molly to restore his career.

Molly undergoes eye surgery at the insistence of her husband and steps into the world of the sighted. Initially, she is very excited, but after a while, she begins to suffer from an illness; her brain fails to process the visual information, and despite having perfect vision, she is completely blind.

After this event, Molly becomes deeply depressed and ill. Having lived for 40 years in the world of blindness, she is afraid of leaving that world.

Once she recovers, she fully realizes that she has lost the beautiful world of blindness that was uniquely hers.

Brian Friel (1929-2015) was an Irish dra-



matist, short story writer, and founder of the Field Day Theater Company.

He is considered one of the greatest English-language dramatists.

He has been likened to an "Irish Chekhov" and described as "the universally accented voice of Ireland". His plays have been compared favorably to those of contemporaries such as Samuel Beckett, Arthur Miller, Harold Pinter, and Tennessee Williams.