

## Israel More Vulnerable Despite 15-Month War on Gaza

Four soldiers were killed during fighting in the northern Gaza Strip on Saturday, raising the total number of Israeli fatalities since October 7, 2023, to 835



Page 5

### 'Our missile power increases daily,' IRGC chief tells top officers

TEHRAN – Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Commander-in-Chief, Major General Hossein Salami, issued a stern warning to adversaries, emphasizing the rapid growth and advancement of the nation's missile capabilities.

During a meeting with senior missile officers from Operations True Promise I and II at a newly unveiled missile complex on Saturday, Salami highlighted the precision, speed, and destructive force of Iran's missiles, underpinned by the unwavering resolve of their operators.

"Our missile capability is growing daily. Every facet of our power improves in quality, quantity, skill, and design," the major general stated.

He elaborated that Iran's missile forces are now capable of launching hundreds of missiles simultaneously in successive waves, stressing their accuracy, velocity, and destructive power, and the operators' unwavering determination.

"Operations True Promise I and II were merely minor demonstrations of this magnitude, a small glimpse of our vast and limitless potential," Salami asserted. ▶ Page 2

### 'A breach of intl. law': Iran condemns France for hosting terrorist gathering

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baqaei has strongly criticized France for hosting a gathering of the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) terrorist group, accusing the French government of supporting terrorism and failing to uphold its international legal obligations.

"Granting permission to a terrorist group to hold a meeting is a clear example of inciting violence, spreading hatred, and interfering in Iran's internal affairs," Baqaei stated in a statement on Saturday.

He stressed that such behavior contradicts the foundations of human rights and the principles of international law.

The notorious MEK recently held a rally outside Paris, attended by controversial figures such as former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, former UK Prime Minister Liz Truss, and former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Another attendee, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's incoming Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg, told the gathering on Saturday, "The world must return to a policy of maximum pressure against Iran to turn it into a more democratic country."

"These pressures are not just kinetic, just not military force, but they must be economic and diplomatic as well," Kellogg added. ▶ Page 3

### The future of the Lebanese Resistance after Aoun election

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON – Amid undeniable fears about Lebanon's future, Hezbollah's vote for Aoun as president has established new security and political balances given the war-ravaged Lebanon's political fragility in the face of growing interference by US-led Western countries and Persian Gulf monarchies.

The election of Gen. Aoun as president was imposed, nevertheless the final say lies with the Shiite duo's shrewdness that prioritizes reconstructing what has been destroyed by the US-backed Israeli aggression; complete withdrawal from the south; and active participation in the new cabinet.

The Shiite duo's approved Aoun to preserve domestic cohesion and national affinities, thwarting the persistent foreign efforts to deepen sectarian and political divisions.

In his inauguration speech, Gen. Aoun affirmed his commitment to these pivotal priorities especially the necessity of agreeing on a defense strategy, as it is no longer acceptable to ignore the Israeli colonial ambitions.

### World must take Trump's threats against Canada, Denmark extremely seriously: American professor

By M.A. Saki

TEHRAN – An emeritus professor of business and international affairs from George Washington University says President-elect Donald Trump's threats to grab Canada and Greenland by force are "stark warnings" that show "when a country turns on its own allies."

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Hossein Akari says, "It is a warning that the rest of the world must take extremely seriously and respond thoughtfully and decisively."

Following is the text of the interview:

**Donald Trump has again threatened to reclaim the Panama Canal and has not ruled out using military force or economic sanctions to pursue acquisition of the Panama Canal and Greenland. What do such threats reveal about Trump's personality or state of mind?**

Trump is an insecure bully who thrives by bullying and knocking others down.

### From fires to firepower: LA burns as US fuels overseas conflicts

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- The outgoing administration of President Joe Biden is facing significant criticism for prioritizing military expenditures overseas while neglecting pressing domestic issues, particularly in light of its inadequate response to the devastating wildfires in Southern California.

Huge wildfires have torn through Los Angeles since Tuesday. They have razed to the ground entire neighborhoods, reducing vast areas of the city to ashes.

According to private forecaster Accuweather, the raging fires have covered tens of thousands of acres of land and could potentially have an economic impact of up to \$150 billion.

An outage monitor that tracks blackouts across the United States said on Sunday that tens of thousands of homes and businesses in Los Angeles remain without electricity.

The blazes in Los Angeles County are believed to be the "most destructive" in modern US history.

Page 5



### More nuclear sites become focus of defence forces in ongoing military drill

TEHRAN – Iran's military has commenced extensive air defense drills, code-named "Eqtedar" (Might), in its western and northern regions, focusing on protecting vital sites like the Fordow and Khondab nuclear facilities.

The exercises feature a broad range of military hardware, including sophisticated radar, missile, and electronic warfare systems, alongside manned and unmanned aircraft, with a focus on both offensive and defensive tactics.

The Iranian Army Air Defense Force and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) are taking part in the exercises, practicing reconnaissance, identification, interception, and engagement operations against simulated threats. ▶ Page 3



### Exclusive Kolookhi welcomes back their 'young teacher' as president

By Soheila Zarfam

Kolookhi, a small and unassuming village nestled in the Sistan and Baluchestan Province of Iran, is the kind of place where not much ever seems to happen.

Life moves at a slower pace, and the rhythm of daily existence is generally uneventful. Yet, over five decades ago, this quiet village played a small but significant role in the early life of a man who would eventually become the President of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian. ▶ Page 2

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

## America, a fake hero

In an analysis, Kayhan addressed the U.S. administration's failure to put out the fire in Los Angeles and the censorship of the even by the pro-Western media in Iran. It wrote: Biden has been providing Israel and Ukraine with huge funds for the war in Ukraine and Gaza, but reduced the budget of the Los Angeles Fire Department that undermined the fire department's ability in controlling the inferno. A number of the pro-Western media outlets have completely censored the news of the huge and damage caused by fire in Los Angeles. The fact is that some people in Iran are prejudiced in favor of the West. Western experts and media criticize the incompetence of the American political system in controlling the fire, but our pro-Western people view the West as "always a hero, victorious and successful". Trump won the election with the slogan "we will make America great again (MAGA)". But it must be said that, firstly, America is not great and instead has become weak; and secondly, the American people have accepted this fact because if they had not accepted it, they would not have voted for him. But our pro-Western people don't acknowledge this fact!

### Jam-e-Jam: Iran's policy towards Syria

In a note, Jam-e-Jam newspaper addressed Iran's policy towards Syria and said: The important point is that the future of Syria seems completely unclear. Certainly, the Islamic Republic of Iran cannot be indifferent to the future of this country considering the fact that Iran had extensive and special relations with Syria over the past half a century. Senior foreign policy officials of our country have also pointed out this matter that we are ready for political interactions and protecting our interests in Syria. This is while no official and acceptable action has been taken in this regard and, unfortunately, the anti-Iran voices have not decreased in Syria, and the anti-Iran currents in Syria are continuously publishing slogans and declarations against Iran. Accordingly, in the foreign policy issues, considering the importance of regional security, the Islamic Republic of Iran is interested in establishing a wise and balanced relations with Syria based on international law and the United Nations Charter.

### Ettelaat: For the sake of people, we must join FATF!

In an interview with former diplomat Abdolreza Faraji Rad, Ettelaat discussed Iran's

foreign policy approach toward the upcoming negotiations with the European trio and possible the United States. He said: The 14th (sitting) government is on the verge of starting nuclear negotiations. Mr. Pezeshkian and the decision-makers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are well aware that the international situation, especially the situation in the Middle East, went into disarray in 2024. Therefore, the Islamic Republic should consider all aspects and then sit around the negotiating table with the Europeans. Iran's nuclear case has been one of the most complicated issue cases in the world over last two decades. But now that America has officially withdrawn from this issue (the 2015 nuclear deal, aka JCPOA), it is the best opportunity to sign an agreement with Europe to revive the JCPOA, which will untie our diplomatic and economic knots. Therefore, we have to formalize the agreement through any method or approach that is possible. It seems the "collective wisdom" has reached the concluded that without the FATF we cannot take any positive steps to reduce the problems. This is a positive thing.

### Arman-e-Emrooz: Lifting sanctions is key to Iran's economic prosperity

In a commentary, Arman-e-Emrooz discussed the lifting of sanctions and Iran's economic growth. It quoted economist Dr. Mehdi Pazoki as saying: The current economic policies and sanctions are the main factors in slowing down economic growth and increasing inflation. The start of nuclear talks and the lifting of sanctions have positive effects on Iran's economy, and this issue is a key factor in improving economic conditions. If the nuclear negotiations reach a positive conclusion and sanctions are reduced, foreign investments are likely to increase, which could contribute to economic growth. Also, the lifting of sanctions can lead to a reduction in import costs and, as a result, a reduction in the inflation rate. As a bridge between the East and West, Iran has a strategic geographical position. Such position can help develop trade exchanges and transit of goods and make Iran a commercial hub in the region. Considering the various potentials, if Iran can counter economic, political, and social challenges, it can achieve sustainable and comprehensive economic growth.

## Military delegates from eight countries visit Bu Musa Island, Strait of Hormuz



TEHRAN – A group of military personnel from eight countries, currently attending a national defense program at Iran's prestigious National Defense University, recently visited Bu Musa Island and the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

The delegation was accompanied by Major General Yahya Safavi, Senior Assistant and Advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, and the head of the university's International Faculty.

In a statement, Major General Safavi explained that the primary purpose of the visit was to showcase Iran's advancements in defense and security, particularly in the crucial regions of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. He highlighted the importance of these areas for international energy transit, industry, and regional stability, underscoring Iran's efforts to strengthen bilateral relations with its

neighboring countries. These nations include India, China, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, and others in the region.

Throughout the three-day visit, the military delegates toured several significant Iranian facilities, including the Shahid Rajaei Port, the Persian Gulf Star Refinery, Hormozgan Steel Company, and various shipbuilding industries. They also visited the ecological environment of Bomoos Island and the Jamaran destroyer, one of the Iranian Navy's key vessels. The group had the opportunity to meet with Admiral Ali Fadavi, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy, where they engaged in discussions on regional maritime security and Iran's defense capabilities.

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

# Second round of Iran E-3 talks begins in Geneva

TEHRAN – The second round of discussions between Iran and the European Troika (Britain, France, and Germany) is set to commence on Monday and will continue for two days.

A representative for the European Union is also joining the countries.

Geneva is hosting the talks focused on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), regional issues, and international developments.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs emphasized earlier that "These discussions are not formal negotiations but rather an opportunity to clarify issues and engage in deeper consultations."

He further explained that the primary aim of these talks is to establish the context, method, and framework for any potential future negotiations.

This round follows recent meetings in Geneva where diplomats from Iran, the UK, France, and Germany addressed various developments.

"We discussed and took stock of recent bilateral, regional, and in-



ternational developments, particularly nuclear and sanctions lifting issues," Gharibabadi stated after the November talks.

The discussions came after an anti-Iran resolution passed by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in November, spearheaded by the U.S. and the European Troika, accusing Iran of not fully complying with the JCPOA.

The JCPOA was an agreement signed in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries, which limited Iran's nuclear program in

exchange for sanctions relief. It collapsed in 2018 after U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew and reimposed sanctions.

Iran responded by gradually scaling back on its commitments 15 years later, citing the failure of European signatories to counteract the U.S. sanctions.

In response to the November 2023 IAEA resolution, which condemned Iran for "insufficient cooperation" without addressing Western non-compliance, Tehran stepped up its uranium enrichment and deployed new advanced

centrifuges, all under IAEA supervision.

Gharibabadi has warned that Iran might exit the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if the UN Security Council's "snap-back" mechanism, which allows for the reimposition of sanctions, is activated. Iran argues that since the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, neither the U.S. nor European countries have the legal standing to trigger this mechanism.

"We are firmly committed to pursuing the interests of our people, and our preference is the path of dialogue and engagement," Gharibabadi reiterated, highlighting Iran's stance on diplomacy.

Adding to this, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated during a recent interview, "The formula we have in mind for resolving the nuclear issue is the same as the JCPOA formula, which is trust-building about Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the removal of sanctions."

He also warned, "If the other side refuses this path [of fair negotiations], it is natural for us to continue on our own way, as we have done in recent years and will continue to do now."

## 'Our missile power increases daily,' IRGC chief tells top officers

From page 1 ▶ Iran showcased its power during Operations True Promise I and II in April and October 2024, unleashing a barrage of missiles and drones on the Israeli regime, effectively striking various sites within the occupied territories.

The IRGC chief affirmed that Iran's capacity is boundless, as the country continuously expands its missile systems nationwide.

Addressing potential enemy miscalculations, Salami stated, "Perhaps the enemy believed our production capacity had diminished," but quickly refuted this, affirming the IRGC's steadfast resilience and strength.

He also praised the performance of IRGC officers and soldiers during Operations True Promise I and II.

"I sincerely commend the brilliance you exhibited in these operations; you've gladdened the hearts of Muslims globally, freedom advocates worldwide, and our great Iranian nation, as well as our esteemed leader, while instilling fear in the enemy," he declared.

He added that the IRGC contributed to the "enduring glory of the history of Muslim battles against arrogant powers and Zionism."

Salami further addressed psychological warfare by adversaries. "In recent weeks, due to regional developments, our enemies have been filled with false excitement, making erroneous



judgments and miscalculations, attempting to portray a weakening of the Islamic Republic of Iran's power," he said. He firmly stated, "We know these judgments are merely the enemies' wishful thinking, not the existing reality."

The IRGC chief asserted that the Iranian armed forces have unveiled only a fraction of the country's true might. "The enemy must recognize that our political resolve to confront any overreach, domination, or aggression is unwavering, complete, and absolute."

The major general emphasized that Iran's commanders and fighters possess the deter-

rent and defensive capabilities to materialize this political resolve.

He also reaffirmed Iran's readiness for large-scale conflicts. "We have long been preparing for major battles, high-intensity warfare, and prolonged confrontations against ostensibly great global powers and their regional allies," he said.

Salami concluded with a call for vigilance and readiness, adding that the IRGC relies on God and is always prepared to demonstrate the great manifestations of this power when commanded, as it has done in the past.

## Iran congratulates Maduro on inauguration, pledges closer ties with Venezuela

TEHRAN – Iran has extended its congratulations to Nicolás Maduro on his inauguration as President of Venezuela for a third term, expressing hopes for stronger bilateral relations between the two nations.

In a statement posted on the social media platform X on Saturday night, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei wrote, "Congratulations to President Nicolás Maduro on his inauguration as President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We wish him great success in serving his people and country and look forward to collaborating with the elected government to advance the extensive ties between Iran and Venezuela."

Maduro was sworn in during a ceremony at Venezuela's National Assembly on Friday, where he vowed to usher in a "period of peace" during his new six-year term. He described his leadership as a "democratizing revolution" inspired by the ideals of Latin American independence heroes and asserted his commitment to what he

called an "eminently democratic project."

Maduro secured victory in the July 28, 2024, presidential election with 51.2% of the vote, narrowly defeating opposition candidate Edmundo González, who garnered 44.2%. However, the opposition, backed by the United States, alleged electoral fraud. González has since fled to Spain, with the U.S. recognizing him as the legitimate winner of the election.

Following Maduro's inauguration, the U.S. escalated its efforts to undermine his government, announcing an increased \$25 million reward for information leading to the arrest of the Venezuelan president and his closest allies.

In his statement, Baqaei reaffirmed Iran's solidarity with Venezuela, denouncing "malign interventions and unilateral coercive measures led by the United States." Both nations have been subjected to extensive U.S. sanctions, which are part of broader imperialist efforts to suppress independent governments.

## Kolookhi welcomes back their 'young teacher' as president

From page 1 ▶ Fifty-one years ago, a young Pezeshkian served his military service here and now he has returned as the nation's leader.

As President Pezeshkian made his second provincial visit to Sistan and Baluchestan last week and visited the place he called home for two years during his twenties, images of the humble house where he spent his military service began circulating online.

The Tehran Times spoke with Ali Ebadi, the president's special cameraman, who accompanied him throughout his Sistan and Baluchestan trip. Ebadi shared that before President Pezeshkian arrived at his former home, the camera crew had gotten there ahead of him and managed to speak with some of the villagers.

"It really felt like an old friend was returning," Ebadi explained. "They addressed him by his first name, Masoud, and talked about the time he had spent there with their families and children. This is because Dr. Pezeshkian served as a teacher there while completing

his military service."

Ebadi quoted one villager saying, "We're so pleased that the young teacher from those years, now the President, has returned to the village where he served. It feels like our children's friend has come home to share memories of the past. He used to stand by a small small water and teach our children how to properly Wudhu." Wudhu is a ritual washing performed by Muslims before prayer. Pezeshkian had made poems to teach the kids about the Islamic ritual. Some of those students who are now grown adults with children of their own, still remember the poems to this day.

Another villager told the cameraman, "I remember how, back then, when our fathers donated land to build a mosque and school for Dr. Pezeshkian, he worked tirelessly alongside the villagers to help with the construction. Those buildings still stand today." The villager also noted the stark changes time had brought. "The Kolookhi of today is vastly different from the village of his service," he added.

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

# More nuclear sites become focus of defence forces in ongoing military drill

From Page 1 ▶ Khordad 15 and Talash missile systems were used to destroy simulated invading unmanned aircraft in the initial phase. IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini stated that these drills, part of a larger series across six provinces continuing until mid-March, are a direct response to "new security threats" and are significantly larger and more sophisticated compared to last year.

In addition to the air defense exercises, a major maritime drill is scheduled for the Strait of Hormuz, and passive defense and tactical movements are being evaluated.

The exercises come amidst heightened tensions after



reports of potential U.S. strikes against Iranian nuclear sites and are seen as a show of strength and preparedness.

During previous rounds of the drill, the military downed

weapons similar to bunker busters over the Natanz nuclear facility located in the central Esfahan province.

**Army to receive new 'strategic' equipment**

Deputy Commander of

the Iranian Army Force for Coordination Affairs Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari has said that Iran's Army is set to receive new strategic equipment in the coming days.

Rear Admiral Sayyari on Sunday, referring to the unveiling of new equipment in recent Army drills said in an interview that high range, high precision, and high destruction power are among the features of these drones, that Iran's Army will be equipped with these modern drones.

Iranian Army Ground Force is set to receive new equipment in the coming days, he added.

## 'A breach of intl. law': Iran condemns France for hosting terrorist gathering

From Page 1 ▶ The event was led by the group's ringleader, Maryam Rajavi.

Iranian spokesperson Baqaei further argued that France's actions are inconsistent with "the fundamental principles of international law regarding friendly relations and cooperation among states based on the UN Charter."

He emphasized that France's leniency and selective approach to terrorism is an "illegal act" that imposes international responsibility on the French government.

"This is completely deplorable and unacceptable morally and in terms of human rights," he added.

The spokesperson also condemned the MEK for its history of terrorist activities, which have led to the deaths of thousands of innocent Iranians and caused injuries to many more.

"The continued presence and activities of the Mojahedin-e-Khalq terror group in France violate France's international legal obligations under relevant treaties related to combating terrorism and UN Security Council Resolution 1373," Baqaei stated.

The spokesperson urged all governments to adhere to their international legal obligations to prevent and combat



terrorism.

He concluded by calling on the French government to honor its commitments and refrain from any assistance in organizing and financing terrorism.

The MEK has a long history of violent activities, including bombings, assassinations, and other acts of terrorism.

The group collaborated with Saddam Hussein's regime during the Iran-Iraq War and carried out attacks that resulted in the deaths of thousands of Iranians.

Its violent past includes the bombing

of a gathering of Islamic Revolutionary leaders in the 1980s, which killed hundreds of people, including senior Iranian figures.

In a recent Tehran trial, testimonies revealed the brutal acts of the MEK.

Witnesses testified that Shahrokh Tahmasebi and Khosro Riyahi Nazari were tortured and killed by MEK operatives.

Describing Tahmasebi's treatment, they revealed that he was abducted in 1982, tortured, and his body burnt and buried, while Nazari faced a similar fate, left in a semi-constructed building.

## Iranian citizen arrives in Tehran after release from Italian custody

TEHRAN - Mohammad Abedini Najafabadi, an Iranian citizen who had been detained in Italy based on unfounded allegations put forth by Washington, returned to Iran Sunday night.

The Iranian Judiciary's media center reported that Abedini Najafabadi's detention in Italy stemmed from a «misunderstanding.» This issue, according to the report, was successfully addressed through diplomatic efforts from the Iranian Foreign Ministry and negotiations conducted between the relevant intelligence agencies of both Iran and Italy.

The media center further stated that all actions taken by both nations ultimately resulted in Abedini Najafabadi's release.

Abedini Najafabadi, 38, is a graduate in mechanical engineering from Sharif University of Technology. He was taken into custody on December 16 by Italian law enforcement officials at Milan Airport as he was preparing to travel to Switzerland, where he resides.

His arrest was reportedly executed based on a warrant issued by the United States.



Washington had accused the engineer of involvement in an Iraqi drone attack targeting an illegal American base in West Asia last year.

On Sunday, the Italian justice ministry announced that they had officially requested the revocation of Abedini Najafabadi's arrest.

The release of the Iranian national followed a decision by Tehran to release Cecilia Sala, an Italian journalist, who had been detained for transgressing Iranian law.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni confirmed on Wednesday that a plane carrying Sala had departed from Tehran after «intensive work through diplomatic and intelligence channels» facilitated her release. Italian authorities have said the two cases or separate.

## Iran affirms commitment to Afghanistan as trade, cooperation discussions intensify



TEHRAN - Discussions aimed at bolstering economic ties between Iran and Afghanistan took center stage this week in Kabul, as the head of Iran's diplomatic mission, Alireza Bikdeli, engaged in high-level meetings with key Taliban officials.

A primary focus of these discussions was the enhancement of trade and investment. Bikdeli met with Afghanistan's acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nooruddin Azizi, who made a strong appeal for increased collaboration from Iranian businesses.

Azizi emphasized the need for a well-defined, joint roadmap to facilitate a significant

expansion of trade between the two neighboring states, highlighting the potential for mutual economic benefit. He suggested exploring new avenues for partnerships in various sectors, urging Iranian companies to consider Afghanistan as a key market and investment destination.

In response, Bikdeli affirmed Iran's unwavering commitment to prioritizing its relationships with neighboring countries, a core principle of its foreign policy, and expressed a desire to work closely with Afghanistan to achieve these shared objectives.

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

## SPORTS

### I knew that my time would come: Ali Gholizadeh

TEHRAN - Lech Poznan Iranian winger Ali Gholizadeh is happy to be in the Polish team and says that he knew that this would come.

The 28-year-old player joined Lech Poznan in July 2023 from Belgian side Charleroi but failed to live up to the expectations.

Gholizadeh is optimistic about the future in Ekstraklasa and says he is happy to be in the club.

"I can be much better and I can't wait to jump to my highest level. I hope to do it as soon as possible, but there is no doubt - I can do more, I know myself and my capabilities. In my opinion, I was closest to my peak form in Charleroi, in one season I scored eight goals and had slightly fewer assists, those were good numbers," Gholizadeh said in an interview with Lech Poznań website.

"I have had two serious injuries since joining Lech Poznan. I feel much better now and I am very happy about it, I have worked hard for it. I am doing everything to do my best. In the previous years I was at the national team training camps and I arrived at my teams a bit later and I was not able to work with them for at least two weeks. For me, what happened this summer was a kind of rebirth. It's incredibly important for a footballer to be able to fully participate in the preparations, and after such a long time without this opportunity, I had the feeling that something special was ahead of me," he added.

"We have to start with the fact that we all had high expectations when I came to Lech. The fans, the club, myself. For a long time, I didn't give the team much, but I always remembered that I had to be patient. At the same time, I understood people who said: hey, you haven't shown anything yet, and you were supposed to be great. I felt that the time for repayment would come, and in order to do that I still have to do a lot," the Iranian international winger said.

"In the match against Legia Warszawa I scored and my dream came true. I played well, the team played well, the stands were full of fans. I scored after three minutes and honestly, it's one of my favorite matches in my entire life," Gholizadeh concluded.

### Nassirshahal steps down as Iran weightlifting coach

TEHRAN - Navab Nassirshahal has stepped down from his role as head coach of Iran national weightlifting team.

Nassirshahal, 33, was appointed Team Melli coach in last year's March.

He had replaced Saeid Alihosseini in the team.

Nassirshahal has previously worked as assistant of Sajad Anoushiravani in 2016 Olympic Games.

He led Iran in the 2023 Asian Weightlifting Championships in Jinju, South Korea, 2024 Olympic Games in Paris and 2024 IWF World Championships in Bahrain.

2000 Olympic Games champion Hossein Tavakolli, 2012 gold medalist Behdad Salimi and ex-Iran coach Koroush Bagheri are shortlisted to replace Nassirshahal.

Nassirshahal competed at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, where he won a silver medal in the 105 kg division, behind Oleksiy Torokhtiy of Ukraine, but was later upgraded to the gold medal following Torokhtiy's disqualification for doping.

The weightlifter participated in the same event at the 2014 Asian Games and the 2015

World Championships, but failed to set a mark in the clean and jerk in both cases.

### Rui Faria, latest candidate to lead Persepolis

TEHRAN - Rui Filipe da Cunha Faria is the most recent candidate, who has been shortlisted to take charge of Persepolis.

Faria is a Portuguese football coach, known for his work with football manager José Mourinho for 17 years.

The 49-year-old coach was head coach of Al-Duhail in 2019-20 season.

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

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

### Esteghlal eye Allahyar Sayyadmanesh: report

TEHRAN - Esteghlal football team have reportedly set their sight on signing Westerlo winger Allahyar Sayyadmanesh.

Sayyadmanesh joined the Belgian team in the last year's January but he is unhappy with lack of playing time.

The 24-year-old player started his playing career in Esteghlal in 2018 and joined Fenerbahçe a year later.

Sayyadmanesh has also played in Zorya Luhansk and Hull City.

### Hyundai, Khatoon to lock horns in AWCL

TEHRAN - The AFC Women's Champions League (AWCL) 2024-25 quarter-final ties are set to be blockbusters.

After an exciting group stage which had it all, the Wednesday's knockout stage draw at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur identified the path for the teams who are aiming to be the inaugural champions to plot their charge.

The-AFC.com has taken a look at what can be expected in the single leg last eight ties, which will be played on March 22 and 23.

Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC of South Korea will play Iran's Bam Khatoon in the quarter finals.

Hyundai Steel Red Angels Women's FC will be aiming to make home ground advantage count against Bam Khatoon FC.

That aside, the tie promises to be a thrilling affair with both teams highly experienced.

Red Angels topped Group A with seven points while Bam Khatoon finished as the Group B runner-up on four points.

Both sides will definitely strengthen their respective squads ahead of the quarter-finals and will be aiming to go all the way.

Tereza Engesha starred for Red Angels in the group stage, netting five of seven goals while team effort took Bam Khatoon through, with four goals coming through contributions from three different players.

## Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$9.4b to Iraq in 9 months



TEHRAN - Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$9.4 billion to Iraq during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 21, 2024), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Foroud Asgari said that Iraq was the second top export destination of the Iranian non-oil goods in the mentioned nine months.

Considering Iran's vast export capacity and Iraq's large market for Iranian goods, both sides want to expand the volume of bilateral economic exchanges.

Iran and Iraq have set a target of \$20 billion in annual trade, and businessmen and authorities of both countries are determined to meet that target.

In late May 2024, the head of the Department of Spatial Planning and Regional Planning of the Iranian Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) said that Iran exports some 2,200 products, valued at \$12 billion, to neighboring Iraq annually.

Speaking in a meeting entitled "Reviewing opportunities and challenges of attracting Iraqi investors and strengthening trade relations between the two countries in line with demarcating Iran in the regional value chain", Jafar Hosseini said that Iraq, benefiting from \$85 billion foreign currency reserves, 130 tons of gold reserves, and 147 billion barrels of proven reserves of crude oil, is among the richest countries in West Asia.

Currently, Iran exports over 2,200 various types of goods and products to Iraq, he said, adding that more than half of the active Iranian traders are present in the Iraqi market.

## Iran's gasoline consumption increases by 7.4%

TEHRAN - The head of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) announced that the country's daily gasoline consumption in the current Iranian calendar year 1403 (started on March 20, 2024) has risen by 7.4 percent compared to the previous year, reaching 124 million liters per day.

According to Tasnim News Agency, Keramat Veis Karami stated: "The daily gasoline consumption in the previous year was 115.4 million liters, which has increased to 124 million liters this year."

He also reported a nine percent increase in diesel consumption in the current year, adding: "Daily diesel consumption last year was 110 million liters, but this year it has grown by nine percent." The growing gasoline consumption in Iran reflects both economic and demographic factors, including an expanding vehicle fleet and increased travel.

Despite being a major oil producer, the rise in domestic demand for refined products like gasoline has placed stress on Iran's refining infrastructure.

Fuel subsidies in Iran are among the highest globally, making gasoline significantly cheaper

Developing the trade infrastructures to facilitate trade between the two countries, encouraging traders to invest in Iraq, promoting trade through dispatching and admitting trade delegations and participating in exhibitions of the two countries, etc. are suggested to strengthen the trade and economic relations between Iran and Iraq, he underlined.

In an interview in mid-December, the ambassador of Iran in Iraq praised the economic relations between the two sides and expressed hope that these relations will be more and better.

Mohammad Kazem Ale-Sadeq announced the value of commercial exchanges between the two countries, and stated that economic relations between Iran and Iraq are very good, and expressed hope that these relations will improve.

The envoy further noted: "Iraq is an important country in the region, and we have very important economic, political, and social relations with this neighbor."

In early May 2024, Tehran hosted the 6th meeting of the Iran-Iraq Joint Economic Committee.

The two-day event was co-chaired by the former Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi and Iraqi Minister of Commerce Atheer Daoud Al-Ghurairi.

On the first day of the meeting, specialized committees including commercial, industrial, agricultural, standardization and quality control, energy, finance, banking, investment and insurance, shipping, transport, and Customs, scientific, educational, tourism, health, as well as sports consulate held meetings to discuss areas for cooperation.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Iran shares land or water borders with 15 countries namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.



than in most countries.

This affordability encourages higher consumption, further straining resources.

To address this, the government has launched campaigns to promote public transportation, develop fuel-efficient technologies, and increase awareness about energy conservation.

The seasonal surge in consumption, especially during holidays, often necessitates the import of gasoline to meet demand.

Analysts emphasize the importance of strategic planning and potential subsidy reforms to balance domestic needs with long-term sustainability.

## Export from Semnan province increases 60%

TEHRAN - As announced by a provincial official, the value of non-oil export from Semnan province rose 60 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.

Morteza Hajian-Nejad, the director-general of Semnan province's Customs Department, said that 310,000 tons of commodities worth over \$370 million were exported from the province in the nine-month period, indicating also 19 percent rise in terms of weight, year on year.

He said that the products were exported to 40 countries, and mentioned Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Russia as the main export destinations of the products exported from the province in

the said time span.

The official further announced that 32,000 tons of commodities valued at \$191 million were imported into the province in the first nine months of the present year, showing seven percent growth in value, and 20 percent rise in weight, as compared to the same period of time in the previous year.

As previously announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran's non-oil exports rose 18 percent in the first nine months of the Iranian calendar year to \$43.14 billion.

Foroud Asgari said imports during the mentioned period, including gold bullion, amounted to \$50.89 billion. The weight of imports declined

# 70 companies partaking in Iran steel structures exhibition

TEHRAN - More than 70 domestic and foreign companies are showcasing their latest products, achievements, and services at the second International Exhibition of Steel Structures, Related Engineering Industries and Services (Iran Steel FAB).

The exhibition will be held from January 13 to 16, 2025, at the Tehran International Permanent Fairground. The exhibition carries the slogan: "Safe and Sustainable Structures for Everyone, Everywhere."

Talking to IRIB about the exhibition, Head of Steel Structures Cooperative Company of Iran (CAMSI) Zare Haghghi stated: "Prioritizing and valuing production in the steel sector, as the most important indicator of national development, highlights its strategic role across diverse industrial and urban infrastructure sectors. These include machinery, tools, mining, construction, defense industries, refineries, petrochemicals, energy production and transmission, as well as transportation."

"Steel structure production in Iran, given the country's position among the top global steel producers, requires a shift in focus



from raw material sales to the production of final goods. This is a hallmark of modern industrial and urban development," Haghghi further added.

He emphasized that entering regional and global markets is key to expanding sales networks, creating value-added products, generating employment, and advancing engineering and construction technologies, ensuring growth for steel structure producers and overall economic development.

Haghghi outlined the exhibition's objectives, which include supporting export development, attracting domestic and foreign investments, exchanging ad-

vanced knowledge in construction and design engineering, introducing standard steel structure producers, showcasing export-ready products, educating specialized and public visitors on new technologies, providing researchers access to scientific studies, fostering a vibrant business environment for participants, facilitating targeted marketing, and hosting specialized seminars and workshops. Additionally, the exhibition aims to evaluate domestic and international markets, create opportunities for new and knowledge-based businesses, strengthen political and economic relations through exhibition

diplomacy, and enable interaction with government and private sector officials.

He highlighted Iran's current steel structure production capacity at 5.0 million tons, with 2.0 million tons currently being produced annually.

The official praised the sector's self-sufficiency, noting, "Iran has achieved unique independence in steel structure production, creating a five-million-ton capacity. However, one significant challenge is integrating steel structures into national housing projects and mass construction."

He identified initial capital as a key barrier to the widespread adoption of steel structures in mass housing projects, which makes them less competitive with concrete structures. However, their faster construction times and reduced project durations make steel structures economically viable for large-scale housing initiatives.

Despite the high safety standards of steel structures, Haghghi lamented that insufficient initial funding has led to their limited adoption by developers and government officials.

## Iran, Turkey pave the way for \$30b in bilateral trade



TEHRAN - Hossein Pirmoazzen, deputy head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), announced the preparation of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to establish a joint Iran-Turkey Chamber of Commerce and Industries following the visit of an Iranian trade delegation to Ankara.

Speaking to the press, Pirmoazzen stated that Iran and Turkey are seriously pursuing the enhancement of bilateral trade relations. The groundwork for increasing trade volume to the targeted \$30 billion has been strengthened through meetings held during the Iranian delegation's visit to Ankara.

According to the official, the current annual trade volume between the two countries stands at approximately \$11.6 billion. He em-

phasized that closer cooperation between ICCIMA and Turkey's Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, along with Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK), is essential to achieving the trade goal set by the presidents of the two nations.

He also highlighted the advantages of the preferential trade agreement signed in 2015, which primarily benefits Iran in the agricultural sector. "This agreement provides significant opportunities for Iranian agricultural exports to Turkey, and Turkish agricultural businesses should take advantage of this," he said.

Pirmoazzen noted that during the high-level Iranian delegation's visit to Ankara, Turkish traders and the Union of Chambers of Commerce in Turkey were invited to visit Iran during the upcoming agricultural exhibition. He also stressed the need to ease truck movement in the food and agricultural sectors to minimize losses, calling it a key discussion point during the delegation's visit, which included 180 representatives.

Based on the latest customs data for 2023, the total trade volume between Iran and Turkey reached \$11.7 billion. Of this, Iran's exports to Turkey amounted to \$4.2 billion, while Turkey exported \$7.5 billion to Iran. "These figures indicate that Turkey holds a stronger position

in trade with Iran," Pirmoazzen remarked.

The vice president pointed to recent agreements, including resuming negotiations on revising the preferential trade agreement, enhancing rail transportation capacity, and developing cooperation in free trade zones. These discussions were part of the 29th Joint Economic Committee meeting between Iran and Turkey held in Tehran last month.

Pirmoazzen also mentioned that Turkey is consistently one of Iran's largest export markets after China, Iraq, and the UAE. In recent years, Iran has managed to increase the export of various goods to Turkey.

He announced that an MOU to establish a joint Iran-Turkey Chamber of Commerce and Industries is ready for signing. "With its implementation, the private sectors of both countries can work more closely to facilitate trade," he said.

The official praised the efforts of Iran's ambassador to Turkey, the Minister of Agriculture, and the ministry's deputies. He concluded by proposing ways to expand economic cooperation, including investments in industries, trade of high-tech products, and the exchange of technical knowledge in various fields of technology.

## Copper cathode production rises 3.2% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN - Production of copper cathode in Iran rose 3.2 percent in 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, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IM- IDRO) has announced.

The organization put the amount of produced copper cathode at 216,732 tons in the nine-month period of this year, and at 209,956 tons in the first nine months of the previous year.

Copper cathode is the primary

raw material input for the production of copper rods for the wire and cable industry.

Given the significance of mining sector in Iran, implementation of projects to develop different parts of this sector has been always a major program of the governments.

As a major state-owned holding company active in the mining sector in the country, IMIDRO is playing a significant part in this regard, and in line with its development role, it has defined a number of programs including supporting the contractors active

in the mining exploration operation, upgrading the geographical information system (GIS) database based on international standards, exploration of hidden and deep resources using new methods and training of required manpower.

Exploration and processing of rare minerals with special technologies, assistance in equipping and updating the drilling fleet with the help of Mining Investment Insurance Fund, planning to support and upgrade the scientific-technical level of exploration consultants, and conducting

additional exploration operations in all existing mines for increasing the reserves tonnage are the other programs of IMIDRO in this due.

Involving the private sector in exploration activities is also an approach that the organization has included in exploration programs.

IMIDRO had also announced that considering the importance of exploration operation in the mining sector, IMIDRO was preparing a strategic five-year program for more focus on exploration activities.

by 3.16 percent to 27.94 million tons, he added.

Non-oil export volume reached 116.35 million tons in the nine-month period, a 13.77 percent increase from the previous year, Asgari noted. The average customs value per ton of exported goods rose 3.74 percent to \$371.

Petrochemical exports accounted for 50.7 million tons, valued at \$19.7 billion, representing a 33.25 percent increase in volume and a 32 percent rise in value year-on-year.

China remained Iran's top export destination, purchasing \$11 billion worth of goods. Iraq followed with \$9.4 billion, the UAE with \$5.3 billion, Turkey with \$5.2 billion, Afghanistan and Pakistan with \$1.7 billion each, and India with \$1.4 billion. Together, these seven countries accounted

for 82.4 percent of the total export volume and 82.85 percent of export value.

The UAE topped the list of Iran's import partners, exporting \$15.3 billion worth of goods to Iran. China followed with \$13 billion, Turkey with \$8.9 billion, Germany with \$1.8 billion, India and Russia with \$1.1 billion each, and Hong Kong with \$1 billion. These seven countries supplied 75 percent of the import volume and 83 percent of import value during the period.

The average customs value per ton of imported goods rose 8.4 percent to \$1,821.

Natural gas in liquid form led the export list at \$6 billion, followed by liquefied propane at \$2.5 billion and methanol at \$1.9 billion. Key imports included raw gold at \$5.6 billion, livestock corn at

\$2.1 billion, and smartphones at \$1.7 billion.

Asgari, who also serves as deputy economy minister, emphasized the role of trade in bolstering the national economy amid ongoing international sanctions.

The 11th session of the Supreme Council for the Development of Non-Oil Exports was held after a four-year hiatus, with the participation of Iran's first vice president on January 1.

In an exclusive interview with IRIB, Alireza Dehghan Dehnavi, head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), highlighted the significance of this council, which had been inactive for nearly four years. He noted that the council had played a key role in national decision-making processes before falling into disuse.

# Israel more vulnerable despite 15-month war on Gaza

Four soldiers were killed during fighting in the northern Gaza Strip on Saturday, raising the total number of Israeli fatalities since October 7, 2023, to 835

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The Israeli regime's rising war crimes in Gaza have seen its soldiers suffer a rising number of casualties.

The spokesperson for the Israel occupation forces (IOF) has admitted the deaths of another four soldiers and the injury of others during battles in northern Gaza's Beit Hanoun.

Israeli media revealed later on Sunday that the death toll had risen to seven with around 30 injured in a 24-hour period, which reportedly involved "severe security incidents".

The reports indicated that dozens of injured IOF soldiers were evacuated on Saturday from northern Gaza, including at least eleven described in either critical or severe condition.

The IOF has besieged northern Gaza from the rest of the Strip, preventing little to no humanitarian supplies from entering in a bid to starve the population into submission.

According to UN agencies and rights groups, the most heinous war crimes have been committed in the north, which has seen daily massacres against the malnourished civilian population.

Despite this, according to details in Israeli media, an Israeli force was hit by an explosive device, followed



by a shooting attack in the north, resulting in many casualties.

Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth reported that the operation targeted a leadership convoy headed by the commander of the Nahal Brigade, as the convoy was traveling along a route presumed to be safe for the IOF.

The newspaper added that the IOF is investigating how the armed fighters reached this area, west of Sderot, and is examining the possibility that they exited through an undiscovered tunnel.

Other Hebrew reports also spoke of a powerful explosive device detonating inside a tunnel in Gaza early in the day, resulting in the initial fatalities.

Channel 12 in Israel described the "Beit Hanoun attack" as a "double ambush" that involved the detona-

tion of a landmine followed by gunfire targeting the Israeli force.

It noted that "the evacuation of the dead and wounded soldiers was complicated and carried out under fire from the fighters."

Hallel Bitton, the military and security correspondent for Israeli Channel 14, pointed out that "ten officers and soldiers were killed during battles in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza over the past week."

A few days ago, the IOF admitted that the officially announced number of Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza had risen to at least 828 since October 7, 2023.

Israeli media has offered a significantly higher number of fatalities and injuries among the IOF in Gaza.

This comes as the Palestinian fighters in Gaza continue to confront the invading Israeli forces with pre-

cision military operations, inflicting casualties among its soldiers and damaging its vehicles.

The initial ground battles in Beit Hanoun between invading Israeli infantry and the Palestinian resistance began on 27 October 2023.

Israeli media criticized the Israeli army's strategy of repeated entry and withdrawal from Gaza rather than seizing and controlling territory. They noted that Hamas exploits this tactic to set deadly traps.

In sharp criticism following the latest deadly incident in Gaza, Bitton said, "The Chief of Staff's infiltration method has failed," adding, "As long as the Chief of Staff does not understand that the only way to fight in Gaza is to seize and control territory, not repeatedly enter and exit it, nothing will change."

Similarly, the military correspondent for Israel Hayom pointed out that the rising death toll of soldiers in Gaza has become difficult to manage.

The correspondent added that the incident in Beit Hanoun was particularly severe, noting that "soldiers from the Nahal Brigade were killed," and that "10 soldiers have fallen in the past week alone, 50 in the last three months, and 400 since the start of the ground maneuver in Gaza – numbers that are becoming hard to contain."

## The future of the Lebanese Resistance after Aoun election

From page 1 ▶ Aoun's commitment to these guarantees will accordingly determine Lebanon's future, as these crucial issues are not only of a local nature, but also has a regional and global dimensions.

Indeed, they require resuming national dialogue which Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri founded 15 years ago, when he called for consensus on a comprehensive defense strategy that would preserve the resistance movement's military capabilities, and prevents any confrontation with Lebanon's national army.

Over the past decades, the resistance movement has adopted Ivan Arreguin-Toft's Asymmetric Conflict Theory, which stipulates that throughout unconventional strategies, the weak can prevail over the major powers.

In the midst of the recent US-led Israeli war on Lebanon, Washington's proxies have spared no efforts to impose the election of a president, according to the United States' imperialist terms in a way that would undermine Hezbollah in the Lebanese political arena.

Despite all the staggering blows it received from September to November 2024, the resistance movement has emerged victorious; it has not lost the will to fight, despite the enemy's geopolitical and technological superiority.

Paul Salem, vice president for international engagement at the Middle East Institute in Washington, told the New York Times that Hezbollah "remains a very heavily armed group, more powerful than any other in the country."

Writing on the Washington Institute for Near East Policy website, one day before the election session, David Schenker, the former US Assistant Secretary of State for West Asian Affairs, stated that choosing a "reform-minded" president is a good first step, yet it does not replace concerted efforts to consolidate Hezbollah's setbacks, otherwise it will simply reassert its deadly grip.

Paul Salem, vice president for international engagement at the Middle East Institute in Washington, told the New York Times that Hezbollah "remains a very heavily armed group, more powerful than any other in the country."

Schenker noted that the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south does not necessarily mean that the government will dismantle Hezbollah's military infrastructure. He pointed out that in order to encourage the pro-US Lebanese factions to seize the opportunity against Hezbollah "Washington may have to make economic and military assistance conditional on the performance of the

Lebanese Armed Forces, with regard to enforcing UN resolutions and imposing sanctions on rebellious Lebanese politicians."

Also in an interview with Haaretz, Dror Doron, a former Lebanon analyst in Netanyahu's office, noted that "the Israeli army is likely to establish a security buffer zone in southern Lebanon. While Hezbollah will resist such a plan, the Lebanese government will not dare to oppose it for fear of being seen as complicit with Israel."

Doron added, "The only way to change the situation is through electing a courageous anti-Hezbollah candidate like General Aoun, who with strong US support, will force Hezbollah to withdraw to the north of the Litani," admitting that such a scenario is likely to lead to "an internal explosion in Lebanon."

If President Aoun deviates from his inauguration speech's rational and national agenda, Lebanon's stability would be shaken. Hence, he must have exceptional flexibility, act with prudence, and not submit to Western dictates that only take into account Israel's hegemonic interests and its superiority on entire West Asia.

This Western dangerous contradiction, whatsoever, can be controlled if President Aoun has sincere intentions and firm sovereign plans.

Each stage has its own necessities, especially after the fall of the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Lebanon must invest on its constructive ties with the friendly Arab and Islamic states, for it is in dire need to establish a series of institutions that addresses the concerns of all sectarian components.

## From fires to firepower: LA burns as US fuels overseas conflicts

From page 1 ▶ The uncontained natural disaster has caused total chaos in the affected areas.

Reports suggest at least 20 arrests have been made for looting.

"Looting is an issue, the number of arrests is continuously growing," Capt Mike Lorenz of the Los Angeles Police Department said on Saturday.

Firefighters have been engaged in combating the blazes that have resulted in the deaths of over a dozen individuals. However, inadequate funding has been cited as a reason for the inability to control the intense infernos effectively.

Kristin Crowley, LA's fire chief, has publicly criticized the city for budget cuts that she said have made it harder for firefighters to do their jobs.

Crowley had said in a memo in December that budget cuts were hampering the department's ability to respond to emergencies.

Meanwhile, reports say fire hydrants in Pacific Palisades were broken before the wildfires began in Los Angeles.

California Governor Gavin Newsom has characterized the insufficient water supply and water pressure to manage the wildfires as "deeply troubling."

Amid the federal government's failure to allocate sufficient funds to deal with the disaster, it has spent billions of dollars on military adventurism abroad.

Over the past days, activists have lashed out at the US government for its military interventions overseas. They argue that the funds designated by the White House for supporting Israel's conflict in Gaza ought to have been redirected to address domestic issues, such as equipping the Los Angeles fire department to manage wildfires more efficiently.

The United States has spent a

record of \$17.9 billion on military assistance to Israel since the start of the regime's genocidal war on Gaza, on October 7, 2023, according to a report for Brown University's Costs of War project, released in October last year.

Earlier this month, the Biden administration informed Congress about a planned arms sale to Israel valued at \$8 billion.

Washington's huge military assistance to Ukraine, in the context of domestic challenges, has also drawn significant criticism within the United States.

But the military support for Israel and Ukraine is just the tip of the iceberg.

The United States allocates significant taxpayer funds to counter China's rise, which is anticipated to become the leading global economy in the future. The US is afraid of being dwarfed by China's growing in-



fluence. Hence, it is making desperate attempts to demonize the Yellow Dragon.

In December, China warned the United States of "playing with fire" after Washington announced more military aid and sales to Taiwan.

US politicians have added fuel to the fire through overseas military interventions and turned a blind eye to domestic needs. For now, American people in Los Angeles are paying a huge price for such erroneous policies.

## World must take Trump's threats against Canada, Denmark extremely seriously: American professor

GWU scholar says the so-called rules-based order after WWII is rapidly eroding

TEHRAN – An emeritus professor of business and international affairs from George Washington University says President-elect Donald Trump's threats to grab Canada and Greenland by force are "stark warnings" that show "when a country turns on its own allies."

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Hossein Akari says, "It is a warning that the rest of the world must take extremely seriously and respond thoughtfully and decisively."

Following is the text of the interview:

**Donald Trump has again threatened to reclaim the Panama Canal and has not ruled out using military force or economic sanctions to pursue acquisition of the Panama Canal and Greenland. What do such threats reveal about Trump's personality or state of mind?**

Trump is an insecure bully who thrives by bullying and knocking others down. He wants to have people subservient and 100 percent loyal to him. He cannot tolerate any competition. He wants to dominate. Sadly, the Republican party has cowered to him and each senator and most members of the House obey him. They dare not cross him. He has frightened them all. They don't seem to realize that they have to unite, uniting is the key, and oppose him if they want to have autonomy and a shred of dignity left.

**In his January 6 press briefing, Trump also threatened Canada, calling the border between the two countries an "artificially drawn line". His remarks came just a few weeks after he called Canada the 51st U.S. state. What sense does such a covetous eye on Canada send to the world, especially to American friends and allies especially as the Canadian FM said "we will never back down in the face of threats"?**

It is a warning that the rest of the world must take extremely seriously and respond thoughtfully and decisively. It is true that they don't have the military power to resist the United States and they cannot

individually be effective in standing up to America's economic and financial pressures, but they can collectively push back on the U.S. if they unite and take economic measures—sanctions and measures to dethrone the role of the dollar in international transactions and as the preeminent asset. I believe if they unite and push back on Trump, he will cower and become very small. The sooner they act the better, but if they start one by one courting and bowing to Trump, then Trump will dominate each and every one of them in every sphere.

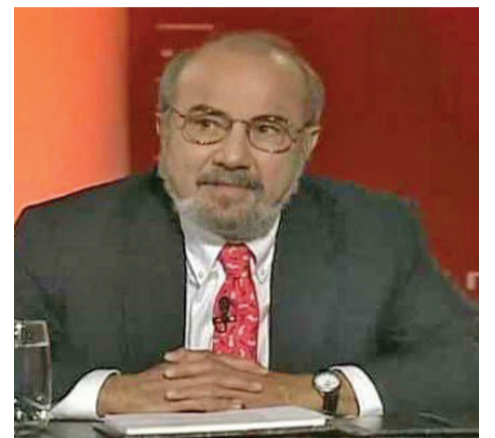
**Aren't such threats a blow to international order and disrespect to other countries' sovereignty or an encouragement toward anarchy and lawlessness?**

Yes, absolutely. The so-called rules-based order after WWII is rapidly eroding at the edges and if nothing is done, and fast, we will have the anarchy that you are alluding to.

**Isn't Trump's U.S. emerging as a bully that would threaten the Western alliance and even NATO?**

Yes and yes, but it is not emerging, it is already a bully and the threats against Denmark and Canada are stark warnings when a country turns on its own allies. Europe should pay heed. Act now and maybe the U.S. Congress will show some courage to stop Trump before these threats become their realities. What Trump does not understand is that the United States also needs Europe for its own security. There are important U.S. bases and thousands of troops in Europe, which could defend Europe but they also provide for the defense of the United States. It would be a catastrophic setback for the United States if it had to close all its European bases. As Trump threatens Europe should consider threatening back!

**It has been for years that American officials have been floating the idea that the U.S. is the leader of the "free world", however, such remarks show that the U.S., at least under Trump, is emerging as a bully in the world. Please give your own opinion.?**



"Trump is an insecure bully who thrives by bullying others"

Yes, the U.S. has been a bully for about 30 or so years. It has been the pre-eminent sender of sanctions that make other countries subservient and it has used this and military power to bend countries to its agenda. Sanctions along with the military power to enforce have enabled the United States to get its way. But Trump is taking that to a new level by threatening to attack these same allies.

**Can Trump's threats force Western allies to reassess their policies or take a departure from the U.S. in terms of defense and economy in the long run?**

Yes, but only if they unite and stand firm. If they can do this, I believe that the U.S. Congress and other decisionmakers in the United States will turn against him.

**Don't you think that Trump's remarks embolden powerful countries to frighten others?**

Yes, and absolutely, it gives two in particular such a free ticket, China and Russia, to do as they wish. And please note that the United States has essentially disabled the United Nations with its dozens of vetoes at the UN Security Council in support of Israel's illegal and rogue actions, to say nothing of its threats to international courts and judges in the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

**Last month Trump threatened attacks on drug cartels inside Mexico. This time he promised to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America. Please give your opinion.?**

This is a childish publicity stunt. Who cares what you call a body of water as long as people know what they are talking about. It has been called the Gulf of Mexico throughout recent history. Yet Trump thinks a name change will make America Great Again! It reminds me of the stupidity of the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf changing the name to the Arabian Gulf and now referring to it as the Gulf!! No name to the body of water! You make a country great by establishing the rule of law, justice, equality before the law, better education and healthcare and eradicating inequality, poverty and corruption, not by changing a name.

**Trump also repeated his threat that "all hell will break out in the Middle East", if Hamas does not release hostages by the time he takes office. What else remains that Trump's administration can do against Gaza as the enclave is already a hell?**

Again, a bully. He forgets the many innocent Palestinians that the Zionists have butchered. He doesn't care for their human lives one iota. And sadly, the Arabs in the Persian Gulf, who have the means and the ability to push back on the ongoing genocide are too afraid to stand up to the United States and Israel.

**Elon Musk, a close aide to Trump, is also using offensive language against European leaders including the German chancellor and president. How do you analyze Musk's personality?**

Musk is a strange fellow. Like Trump, he is insecure. He is drunk on the power that his wealth has afforded him and he is running wild. The end may not be so glorious.

## Flights from Gorgan to Istanbul to begin next week



TEHRAN – Weekly flights between Iran's Gorgan and Istanbul are set to commence on January 21, the director-general of Golestan province's airports said on Sunday.

The service, facilitated by Yazd Airways, will operate weekly on Tuesdays, departing from Gorgan International Airport, Ali Metanat noted.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, the official highlighted the collaborative efforts and negotiations leading to the launch of this new route. "The first flight is scheduled for Bahman 2 (January 21) by Yazd Airways," he stated.

In addition to the Istanbul service, Metanat revealed plans to expand Gorgan's international flight network further.

"We are currently in discussions to establish routes from Gorgan to Ashgabat in Turk-

menistan and Samarkand in Uzbekistan."

He noted that this expansion aims to cater to increasing demand from residents and local businesses.

Currently, Gorgan International Airport operates two weekly international flights to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and Aktau in Kazakhstan.

The addition of the Istanbul route will bring the total number of international destinations to three.

Domestically, the airport handles 57 weekly flights to destinations including Tehran, Mashhad, Zahedan, Shiraz, Assaluyeh, Chabahar, and Kish. These routes operate daily, providing consistent connectivity within Iran.

Metanat expressed optimism about the airport's growing role in regional and international air travel.

"The addition of new international routes is a significant step in meeting the demands of our community and fostering economic growth," he concluded.

Golestan is one of the 31 provinces of Iran, located in the northeast of the country and southeast of the Caspian Sea.

Its capital is the city of Gorgan, formerly called Esterabad until 1937. Golestan was split off from Mazandaran province in 1997.

Golestan is bordering Turkmenistan to the north. One of the key border points between the two countries is Incheh Borun, which serves as a vital crossing point.

## Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Quebrada de Humahuaca

Quebrada de Humahuaca, situated in Argentina's province of Jujuy, follows the line of a major cultural route, the Camino Inca, along the spectacular valley of the Rio Grande, from its source in the cold high desert plateau of the High Andean lands to its confluence with the Rio Leone some 150 km to the south.

The UNESCO-designated valley demonstrates substantial evidence of its use as a major trade route over the past 10,000 years.

It features visible traces of prehistoric hunter-gatherer communities, of the Inca Empire (15th to 16th centuries), and of the fight for independence in the 19th and 20th centuries.

According to UNESCO, the property is a highly representative example of the south Andean valleys, with an exceptional system of communication routes and economic, social, and cultural coordination.

This is the most important physical linkage between the high Andean lands and the extensive temperate plains in south-eastern South America.

Its impressive natural environment is kept almost intact, with hundreds of archaeological and architectural sites that bear witness to its long and rich history.

The valley shows substantial evidence of its use as a major trade route over the past 10,000 years. Scattered along the valley are extensive remains of successive settlements whose inhabitants created and used these linear routes.

They include prehistoric hunter/gatherer and early farming communities (9000 BC to 400 CE), large structured agricultural soci-

eties (400 CE-900), flourishing pre-Hispanic towns and villages (900-1430/80), the Incan empire (1430/80-1535), Spanish towns, villages and churches (153/93-1810), and traces of Republican struggles for independence (1810-20th century).

Of particular note are the extensive remains of stone-walled agricultural terrace fields at Coctaca, thought to have originated around 1,500 years ago and still in use today; these are associated with a string of fortified towns known as pucarás.

The field system and the pucarás together make a dramatic impact on the landscape one that is unrivalled in South America. The valley also displays several churches and chapels and a vibrant vernacular architectural tradition.

The current population, on its part, keeps its traditions in an outstanding cultural landscape.

Thus, Quebrada de Humahuaca is an extremely complex heritage system characterized by elements of various kinds inserted in a stunning, impressive and colorful landscape.

The interaction between the geo-ecological system and the successive societies and cultures that have occupied it for the last 10,000 years shows space-time continuity that is hard to find in other areas.

Separated from the ensemble, only a few properties can be considered unique and outstanding.

However, the combination of natural and cultural elements has given rise to a site that is beyond comparison in every sense.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Discover Museum of Light and Illumination in UNESCO-listed Yazd

By Afshin Majlesi

The Museum of Light and Illumination, located in the historic city of Yazd, stands as a cultural and architectural masterpiece.

This iconic destination is nestled within a lush garden along Kashani Street. Known locally as Qasr-e Ayeneh ("Palace of Mirrors"), the museum offers visitors not only a chance to explore a strikingly beautiful building but also to delve into a rich collection of historical artifacts.

### A treasure trove of history

The museum offers a fascinating glimpse into history through its diverse collection of artifacts related to light and illumination. Visitors can marvel at an array of objects, including ancient bronze mirrors and antique lighting devices like oil lamps, candle holders, and kerosene lamps, which showcase the evolution of light sources across centuries.

Among the standout exhibits are chandeliers and lamps of various types; mounted, handheld, and standing, which have been crafted to burn different fuels such as animal fat, candles, gas, kerosene, and electricity. Some of the oldest pieces, like the ancient oil lamps, date back to the Sasanian period, reflecting their rich historical significance.

In addition to lighting tools, the museum houses rare bronze and metal artifacts from historically significant regions, including Lorestan, and a collection of coins and century-old stamps, particularly



Descriptions of the exhibits are also available in Braille, enabling all visitors to connect with the museum's treasures. Through its thoughtful curation, the Museum of Light and Illumination not only preserves the history of light but also illuminates the cultural and artistic legacies of the past.

### Architectural marvel

One of the most remarkable aspects of the museum is its unique architecture, which blends traditional Iranian and European styles.

Upon entering, visitors are greeted by a sprawling garden that frames the magnificent building. The museum itself boasts a spacious courtyard, a grand swimming pool, and intricately designed interiors.

Walls and ceilings adorned with mirror mosaics capture and reflect light, creating a luminous and enchanting atmosphere—a feature that gives the museum its name.

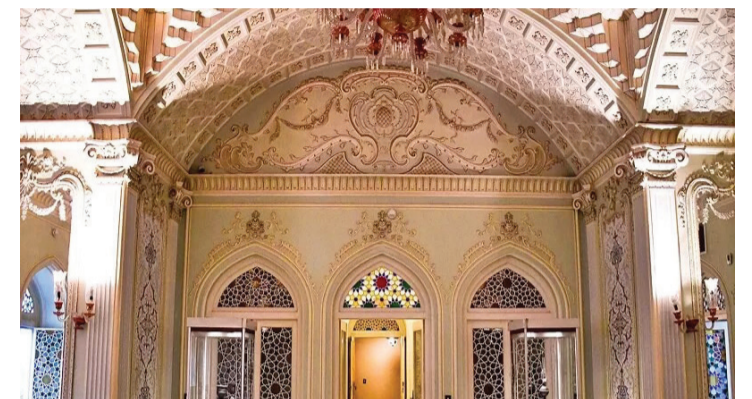


from the Qajar era. Visitors can also explore beautifully handwritten manuscripts that highlight the cultural and artistic heritage of Yazd.

The museum's inclusivity is noteworthy, as it provides accessibility for visually impaired individu-

Adding to the splendor, wooden lattice doors and stained-glass windows scatter colorful beams of sunlight across the rooms, creating a dreamlike ambiance. The elaborate stucco work and artistic carvings further enhance the visual appeal. Notably, the Shah Neshin (King's Quarter) and the Hozkhaneh

(Pool Room) stand out as architectural highlights. The Hozkhaneh, with its massive marble pool and distinct design, is the largest room in the museum and features 1,800



tiles in its construction.

### Historical significance

Constructed during the Pahlavi era, the building originally served as a private guesthouse owned by the late Reza Sarrafzadeh, a prominent local figure and merchant.

Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, ownership of the whole garden was transferred to the Mostafafan Foundation of Islamic Revolution upon a court order, and a few years later, the property was transformed into a museum. Recognized for its cultural and architectural value, the museum was added to Iran's National Heritage List in 1998, only a year after its inauguration as a museum.

### Cultural hub

The museum frequently serves as a venue for major cultural and artistic events, including exhibitions of painting, calligraphy, and photography.

Its carefully designed decor, a harmonious blend of Iranian craftsmanship and European influence, makes it a fitting setting for

such prestigious gatherings.

### Why visit?

A trip to the Museum of Light and Illumination is a must for anyone visiting Yazd. It offers a rare opportunity to experience a dual attraction: a historical palace brimming with artistic elegance and a treasure trove of cultural artifacts. As Yazd itself is a UNESCO World Heritage site, the museum perfectly complements the city's reputation as a center of history and tradition.

Whether you are drawn by its stunning architecture, intrigued by its collection of ancient relics, or simply looking to immerse yourself in the cultural splendor of Yazd, the Museum of Light and Illumination promises an unforgettable journey through time and beauty.

### Yazd, don't-miss destination in heart of Iran

In July 2017, the historical core of Yazd, the provincial capital, was named a UNESCO World Heritage site. Yazd is regularly referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. The city is full of mudbrick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

Cultural heritage experts believe that Yazd is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. The historical core of Yazd is chockfull of mudbrick houses, bazaars, public bathhouses, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and centuries-old gardens. From the divine point of view, the city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

## Passenger traffic at Bileh Savar border terminal increases by 38%

TEHRAN - Passenger traffic at the Bileh Savar border terminal has risen by 38% during the first nine months of this current Iranian year (started on March 20, 2024), according to Lotfollah Babai, the terminal's director.

Speaking to reporters, Babai stated that 68,441 passengers used the terminal (which is situated in Iran's Moghan county bordered by the Azerbaijan Republic) during the same period last year.

This year, over 94,000 passengers have passed through the terminal. Of this total, 1,178 were Iranian passengers, while 93,177 were foreign nationals. Iranian passengers primarily crossed on foot, while foreign travelers used buses.

Babai highlighted a 34% decrease in the num-

ber of incoming Iranian passengers compared to last year. In the past Iranian year, 1,755 Iranian passengers entered the country through the terminal, compared to 1,165 this year.

Regarding foreign travelers, Babai reported that 43,957 foreign nationals entered Iran through the Bileh Savar border terminal, while 49,220 departed during the same period.

This marks a 40% increase in foreign passenger departures compared to the previous year when 35,166 foreign travelers exited through the terminal.

In addition to passenger traffic, 116,377 vehicles, including both loaded and empty vehicles, crossed the border during the nine months. Of these, 60,454 entered Iran, while 55,923 exited through Bileh Savar.



This includes 113,932 trucks and 2,445 buses, representing a 43% increase in bus crossings and a 19% increase in truck traffic compared to the same period last year.

The Bileh Savar border terminal, located in Ardabil province, serves as a key crossing point in Moghan county. The terminal is 159 kilometers from the provincial capital of Ardabil, 50 kilometers from the nearest airport, and approximately 130 kilometers from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

## Barcelona is using its tourist tax to help tackle effects of climate change

After wide-scale anti-tourism protests over the summer, Barcelona is trying to turn a negative into a positive by spending some of the money raised from the city's tax on visitors to tackle issues caused by climate change.

Barcelona is one of the most visited cities in Europe, and for many of Barcelona's 1.6 million residents, tourism is seen as the reason for a growing number of problems, like a housing

shortage, rising prices and changing neighborhoods.

"The urban fabric is completely destroyed," Barcelona resident Fernando told CBS News. He lives in a neighborhood that is popular among tourists for its restaurants and bars.

"This area particularly, you know, I've lived here for over 20 years and it's just, slowly getting, like, soulless. I would say 50% of the buildings are

here just for temporary use, you know, for rentals," he said.

"If it was like interesting cultural artistic and these kinds of clients, that would be much better for everybody," Barcelona resident Elizabeth, who works at a hotel, told CBS News. "But people who come only for party, drink and just not taking care of the city. That is the problem."

But Barcelona is among a number of southern European

cities facing another problem: the increasingly extreme effects of climate change. In recent years, it has become drier and warmer, and there have been intense and dangerous heat waves and draughts.

The rising temperatures have become a problem for city infrastructure like public schools, many of which do not have air conditioning, as the extreme heat of summer extends into the school year.

At one Barcelona public school, 11-year-old student Mia told CBS News that she struggles to concentrate when it's hot.

"Sometimes when you're like, in the class, and you just came out playing football, it's very hot," Theo said.

But this year, for the first time, Mia and Theo have air conditioning in school, after a system was installed over the summer. It was paid for using

money raised from Barcelona's tourist tax — a small fee charged to visitors.

"The tourist tax is what the tourists that visit our city pay when they are in a hotel or in a touristic apartment," Barcelona's Deputy Mayor Laia Bonet told CBS News. "The possibility of using these revenues, the tourism tax, for such a project is very important so that we can accept."

(Source: CBS News)

Fully Furnished Apartment to let  
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lobby, full-time lobbyman, security  
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By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN –The Department of Environment (DOE) is taking new steps to further protect the Asiatic cheetahs in the country.

“Relocating domestic animals from cheetahs’ habitats, fencing Tehran-Mashhad road, which is one of the most dangerous areas, and breeding in captivity are among the most recent measures the Department of Environment has been taking to preserve cheetahs,” IRNA quoted Hamid Zohrabi, an official with the DOE as saying.

These plans mainly focus on threat removal. During these years, domestic animals have been removed from an area of 150,000 hectares including Golestan National Park as well as the wildlife sanctuary in the area, Zohrabi added.

The DOE is following up on the allocation of two trillion rials (around 2.9 million dollars) to decrease cheetahs’ mortalities on the Tehran-Mashhad road through enhancing road lighting, reducing vehicle speeds, and fencing.

Drones and other wildlife monitoring tools can be also used to conserve cheetahs in the area. However, more is needed to be



done to reach a favorable result, the official further noted.

“We do our best to safeguard cheetahs’ habitats, but to increase their population, the plan to breed in captivity is going on.

We have already taken measures to standardize their breeding site in captivity with the help of the private sector, Zohrabi stressed.

### Conserving cheetahs

The expansion of the cheetah territory, and safeguarding their habitats have increased the number of cheetahs, IRIB quoted Zohrabi, as saying in November 2024.

Highlighting the key role of public participation in the con-

servation of Asiatic cheetahs, the official said over 400,000 hectares area of land between Turan National Park in Semnan province and Miandasht Wildlife Refuge in North Khorasan province are protected by the private sector.

The plan to increase prey is being implemented by the cooperation of the DOE and local communities, he noted.

In October 2024, the official said that the DOE is planning to organize a committee for the preservation of critically endangered species including cheetahs, black bears, and great bustards.

“The Department of Environ-

ment is planning to protect endangered species by establishing conservation committees with the help of non-governmental organizations, as well as fostering cooperation with the public, rangers, experts, and government agencies,” IRNA quoted Zohrabi as saying.

Growing the population of cheetahs in the wild is the top priority of the DOE, but their breeding in captivity is also scientifically monitored at the Turan National Park Research Center in the city of Shahrud, IRNA quoted Bahram-Ali Zahiri, an official with the DOE, as saying.

Measures are being taken to preserve cheetahs from extinction by raising their population to 50, he added.

Cheetahs are polygamous mammals. Asiatic cheetahs reach maturity at 2 to 3 years of age and can reproduce until 8 years of age. Female Asiatic cheetahs give birth to multiple cubs, he explained.

A document on the growth and maintenance of Asiatic cheetahs as a valuable and endangered species has been compiled for the first time in Iran marking a valuable scientific achievement by local experts, Zahiri said.

## Iraq seeks to foster co-op with Iran anti-narcotics police



TEHRAN – The Iraqi anti-narcotics police chief, Ahmed Al-Zarkani, has highlighted the need to enhance joint activities on combating drug smuggling and sharing expertise between the two countries.

Lauding Iran’s efforts in the war against narcotics, Al-Zarkani said, “We welcome boosting joint activities with Iran anti-narcotics police and look forward to expanding cooperation on other drug-related issues,” ISNA reported.

The official made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on Sunday with his Iranian counterpart, Iraj Kakavand. The Iraqi official highlighted the significance of exchanging information on drug traffickers, as well.

“Targeted, comprehensive fight against anti-narcotics requires a lot of efforts and goes beyond the national borders of the two countries; by fostering cooperation, we will be able to adopt appropriate measures to deal more decisively with drug trafficking,” Al-Zarkani noted.

The Iranian official, for his part, underscored the need to intensify the fight against armed drug traffickers on joint borders.

Controlling the borders and drug traffickers who buy and sell weapons in exchange for

drug trafficking on joint borders will lower the opportunity for any criminal activities by the armed drug smugglers at borders, Kakavand stressed.

Following formerly signed memorandums of understanding, Iran’s anti-narcotics police is willing to boost collaborations on simultaneous border patrols, learning about the drug smuggling methods and transit routes, establishing a specialized team to deal with specific cases, and exchanging information on smugglers and those arrested.

### Regional co-op essential

In July 2024, former Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi participated in the second International Conference on Drug Control, which was held in Baghdad, Iraq.

During his two-day official visit, Vahidi met counterparts from other countries to explore ways to foster cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking.

The event was attended by Iraqi Minister of Interior, Abdul Amir Al-Shammari, and the anti-narcotics police chiefs of the neighboring countries participated in the preparatory meeting.

During the meeting, Kakavand called regional cooperation essential in tackling drug trafficking.

Highlighting Iran’s all-round efforts in the battle against narcotics and illicit trafficking, Kakavand said regional cooperation is crucial to address the problem due to vast border trafficking, IRNA reported.

### Iran’s substantial efforts in fight against drug trafficking

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has lauded the Iranian government for its substantial efforts and steady

fast commitment to tackling drug trafficking.

On December 8, 2024, Alexander Fedulov, UNODC Iran Country Representative, attended a high-level meeting which was held at the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ) on the occasion of the successful seizure of 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

During the meeting, Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi, Commander of the Iranian Border Guard, shared details of a major drug seizure in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

On September 10, 2024, Iranian forces successfully seized 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine.

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

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

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

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

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

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## ‘Water transfer from Sea of Oman has no environmental risk’

Transferring water from Sea of Oman to central drought-ridden provinces of the country, provided that the environmental requirements are met, will not pose threats to the environment, Issa Kalantari, the Department of Environment (DOE) chief has announced.

To provide the amount of water needed for the country, agriculture and industries, there is no choice but to use seawater, the incredible and abundant resources, now and in the future, Kalantari stated, IRNA reported on Monday.

## شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان مشکل زیست محیطی ندارد

رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست کشور گفت: شیرین سازی و انتقال آب دریای عمان به استان های مختلف به شرط رعایت الزامات محیط زیستی، جانمایی مناسب در ساخت آب شیرین کن و رهاسازی پساب آن مشکل و مانع زیست محیطی ندارد و از نظر این سازمان بلا مانع است.

عیسی کلانتری دوشنبه شب در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: برای تامین آب کشاورزی، آشامیدنی و صنایع کشور چاره ای جز استفاده از آب دریا نداریم و باید چه اکنون و چه آینده به این منابع بیکران و بسیار فراوان رجوع کنیم.

JANUARY 13, 2025

Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

7

## IRCS, intl. societies cooperate to aid Syrian refugees

TEHRAN –In cooperation with other international societies, the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has provided rescue services to Syrian refugees in the south of Lebanon.

The IRCS has dispatched a relief team to Lebanon to assist and protect Syrian refugees, IRNA quoted the IRCS director for international affairs, Razieh Alishvandi, as saying.

In collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the team has so far provided emergency accommodation for homeless Syrians.

Currently, a camp with 60 tents has been set up due to the availability of necessary infrastructure, including sanitary facilities and flat land, she said.

Referring to the critical conditions of Syrian refugees in different areas of Lebanon, Alishvandi said, “The refugees in these areas need immediate shelter, therefore the Iranian Red Crescent Society will set up a camp with a capacity of 1,000 beds in the area. It will be developed later to meet the needs of refugees based on the situation of the border areas.”

### Lebanese Red Cross seeks IRCS cooperation

In November 2024, the secretary general of the Lebanese Red Cross, Georges Kettaneh, called the IRCS to help provide accommodation and medical services to war-affected people in Lebanon following the ceasefire.

The secretary general of the IRCS, Meysam Afshar, and Alishvandi paid a visit to Beirut to assess the needs of war-affected people in order to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid in the region.

“The displaced people have begun returning home after the announcement of the ceasefire, but the health and treatment facilities in Lebanon have been almost destroyed,” The IRCS website quoted Kettaneh as saying.

Referring to the IRCS as one of the top societies in the world, Kettaneh said, “There are no field hospitals in conflict zones, so there is no capacity or infrastructure to address people’s medical needs.

Also, one of our main concerns is that the winter is approaching while many are homeless as 4,600 houses were completely ruined in the war.”

The official went on to say that the tents, manufactured by the IRCS, were extremely useful in sheltering displaced people. “We desperately need these tents to shelter more Lebanese in the future.”

Moreover, Afshar and Alishvandi, in a meeting with Cristhian Cortez Cardoza, the IFRC deputy director for emergency response and operations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in Beirut discussed opportunities for enhanced collaboration to address urgent needs and provide relief to war-affected communities.

## Blood donation rises by 2% in 9 months

TEHRAN –Blood donation in Iran has increased by more than two percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year which started on March 20, 2024, compared to the same period last year.

A total of 1,793,126 blood units were donated over the mentioned period, IRNA quoted Bashir Haji-Beigi, the Blood Transfusion Organization spokesman, as saying.

“The highest blood donation growth was recorded in the provinces of Kohgiluyeh-Boyer-ahmad (over 25 percent), Sistan-Baluchestan (more than 15 percent), and Alborz (over 9 percent),” Haji-Beigi noted. The official went on to say that the continuous blood donation growth rate in the country has increased to over 56 percent.

The provinces of Semnan (around 69 percent), Yazd (about 68 percent), and Golestan (almost 66 percent) hold the highest rates for continuous blood donation, respectively.

Referring to women’s share of blood donation in the country, which is currently 4.5 percent, Haji-Beigi said North Khorasan and Lorestan (over 8 percent), and Sistan-Baluchestan (over 7 percent) provinces, had the highest blood donation by women. Tehran province accounted for more than 16 percent of the total blood donation in the same period, Haji-Beigi added.

### 4.7% rise in blood donation yr/ yr

A total of 2,327,997 Iranians donated blood over the past Iranian calendar year (March

2023-March 2024), an increase of 4.7 percent compared to the year earlier.

Tehran and Fars provinces made the largest contributions accounting for more than 16 percent and more than 7 percent of the total blood donation, respectively, IRNA quoted Haji-Beigi as saying.

Last year, the highest growth in blood donation was recorded in the province of Lorestan with 22 percent, followed by North Khorasan with 16 percent, and Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad with approximately 13 percent.

The overall blood donation rate was over 54 percent in the country last year with Semnan (69 percent), Yazd (64 percent), and Qom (63 percent) provinces ranking the highest.

Women’s share of blood donation was equal to four percent. A total of 102,907 women donated blood which had increased compared to the previous year. However, women are expected to get more involved in blood donation.

Women in Lorestan province, nine percent, had the highest contribution followed by North Khorasan, almost eight percent, and Sistan-Baluchestan, over seven percent.

Last year, the blood donation rate reached 27 per thousand people.

The highest rate was recorded in Mazandaran province with over 40,000 people donating blood.

Semnan province, over 39,000, and Yazd province ranked second and third.



## Hundreds of couples celebrate wedding

Some 650 university student couples celebrated their wedding in a ceremony which was held on Friday.

The ceremony marked the birth anniversary of the first Shia Imam, Imam Ali (AS), and Father’s Day, which falls on Tuesday.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**  
Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
Email: info@tehrantimes.com  
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430  
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

JANUARY 13, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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

Imam Ali (AS)

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

## “No Exit” on stage at Tehran theater

TEHRAN- An adaptation of French playwright Jean-Paul Sartre's 1944 play “No Exit” is on stage at the Neauphle-le-Chateau Theater in Tehran.

Taha Mohammadi is the director of the play, which has been translated by Hossein Esmaili and Faezeh Tajik.

Maryam Momen, Shahrzad Kamalzadeh, Seyyed Jamshid Hosseini, and Pegah Moradi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until January 17.

“No Exit” explores the existential themes of freedom, responsibility, and the nature of hell. Set in a single room, three characters - Garcin, Inez, and Estelle - find themselves trapped together for eternity. Through their interactions and revelations, Sartre delves into the complexities of human existence and the torment we inflict upon ourselves.

The trio of characters are seemingly ordinary individuals, thereby highlighting the universal nature of their predicament. As they gradually disclose their pasts and insecurities, the audience becomes privy to their individual struggles and the intricate web of relationships that develop within their confined space.

The play delves into the psychological imprisonment of the characters, who are stripped of any distractions or escapes. As they confront their innermost thoughts and desires, tensions rise and conflicts emerge. Each character becomes an instrument of torment for the others, highlighting the inevitable suffering caused by human interaction.

The famous line, “Hell is other people,” encapsulates the central theme of the play. Sartre explores the themes of self-deception, deceit, and the relentless gaze of others that reveal our true

selves.

The absence of physical torture or demons tormenting the characters intensifies the psychological anguish, encapsulating Sartre's belief in the inherent nature of human suffering. The underlying existentialist ideology suggests that freedom and responsibility are inextricably linked, and the characters are condemned not by external forces, but by their own choices.

Jean-Paul Sartre was a French philosopher, author, and playwright who made significant contributions to the existentialist movement. Born in 1905, in Paris, Sartre developed a keen interest in philosophy at an early age. He is best known for his existentialist philosophy, which emphasized the individual's freedom and responsibility to determine their own meaning in life. Sartre believed that existence precedes essence, meaning that individuals are free to define themselves through their choices and actions rather than being predetermined by any external forces.

As a writer, Sartre produced an extensive body of work, including plays, novels, and philosophical treatises. His most famous works include novels such as “Nausea” and “The Age of Reason,” as well as plays like “No Exit” and “The Flies.”

Beyond his literary pursuits, Sartre was also deeply involved in political and social activism. He was an outspoken critic of colonialism and supported various leftist movements. Sartre's commitment to political causes and his influential stance on issues such as the Algerian War earned him both acclaim and critique. His philosophical and political contributions continue to hold relevance and influence in contemporary discourse, making Jean-Paul Sartre a significant figure in the realms of philosophy, literature, and activism.

## Cartoon of Day



Find The Wrong Path  
Cartoonist: Mohammed Afefa from Palestine

# Culture minister emphasizes importance of transparency to reach cultural justice

Mohamadreza Seyedagha

TEHRAN-Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi, at a press conference on Sunday, emphasized the importance of transparency and the role of media to help the ministry through their criticisms and suggestions.

In his first media conference, Salehi elaborated on the approaches and policies in various fields of culture and art and responded to questions from members of the press.

Regarding the measures taken in the past four months, since taking office as the minister, Salehi said that Various programs in different aspects of culture and art have been initiated including enhancing democratization, promoting cultural justice, and increasing transparency.

“Cultural justice is of great importance. Everyone should have the right to access non-classified information. Therefore, a transparency committee has been reactivated during this period, and we have uploaded 200 documents”.

Responding to a question by the Tehran Times about the absence of some of the Iranian films which have won international awards in the upcoming edition of the Fajr Film festival, Salehi said: “If a film has not received a screening per-



mit, it has been excluded from the festival. This is based on the festival's regulations and has nothing to do with their content”.

Salehi emphasized the need for greater diversity in Iranian cinema and highlighted efforts to promote various genres.

“In the current climate of Iranophobia, culture and art serve as our gateway to the world, providing a comparative advantage. Various initiatives have been undertaken in this field,” he added.

The minister highlighted the “Say From Iran” initiative, which

invites influential individuals from social media to visit Iran, has led to significant outcomes.

On music, Salehi reflected, “In recent decades, there has been an unusual interest in Korean music among Iranian youth. This speaks volumes about the trajectory of our country's music. We haven't done enough to cater to the tastes of younger generations with proper productions.”

He mentioned the new National Music Policy Document, which offers a hopeful path forward, incorporating reforms and focusing

on diversity in musical genres.

On the issue of rising book prices, Salehi pointed to fluctuations in the price of paper, which has affected the affordability of books. He emphasized the need for stable pricing mechanisms and expressed concern about books becoming a luxury item.

He also spoke about cultural collaborations with the neighboring countries as well as other nations such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, noting the potential for stronger ties through culture, art, and media.

## Resistance Film Festival opens call for entries



TEHRAN- The secretariat of the 18th edition of the Resistance International Film Festival has officially announced a call for submissions.

The festival, themed “The Discourse of Resistance: Al-Aqsa Storm and the Freedom of Holy Quds,” aims to showcase a collection of

cinematic works reflecting the values of resilience and resistance against oppression.

The festival, organized by the Cinema Association of the Revolution and Sacred Defense in collaboration with the Cultural Foundation of Ravayat-e Fat'h, is set to take place in February 2025.

Participants are encouraged to submit their works before January 19, 2025, as the deadline for submissions has been extended for interested filmmakers.

This year's festival will feature eight sections that will include competitive categories for both domestic and international films.

Notable segments include “The World without Israel,” dedicating its focus to films concerning Palestine, as well as categories for documentaries, artificial intelligence-themed

narratives, Sacred Defense topics, and reviews within the humanities.

The festival is open to a diverse array of formats, encompassing feature films, animations, both short and long documentaries, and series.

A dedicated narrative writing section will cater exclusively to screenwriters.

The 18th International Resistance Film Festival is a vital platform for the promotion and dissemination of cinematic works that embody the spirit of resistance against injustice, oppression, and inequality.

This year's festival promises to be an unforgettable experience, as it seeks to honor the principles of resistance and promote the freedom of thought and expression.

## IAF cinematheque to screen Bergman's television play “The Image Makers”

TEHRAN-The cinematheque of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) will show the 2000 Swedish television play “The Image Makers” directed by Ingmar Bergman on Wednesday.

The movie screening will start at 5 p.m. and will be followed by a review session in the presence of the theater critic Aran Ghaderpour, Mehr reported.

The drama is set in the year 1920 at Filmstaden where the film director Victor Sjöström is shooting the film “The Phantom Carriage,” an adaptation of Selma Lagerlöf's novel “Thy Soul Shall Bear Witness!” Accompanied by actress Tora Teje and film photographer Julius Jaenzon, he has now

invited the book's author, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, to take a first look at some early scenes.

The play was originally written for and staged by the Royal Dramatic Theater, featuring the same cast, where it premiered in 1998, directed by Bergman. Following the success of the stage production, it was adapted for Swedish television by SVT in 2000 with Bergman as director.

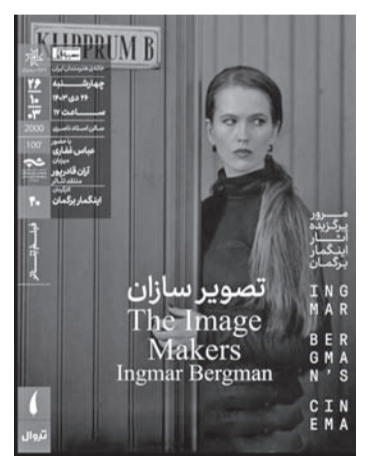
The cast includes Anita Björk, Elin Klinga, Lennart Hjulström, Carl Magnus Dellow, and Henrik Nyberg.

Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007) was a Swedish film and theatre

director and screenwriter. Widely considered one of the greatest and most influential film directors of all time, his films have been described as “profoundly personal meditations into the myriad struggles facing the psyche and the soul”.

Bergman directed more than 60 films and documentaries, most of which he also wrote, for both cinema releases and television screenings. Among his most acclaimed works are “The Seventh Seal” (1957), “Wild Strawberries” (1957), “Persona” (1966) and “Fanny and Alexander” (1982).

Bergman also had a theatrical career that included periods as Leading Director of Sweden's



Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm and of Germany's Residenz Theater in Munich. He directed more than 170 plays.

## Mai Jia's “The Message” available at bookstores

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book “The Message” written by the Chinese novelist Mai Jia has been released in the Iranian book market.

Retitled “Sound of the Wind,” the book has been published by Ghooghnoos Publishing House in 392 pages in Iran with a translation by Fariba Bordbar, ILNA reported.

The story is set in China in 1941. At the height of the Sino-Japanese conflict, the Tokyo-backed Republic of Nanking strengthens its underground struggle against the resistance.

One night, four intelligence agents – two men and two women – serving the puppet government of Wang Jingwei as cryptographers are escorted to the famous Qiu Estate, two isolated buildings on the outskirts of Hangzhou. They have been summoned by the headquarters

of the imperial army because a spy is hiding among them. Ghost Name. Jin, Wu, Li and Gu must remain locked up until the traitor is unmasked.

Separating the truth from the lies, however, is not easy. Each of the suspects places a limit on what they are willing to reveal, each has a story to tell to support their integrity. And each version is capable of overturning the previous one.

So, who is guilty? Who is innocent? No one knows what to believe, but the truth, if it really is the truth, has its price.

After working for a long time in the Chinese secret services, alongside agents and cryptanalysts, Mai Jia transfers her profound experience into a high-tension spy story that, against the backdrop of one of the great wars in history,

takes on the charm of a mathematical puzzle.

Mai Jia, 60, is arguably the most successful writer in China today. His books are constant bestsellers, with total sales over three million copies.

He has achieved unprecedented success with film adaptation: all of his novels are made into major films or TV series, the screenplays of which are often written by himself. He is hailed as the forerunner of Chinese espionage fiction, and has created a unique genre that combines spycraft, code-breaking, crime, human drama, historical fiction, and metafiction. He has won almost every major award in China, including the highest literary honor - the Mao Dun Award.

He has also served as the president of Zhejiang Writers Association and vice president of the Zhejiang Literature and Art Association.