



► Page 5

## Ayatollah Khamenei's Prediction Comes True: Resistance Becomes Stronger

' Hamas has added up to 15,000 fighters since start of war', US intel figures say

### Over 70 women in charge of key positions

TEHRAN – More than 70 women are acting as vice president, minister, spokesperson, and other key positions in the government.

Constituting half of the human resources of the country, women play a key role in sustainable development, Fakhrossadat Fatemi, an official with the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, said.

She made the remarks in an address to the 48th session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), in Geneva on Friday.

Reducing the gender gap in education to 3 percent, increasing the share of women in the student population to more than 52 percent, and increasing the presence of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are among the important achievements of Iran, she highlighted.

### Gandhi Peace Prize awarded to Iran for advocacy of Palestinian rights

TEHRAN – Iran has been awarded the International Gandhi Peace Prize for its ongoing support of Palestinians and its contributions toward peace in West Asia.

The award was presented to Iran during a conference in New Delhi, the capital of India, on Saturday. The event brought together diplomats, cultural figures, and peace advocates from various countries, highlighting the importance of international cooperation for peace and justice in the region.

As the Israeli regime continues its genocidal campaign in Gaza, Iran's consistent support for Palestinian rights and its stance against occupation have earned it global recognition. ► Page 2

### Alive and kicking: Four Israeli captives freed in good condition

Hamas released more Israeli captives from the Gaza Strip on Saturday as part of a ceasefire between the regime and the resistance movement.

Four female soldiers were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Gaza City.

They ascended a podium, where they waved and smiled before being escorted away. The captives seemed to be in good condition. They later arrived in Israel.

A total of 200 Palestinians also walked free from Israeli jails. More than 120 of them were serving life sentences behind bars.

It was the second captive-prisoner swap since the ceasefire took effect on January 19.

### US political meddling in Lebanon aimed to compensate for Israel's defeat

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON – It was not surprising when the Israeli occupation regime announced that it does not intend to completely withdraw from southern Lebanon following support from the Trump administration. The announcement confirms the occupation regime's usual policy of disrespecting any UN agreement.

The refusal along with its aggressive policies are in line with Washington's imperialist schemes. This is what Mike Herzog, the Israeli ambassador to Washington, acknowledged by stating that the American administration "has to take into account Israel's security needs."

### Hamas reveals stunning details of October 7

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – For the first time, details of the Al-Aqsa Storm Operation carried out by the armed wing of Hamas have been revealed.

In the first series published by Al Jazeera, the al-Qassam Brigades revealed never-before-seen footage of the al-Aqsa Storm on October 7, 2023.

Entitled "What is Hidden is Greater," the footage highlights the Hamas military leadership meetings, how the operation was executed, and the events that followed.

It also showed rare footage of the al-Qassam Brigades commander, Muhammad Deif, fully visible and standing on his feet (dismissing reports of his injuries) inside the military operations room, putting the final touches on the attack plan.

► Page 5

### 40th International Fajr Music Festival to host 6 international musicians, bands

By Mohamadreza Seyedagha

TEHRAN-The 40th International Fajr Music Festival aims to enhance the artistic quality of the festival based on the available resources, focusing on more serious and art music, said the head of the Music Office at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ahmad Sadri.

Speaking at a press conference held on Saturday at Vahdat Hall in Tehran, Sadri added: "To do so, we have invited professionals in the field to participate in the festival". ► Page 8

## 'Pioneers of Progress' exhibit manifestation of private sector's capabilities

Senior officials visit private sector's achievements ► Page 4



President Pezeshkian talks to private sector's representatives



Visiting exhibition, I feel extremely proud: Zarif



Parliament tries to solve challenges of private sector: Qalibaf

## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## New Middle East or Trump's ideal?

In a commentary, Arman-e-Emrooz dealt with Trump's policy towards Tehran and wrote: Now that Trump has returned to power, everyone is waiting to see what policy he will adopt towards Iran. Trump has not announced his policy towards Iran yet. Apparently, it seems he is not looking for war. But at the same time, he wants peace with his own standards and from a position of power. He may make a military threat, but it is unlikely that he will start a war unless he is sure beforehand that it will be one-sided and will not cause major losses (to the U.S.) Trump's constant emphasis on avoiding war in the Middle East is that he is looking for diplomacy and an agreement with Iran; but what kind of agreement? It has been said that he is looking for an agreement beyond the JCPOA with a focus on the nuclear issue, in which he will gain some concessions. In general, direct negotiations - secret or open - will most likely begin sooner or later. In the world of politics, it is not unlikely that we would eventually witness unexpected and surprising white smoke in negotiations.

## Hamshahri: Trump's comments on Iran

In a note, Hamshahri addressed Trump's latest statements about Tehran. It wrote: U.S. President Donald Trump made threatening and anti-Iran statements on Thursday evening, stating that it would be great if issues were resolved with Iran without Israel attacking Iranian nuclear facilities. His statements come after media speculation about the appointment of Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy for the Middle East, to lead efforts on Iran. According to Israeli journalist Barak Ravid, the U.S. President's possible decision to appoint Witkoff as special envoy is a sign of his desire to engage diplomatically with Iran and reach a new nuclear agreement with Iran. On the other hand, the U.S. President's threatening statements against Iran come at a time when Iranian officials, while expressing their readiness for diplomacy, have warned against any military or belligerent action against Iran.

## Sobh-e-No: Focusing too much on talks not advisable

In an analysis, Sobh-e-No newspaper discussed possible direct negotiations with the United States and its psychological impact on society. The paper said: In recent weeks, the issue of direct negotiations with the United States has been raised again in the statements of some politicians. Previous experiences have shown that Trump is not only untrustworthy but has always used agreements as a tool for further pressure. One thing to consider is the effect of these statements on public opinion. Promoting negotiations as a definitive solution can create unrealistic expectations among the people. But when these negotiations do not reach the desired result or fail, it intensifies people's disappointment. Focusing too much on this option is not only not useful, but can also have negative economic and social consequences. Solving Iran's problems requires relying on domestic power, reforming defective structures, and neutralizing sanctions through long-term strategies, not eyeing on negotiations whose past experiences have proven futile.

## Javan: Opportunities in the Afghan economic market

In an article, Javan discussed the upcoming visit of the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Kabul and wrote: Surely the Afghan economic market provides a huge potential for the Iranian private and public sector. Afghanistan is a country of opportunities, and this great potential and capacity should not be neglected. While various economic delegations from Asian and European countries have been seeking to benefit from the Afghan market, why should Iran, as a neighbor that has the most in common with Afghanistan, remain deprived of this market? It is expected that Arachis's visit to Kabul would mark a serious and effective step towards implementing and pursuing economic agreements, and lead to active involvement of private and public sector in the Afghan economic market with a win-win outcome for the two brotherly and Muslim nations.

## IRGC naval forces successfully test AI-powered missiles in major exercise



TEHRAN - In a demonstration of advanced capabilities, the naval forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) successfully fired missiles equipped with artificial intelligence, hitting mock enemy targets during a large-scale military exercise.

The exercises, code-named "Great Prophet Authority 19," were conducted across the southern Iranian provinces of Bushehr and Khuzestan. On the final day of the drills, the IRGC Navy deployed the Qaem and Almas missiles, launched from advanced Mohajer 6 and Ababil 5 drones, showcasing the integration of AI into Iran's missile systems.

Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, the IRGC Navy's Commander, who oversaw the exercises, emphasized the significant upgrades made to the Navy's equipment and systems. The drills saw the launch of various ballistic and surface-to-surface missiles, including an offensive missile

from the strategic Shahid Soleimani warship, and the interception of enemy targets using Kowsar 222 missiles.

Tangsiri explained that the extensive military drills, held in the northern and central regions of the Persian Gulf, were aimed at enhancing coordination and combat readiness within the IRGC naval forces. The drills also served to send a message of peace and friendship to neighboring countries, reinforcing Iran's desire for regional stability.

This exercise comes as part of the Islamic Republic's ongoing efforts to improve its military capabilities under the leadership of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Iran's Armed Forces, including both the Army and the IRGC, continue to enhance their combat readiness in response to perceived external threats, reaffirming their commitment to defending the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

## Tehran slams European Parliament for exploiting human rights to target Iran

TEHRAN - Iran has strongly condemned the recent resolution by the European Parliament, asserting it has exploited human rights as a pretext for politically motivated allegations against the nation.

Tehran dismissed the resolution for alleged "repression of human rights and women's rights" as lacking legal foundation and being part of a broader interventionist agenda.

Marzieh Afkham, Director General for Human Rights and Women at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized the resolution, describing it as "a repetitive act indicative of an interventionist and politically motivated approach" within the European body.

She argued that such resolutions overlook the progress Iran has made in enhancing its human rights record, including legislative reforms aimed at improving women's rights and ensuring broader freedoms.

Additionally, Afkham condemned the resolution as "irresponsible," asserting that Iran's judicial system is professional and independent.

"The Iranian judicial system is a professional and independent entity, and judicial processes in the country are always based on law and adhere to the principles



of fair trial," she stated.

Afkham emphasized that Iran rejects any foreign interference in its judicial processes, considering such actions contrary to international law principles.

On January 23, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, condemning what it alleged was a systemic violation of human rights and "hostage diplomacy" by Iran. It called for a comprehensive European response.

The resolution was passed with 556 votes in favor, 6 against, and 42 abstentions.

## 'IRGC vital for national defense'

The European Parliament's resolution,

which also criticized the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), was met with additional disdain by Tehran.

Afkham described the parliament's stance on the IRGC as "completely baseless and condemnable."

She explained that the IRGC is a legal and popular institution, playing a fundamental role in safeguarding Iran's national security, defending against aggression, and combating terrorism in the region.

"Any affront against this homeland defender will face a decisive response from the Islamic Republic of Iran," Afkham warned.

Afkham also voiced Tehran's dissent with the interventionist positions of some European Parliament members, urging them to learn from past mistakes.

She concluded by asserting that the European Parliament should "take steps towards respecting its international legal obligations and play a constructive role in promoting peace, stability, and human rights," rather than supporting terrorist groups, which she said equates to endorsing and encouraging violence and violating fundamental human rights.

## Azerbaijan summons Iranian diplomat over alleged media tensions

TEHRAN - The Azerbaijani news agency Trend reported that Ja'far Agha'i Merian, the Iranian chargé d'affaires, was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan following a series of tensions regarding media coverage.

The Azerbaijani government raised objections to what it described as a "continuous campaign against Azerbaijan in Iranian media."

The development comes as the Azerbaijani media frequently publishes content critical of Iran.

The invitation for the Iranian diplomat to Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs came following a discussion between Ali Alizadeh, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan in Tehran, and Mojtaba Damirchiloo, the Assistant Minister and Director General for Eurasia at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the discussion on Friday, the two sides noted the state of their bilateral relations and explored ways to expand cooperation in various sectors.

Damirchiloo highlighted the positive momentum in Iran-Azerbaijan ties, noting significant progress in high-level exchanges and the revival of the joint economic commission after a three-year break. He stressed the need for both countries to implement agreements and safeguard their relationship moving forward.

However, Damirchiloo also expressed concerns over recent

actions in Azerbaijan that he described as harmful to the bilateral relationship, particularly referring to the treatment of Iranian students studying in Azerbaijan.

Sixteen female Iranian students were expelled from their schools, and ten were deported from Azerbaijan last week after the government accused them of "immoral behavior."

On December 2024, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the resumption of consular operations, confirming the embassy's commitment to providing ongoing services to Azeri citizens and other individuals requiring assistance. This followed the embassy's reopening in July 2024 at a new location, a significant milestone after a period of closure triggered by a deadly incident.

In January 2023, an attack on the Azerbaijani embassy in Tehran caused Baku to temporarily close its diplomatic mission and evacuate its staff. The Azerbaijani government characterized the incident as a "terrorist act," prompting heightened tensions between the two countries.

An investigation conducted by Iranian authorities showed personal and familial motives behind the attack. The gunman told police that he believed the embassy was concealing his wife from him. The man attacked the building while his children were waiting inside his car parked close to the embassy.

## Pakistan Navy talks growing maritime partnership with Iran ahead of AMAN-25 exercise



TEHRAN - The Commander of the Pakistan Navy has expressed his enthusiasm about the participation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the forthcoming multinational maritime exercise, AMAN-25, set to take place in Karachi from February 7 to February 11.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Iranian news agency IRNA in Islamabad, Ad-

miral Naveed Ashraf emphasized the long-standing and constructive relationship between Pakistan and Iran's naval forces. He also indicated his eagerness to further expand and enhance this partnership.

During the official visit of General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, to Islamabad, Pakistan extended a formal invitation to Iran for the AMAN-25 exercise.

Tehran welcomed the invitation, reinforcing the shared interest in strengthening military cooperation.

Admiral Ashraf noted that Pakistan values the contributions made by the Iranian Navy in fostering stronger regional maritime cooperation. "We

## Gandhi Peace Prize awarded to Iran for advocacy of Palestinian rights



From page 1 ▶ During the conference, the organizers underlined the urgent need for serious action from international organizations to prevent further violence and genocide.

They stressed that peace could only be achieved through greater cooperation at both the political and cultural levels. The conference also explored the deep historical connections between India and West Asian region, emphasizing the importance of strengthening these bonds to foster peace in the region.

The International Gandhi Peace Prize, established by the Indian government in 1995 to honor the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, is awarded annually to individuals or countries that embody Gandhi's ideals of peace, nonviolence, and hu-

manitarianism. This year, Iran, alongside South Africa, Iraq, and Qatar, was recognized for its tireless efforts in the pursuit of peace and stability in a region marked by prolonged conflict.

Israel was forced to accept the ceasefire agreement last week after waging 15 months of devastating war on the Gaza Strip, causing over 46,000 Palestinian deaths and injuring more than 110,000 others.

The Israeli regime initiated its war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, following a successful operation by Hamas in the occupied territories. The operation dubbed 'al-Aqsa Storm' was a response to the Israeli regime's increasing violence toward Palestinians and its repeated desecrations of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Admiral Ashraf also discussed the evolving maritime security landscape in the region. He noted that the geopolitical environment remains unstable and complex, especially in the context of the region's growing socioeconomic competition. "Our maritime security is closely linked to the rapidly changing dynamics of the Indian Ocean, and we must recalibrate our mutual interests accordingly," he explained.

The Admiral also touched on the ongoing threats posed by actions in the Red Sea, particularly from Israel, which have escalated tensions and disrupted safe passage through vital maritime routes such as the Gulf of Aden.

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

# Accusations of arms smuggling to Lebanon 'baseless', Iran refutes Israeli claims

TEHRAN – In a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the rotating President of the Security Council, Iran has categorically denied allegations from the Israeli regime that it has been smuggling advanced weapons systems to Lebanon.

These accusations, presented by the Tel Aviv regime in a letter dated January 13 to the same UN institutions, have been dismissed by Tehran as unfounded and politically motivated.

Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, strongly condemned the claims on Saturday, stating, "These allegations are nothing but a pretext for justifying the repeated violations by the Israeli regime of Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006) and its blatant disregard for the ceasefire arrangements with Lebanon."

Security Council Resolution 1701, was designed to end Israel's 2006 war against Lebanon, enforce a ceasefire, and ensure the regime's withdrawal from Lebanese territories.

Iravani asserted that the Israeli regime has no intention of complying with its



obligations under this resolution, using "baseless accusations" to legitimize its ongoing occupation of southern Lebanon.

He emphasized the importance of the international community holding Israel accountable.

Iravani urged the Security Council to "take a firm stand and compel the Israeli regime to fully implement its obligations," calling for an immediate end to Israel's violations against Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The ceasefire agreement between the Israeli regime and Hezbollah reached in late 2024, was intended to halt hostilities and mandate the withdrawal of Israeli oc-

cupying troops from southern Lebanon within 60 days.

However, the Israeli regime has egregiously ignored this deadline, maintaining its military presence in the area and blatantly violating the ceasefire terms.

Iravani also rejected similar accusations made by representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom during an open session of the Security Council on January 23.

He described these claims as "completely baseless and without merit," asserting that they are attempts to divert attention from the alleged complicity of these nations in the actions of the Israeli regime.

"The attribution of destabilizing activities in the region to Iran is completely baseless and lacks credibility," Iravani declared.

He pointed out that the U.S. and UK have facilitated war crimes committed by Israel against Palestinians in Gaza, noting that their unconditional support has emboldened the Israeli regime to act with impunity.

## Sanctions harming children's rights in Iran, says deputy minister at UN review

TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy for Human Rights and International Affairs at the Ministry of Justice has addressed the detrimental effects of unjust sanctions on efforts towards advancing children's rights in Iran.

Askar Jalalian, presented Iran's fourth report on children's rights during the 48th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva on Tuesday.

Jalalian began by reaffirming that the protection and promotion of children's rights remain a core principle of Iran's legal system.

"Respecting children's rights is not just a legal duty but a deeply embedded value within our system," Jalalian stated.

One of the key highlights of his presentation was the adoption of the "Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents" in recent years, which he called a landmark achieve-

ment in the country's efforts to protect vulnerable young people. This law, along with its executive regulations currently under development, lays the groundwork for improving child welfare and safeguarding children's rights at a national level.

Furthermore, Jalalian pointed out that the Ministry of Justice had been designated as the national authority overseeing the Convention on the Rights of the Children in Iran. This role includes the coordination of efforts across various sectors, both governmental and non-governmental, to ensure compliance with international standards.

The ministry, he explained, has established a comprehensive structure to support the implementation of the convention's provisions, including the formation of expert committees in each of the country's provinces. These committees, working alongside a national council, have been tasked



with overseeing the execution of child protection policies and ensuring that the rights of children are upheld in every corner of the nation.

Despite these significant strides, Jalalian also underscored the challenges Iran faces, particularly the negative impact of unjust international sanctions on the country's ability to fully support and advance children's rights. He expressed concern that sanctions have hindered Iran's capacity to provide essential ser-

vices and support for children, especially in areas such as education, healthcare, and social services, which are critical to the well-being of the nation's youth.

In conclusion, while recognizing the progress made, Jalalian called for international cooperation and understanding, urging that sanctions be lifted to allow Iran to better meet its obligations and ensure a brighter, safer future for all children in the country.

## Saeed Khatibzadeh takes helm of Iran's leading foreign policy think tank

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has elevated Saeed Khatibzadeh to the role of Deputy Foreign Minister and appointed him as the new head of the Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS).



Khatibzadeh, who brings a wealth of experience, has previously represented Iran as ambassador to Croatia.

His career also encompasses key positions such as advisor to the Foreign Minister, Deputy Foreign Minister, head of the Public Diplomacy Center, and spokesperson, in addition to serving as the Director General of the Office of Political and International Studies.

The institute plays a pivotal role in shaping the nation's foreign policy through rigorous research and analysis of international affairs.

Founded in 1983, the IPIS stands as one of Iran's leading think tanks, operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He emphasized the resilience of the Iranian people, stating, "Our nation has shown that the enemies' dreams will not come true. The sincerity and the unjustly shed blood of our fighters and martyrs will not allow these dreams to materialize."



He emphasized the resilience of the Iranian people, stating, "Our nation has shown that the enemies' dreams will not come true. The sincerity and the unjustly shed blood of our fighters and martyrs will not allow these dreams to materialize."

He emphasized the resilience of the Iranian people, stating, "Our nation has shown that the enemies' dreams will not come true. The sincerity and the unjustly shed blood of our fighters and martyrs will not allow these dreams to materialize."

He emphasized the resilience of the Iranian people, stating, "Our nation has shown that the enemies' dreams will not come true. The sincerity and the unjustly shed blood of our fighters and martyrs will not allow these dreams to materialize."

President Masoud Pezeshkian hosted a joint meeting with the heads of the legislative and judicial branches at the Presidential Office on Saturday, January 25, 2025.

### Esteghlal, Malavan share the spoils in goalless draw

TEHRAN – Esteghlal and Malavan football teams played to a goalless draw in the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Saturday.

The match, held at Sirous Ghayeghran Stadium in Bandar Anzali, was uneventful and ended without any goals.

Earlier in the day, Esteghlal Khuzestan drew 1-1 with Gol Gohar at the Ghadir Stadium in Ahvaz.

On Sunday, Persepolis will host Tractor in Tehran, Sepahan will face struggling Kheybar in Isfahan, and Mes will take on Foolad in Rafsanjan.

On Monday, Shams Azar will host Chadormalou in Qazvin, Nassaji will play Aluminum in Ghaemshahr, and Havadar will meet Zob Ahan in Tehran.

### Ismail Kartal optimistic about future of Persepolis

TEHRAN – Newly-appointed head coach of Persepolis expressed his hope for winning title with the team.

The 63-year-old coach was named Persepolis on Friday and traveled to Tehran Saturday morning.

Kartal has penned an 18-month deal with Persepolis.

He replaces Spanish coach Juan Carlos Garrido for the remainder of the season.

"The Persepolis management has been in contact with me for a while. I conducted a thorough investigation and found out that Persepolis are one of the most prominent clubs in Iran. The team have a large fan base, with 40,000 to 50,000 spectators attending each match. They are currently in fourth place in the Iranian league and also compete in the AFC Champions League Elite," Kartal told the reports.

"The Persepolis management showed serious interest. Other clubs, both from Turkey and abroad, had also made offers but I decided to work with Persepolis. They have very eager, energetic, and enthusiastic supporters. Perhaps we can achieve a great season by winning the league and the domestic cup and I am optimistic about years to come. We know we need to work hard to attain these goals. For me, joining Persepolis is a special and positive opportunity, and I hope my performance will pave the way for other Turkish coaches as well," the Turkish coach added.

Kartal further discussed the recruitment of foreign players, saying: "There are players I want to bring from Turkey to Iran. Our negotiations are ongoing. There are a few players I am familiar with them, but we have to consider the transfer window first."

"I spoke with Mustafa Denizli and Ertugrul Saglam and received valuable insights, which helped me decide to accept Persepolis's offer," he concluded.

Ismail Kartal will earn \$2.2 million from Persepolis under his 1.5-year contract. Last season, he achieved 99 points with Fenerbahçe, the highest points in a single season in the club's history, but the team fell short of winning the championship.

### Bijan Heydari to officiate Persepolis, Tractor match

TEHRAN – Bijan Heydari has been chosen to officiate the match between Persepolis and Tractor football teams in Matchweek 17 of 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

Heydari is joined by assistant referees Alireza Ildorom and Amir Mohammad Davoudzadeh in the match.

Moud Bonyadifar has been chosen as VAR referee.

The match will be held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Sunday.

Tractor lead the IPL with 35 points and Persepolis are fourth with 30 points.

### Financial transactions between Iran and IOC facilitated

TEHRAN – The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has deposited \$240,000 into the account of Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC) for the first time.

This marks a significant milestone, as it is the first instance of revenue from the National Olympic Committee of Iran entering Iranian banks through the IOC.

As a result, many financial transactions between Iran and the IOC will be facilitated. This development comes at a crucial time when, due to sanctions, the country's sports federations have struggled to bring funds from international federations into Iran.

Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa, the President of the National Olympic Committee of Iran, has officially confirmed this news.

### Foolad complete signing of Blanco

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team forward with Gustavo Blanco Leschuk joined Foolad.

The Argentine parted ways with Esteghlal by mutual consent on Friday.

The 33-year-old striker joined Esteghlal last year, but failed to meet expectations.

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

The Ahvaz-based team sit third in the table four points adrift of leader Tractor.

### Safdarian takes gold in 2025 UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup

TEHRAN – Mohammadreza Safdarian of Iran claimed a gold medal at the 2025 UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup.

Mongolian climber Mandakhbayar Chuluunbaatar won the silver and bronze medal went to South Korean Joon Kyu Park.

The Round 2 of the UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup season was held in Saas-Fee, Switzerland from Jan. 23 to 25.

The iconic ice tower in the Swiss Alps has hosted competitions since the early 2000s. This year marked the 25th anniversary of the first event.

The event was organized in collaboration with UIAA member association, Swiss Alpine Club (SAC).

## Iran, Turkey discuss expansion of transport, transit co-op



Iranian Ambassador to Turkey Mohammad-Hassan Habibzadeh (L) and Turkish Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Enver Iskurt

TEHRAN- During a meeting between Iranian Ambassador to Turkey Mohammad-Hassan Habibzadeh and Turkish Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Enver Iskurt, the two sides discussed the ways to expand cooperation between Iran and Turkey in the fields of transportation and transit.

In this meeting, the projects and prospects for the development of relations between the two countries in various fields of rail, road, air and sea transportation were discussed and opinions were exchanged.

In this meeting, the recent problem of truck traffic at the border crossings of Iran and Turkey was also discussed.

Turkey's recent decision to revoke fuel tax exemptions for Iranian commercial vehicles entering its borders has sparked significant controversy. This measure, implemented on December 29, 2024, forces Iranian truck drivers to pay exorbitant fuel taxes, amounting to 155 percent of Turkey's special consumption tax rate. Iranian truckers, already facing delays at border crossings, now confront additional financial burdens that could disrupt the region's trade dynamics.

The move comes as a retaliatory response to Iran's "full-tank" policy, which mandates foreign trucks leaving Iran to pay a customs duty equivalent to the fuel in their tanks to combat fuel smuggling. While Turkey justifies its decision as reciprocal, it undermines ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral trade relations between the two nations.

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Mohammad Atabak has emphasized that enhancing trade between Iran and Turkey requires the establishment of a preferential trade agreement and the removal of tariff restrictions.

During a meeting with Turkish Trade Minister Omer Bolat and his accompanying delegation in mid-December 2024, Atabak pointed out that the trade potential between Tehran and Ankara surpasses the current volume of exchanges.

He stressed that implementing bilateral agreements, reviving preferential trade, and strengthening interactions would serve as the foundation for increasing bilateral trade.

Atabak noted that the economic relations between Iran and Turkey, underpinned by deep cultural and historical ties, should yield a higher volume of trade.

The Iranian minister expressed optimism about progress in the joint cooperation framework between the two countries and referred to it as a crucial step toward boosting trade between the capitals. He added that the initial phase of this cooperation, in line with the terms of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee, would significantly enhance trade relations.

The official further emphasized that increasing trade would accelerate the implementation of facilitative trade programs. The roadmap developed in collaboration with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) would be pivotal in advancing the execution of these plans and deepening bilateral ties.

Atabak also welcomed the formation of specialized committees to address bilateral issues, stressing that most trade-related challenges could be resolved through the Trade Promotion Organization. He elaborated on the preferential trade agreement between the two countries, suggesting that its terms could be revisited to expand preferential trade volumes.

As a further step in improving bilateral trade, Atabak underscored the importance of joint border committees to address border issues and streamline goods exchange between the neighboring countries. He also highlighted the need to remove certain tariff barriers to increase trade flows.

Concluding, Atabak reiterated Iran's readiness to expand cooperation with Turkey, emphasizing the industrial advantages of both countries in joint production.

On the Turkish side, Minister Bolat acknowledged that the current trade volume between the two nations does not meet expectations. He expressed confidence that with the revised cooperation framework and agreements with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, economic exchanges between the two countries would accelerate.

With the aim of facilitating foreign trade, providing market consulting, marketing of Iranian products and services, providing commercial and economic consulting services in various sectors and helping to conclude commercial contracts, the TPO issued the above-mentioned permit.

## TPO issues permit for establishing 60 trade centers in 35 countries

TEHRAN- Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has issued the permit to establish about 60 trade centers in 35 countries, the TPO portal published.

Trade centers are one of the tools of the TPO to help the private sector so that they can adjust their business relations with the world.

TEHRAN- Iran exported commodities valued at \$202,587,787 to Kazakhstan in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 – December 21, 2024), according to a reported published by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The IRICA report put the country's weight of goods exported to Kazakhstan in the mentioned nine-month period at 360,182,868 tons.

On January 7, Mahmoud Najafi Arab, head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) and Ontalap Onalbayev, Kazakhstan's ambassador to Iran, met at the chamber to discuss ways to expand trade relations between the two countries.

During the meeting, the Kazakh ambassador announced that a trade delegation led by Kazakhstan's Minister of Trade would soon visit Tehran.

A memorandum of cooperation was also signed between Tehran's

Chamber of Commerce and the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce on the sidelines of the meeting.

The discussions highlighted the Iranian Parliament's approval of the free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Both sides viewed the agreement as a historic economic opportunity to initiate broader economic and trade collaborations between Iran and Kazakhstan.

During the meeting, Najafi Arab noted that the current trade volume between Iran and Kazakhstan does not align with the potential of both countries.

He described Iran's observer membership in the EAEU as a turning point for economic relations with member states, including Kazakhstan.

He reiterated Tehran Chamber's commitment to leveraging its resources and the private sector to foster stronger economic partner-

ships.

He also referred to the upcoming third Eurasian International Trade Exhibition, scheduled for early March 2025 in Tehran, emphasizing the potential for private sector collaboration in fields such as engineering, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, machinery, textiles, and food industries.

He called for identifying opportunities in these areas and facilitating sustainable partnerships between businesses in both countries.

The official further proposed establishing joint chambers between Tehran and major Kazakh cities, such as Almaty and Astana, to strengthen bilateral cooperation.

Ontalap Onalbayev highlighted Kazakhstan's strategic importance as a reliable trade route to major markets in Russia and China, backed by robust infrastructure and favorable conditions for foreign investments.

He noted that Iran is a significant trading partner for Kazakhstan in

# "Pioneers of Progress" exhibit, manifestation of private sector's capabilities

## Senior officials visit private sector's achievements

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- "Pioneers of Progress" exhibition, showcasing the latest achievements and capabilities of the private sector, kicked off on Tuesday, January 21, at the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh.

This national event, participating by the companies and startups, was held with the aim of introducing the achievements of the private sector in various fields of industry, technology and services, and provided a unique opportunity to show domestic capabilities and strengthen the national economy.

**Using private sector capacities, only way for progress of country: Leader**

Regarding the significance of the event, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei visited the exhibition in its first day.

Visiting the exhibition, the Leader said, "The only way for the progress of country is to use the capacities of the private sector."

Ayatollah Khamenei also held a meeting with private sector representatives at the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh on Wednesday.

During the gathering, 10 private sector representatives delivered speeches in the presence of the Leader, followed by remarks from Ayatollah Khamenei himself.

Referring to his Tuesday visit to the exhibition, the Leader said the exhibition shows only a small portion of the country's realities.

Yet at the same time, Ayatollah Khamenei went on, "It reveals that the private sector, despite pressures, sanctions, and threats, has reached an acceptable level of progress and the country's movement is forward. We must appreciate this great divine blessing."

As exhibition was held with the aim of highlighting the capacities of Iran's private sector and empowering them in the national economy, the Leader recommended that the country's officials visit this exhibition to become more familiar with the capacities and capabilities of the



private sector.

The national event was also visited by President Masoud Pezeshkian, Vice President for Strategic Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif, President's Chief of Staff Mohsen Haji-Mirzaei, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak, Information and Communications Technology Minister Sattar Hashemi, and Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezelgeh on Saturday, January 24.

While talking to the entrepreneurs and the representatives of the private sector, president and the officials were informed about the capacities and achievements of the private sector.

**Visiting exhibition, I feel extremely proud: Zarif**

Visiting the exhibition, Vice President for Strategic Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "Seeing the Pioneers of Progress exhibition, I feel extremely proud. Indeed, the capability of Iran's human force and industrial capability of the country is one of our biggest capabilities, and I hope that by removing the obstacles, we will be able to make the most of these capabilities."

**Parliament tries to solve challenges of private sector**

Also, after visiting this exhibition, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, emphasized the efforts of the parliament to solve the challenges of the private sector in the legislative field and said, "If we all work hard and do not transfer

management disagreements to the law of the national development plan; and the government, the parliament and the private sector work hand in hand, we can solve a significant part of people's problems."

**Government determined to support private sector**

The exhibition was also visited by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref on Thursday, January 23.

While listening to the concerns and requests of companies in the fields of supporting downstream chains, reducing government bureaucracy, facilitating the issuance of permits, reviewing cumbersome laws and regulations, solving currency and tariff problems, ordering raw materials and goods needed for production, and solving the tax problems, he emphasized the government's determination to support the private sector and said, "After visiting this exhibition, separate meetings will be held with each of these sectors to deal with their issues."

In recent years, Iran's private sector, as the engine of the country's economy, has played an irreplaceable role in sustainable development and employment creation.

The "Pioneers of Progress" exhibition, which was held with the support of governmental institutions and related organizations, provided an exceptional opportunity to introduce the achievements of this sector and strengthen communication between economic actors.

This event is considered not only as an exhibition, but also as a platform for exchanging ideas, creating business networks and introducing new technologies.

The exhibition showcased the capabilities, innovations, and advancements of the private sector in various economic and industrial fields. These sections include:

\* **Advanced Industries and Modern Technologies:** This section pertains to advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, biotechnology, and other scientific innovations in which private companies are active.

\* **Industry and Production:** This section displays industrial products, including petrochemical products, industrial equipment, machinery, and domestically produced goods.

\* **Agriculture and Food Industries:** Achievements of the private sector in agriculture, animal husbandry, food production, organic products, and innovations related to the agricultural industry are presented in this section.

\* **Transportation and Logistics:** This section introduces capabilities in transportation, advanced logistics systems, and equipment related to air, sea, and land transportation.

\* **Services and Digital Economy:** In this part, startups, information and communication technology companies, and services related to the digital economy were present and showcased their achievements.

\* **Environment and Renewable Energies:** This section focuses on innovations in clean energy, such as solar and wind energy, and environmental technologies.

\* **Health and Pharmaceuticals:** This section pertains to medical products and technologies, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, and health-related achievements.

The exhibition, organized under the theme of "Production Leap with Public Participation", highlighted private-sector innovations and accomplishments.

## Iran's steel production capacity hits 55m tons

TEHRAN- As announced by the head of the National Iranian Steel Company, the country's steel production capacity has hit 55 million tons.

"Currently, the country's steel production capacity is 55 million tons, and three times this capacity, investment permits have been issued", Mohammad Qobadi Samani stated.

The Iranian Steel industry has been constantly developing over the past years against all the pressures and obstacles created by outside forces like the U.S. sanctions and

the coronavirus outbreak that has severely affected the performance of the world's top producers.

The country is expected to climb to seventh place among the world's top steel producers by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025).

Iran's steel production is estimated to reach 32 million tons in the current year.

Iran's crude steel production reached over 28 million tons in the first 11 months of 2024, registering a 0.5 percent increase compared

to the same period last year, according to the latest report by the World Steel Association (WSA).

According to the WSA's report, Iran maintained its position as the world's 10th largest steel producer during the mentioned period, Iran's Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) reported.

Iranian steel mills produced a total of 3.1 million tons of steel in November, registering a 0.1 percent increase compared to the same month of 2023.

## Iran exports commodities worth \$202.5m to Kazakhstan in 9 months

the region and commended Tehran's Chamber of Commerce for its critical role in enhancing bilateral economic ties.

The ambassador announced that a Kazakh trade delegation, including major companies, would visit Tehran for the 20th Joint Economic Committee meeting between the two nations. This visit aims to foster negotiations and partnerships with Iranian counterparts.

Onalbayev emphasized that a cooperation document signed between Iran and Kazakhstan in 2023 outlines a roadmap for economic collaboration, with chambers of commerce from both countries tasked with implementing key provisions. He also noted that Iran's direct investment in Kazakhstan reached \$3.4 billion in 2023, highlighting significant potential for further growth.

Amir Abedi, head of the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce, proposed twinning Tehran's Chamber with Astana's Chamber and called for extending the current 15-

day visa-free travel agreement to 30 days.

He stressed that the upcoming Eurasia Trade Exhibition and related events could mark a pivotal step in revitalizing economic ties between the two nations.

Meanwhile during a meeting between Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi and Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Tehran Ontalap Onalbayev in late November 2024, the Iranian official highlighted the need to establish a joint business council with Kazakhstan.

He said: "The formation of a business cooperation council between the two countries can help in the process of developing trade relations between the two countries, and we are interested in forming this council with the participation of the Iranian and Kazakh Chambers of Commerce."

He further pointed out the importance of transit and transportation of goods for Iran, adding: "Activat-

ing a railway route between the two countries can also play a role in the development of international corridors."

Regarding the need to expand trade between Iran and Kazakhstan, he said: "We are prepared to develop trade between the two countries, both in imports and exports, and we do not have a priority in which direction our trade should be oriented. Because good imports bring prosperity to the people, and exports contribute to employment and production."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the TPO head mentioned Iran's potential and capacities to export technical engineering services to Kazakhstan, saying: "Our companies have good technical knowledge and expertise and can complete various projects with the best quality and the lowest price. Many projects, completed by Iranian contractors in the region, have been appreciated as exemplary projects."

He called on the Kazakh side to facilitate bank guarantees for Iranian contractors.

# Ayatollah Khamenei's Prediction Comes True: Resistance Becomes Stronger

## Hamas has added up to 15,000 fighters since start of war, US intel figures say

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - Israel is laboring under the delusion that it has dealt debilitating blows to resistance groups in West Asia through its aggressive military operations.

But at least the recent ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas indicates that the regime has been building castles in the air.

Israel launched war on Gaza shortly after Hamas carried out the Aqsa Storm attack. It was a surprise military operation that the resistance group conducted in southern Israel on October 7, 2023. More than 1,100 people were killed in the Hamas operation and about 250 others were taken captive. Dozens of the captives still remain in Gaza.

Several of the remaining captives have so far been released as part of the ceasefire that went into effect on January 19 and the rest are expected to walk free if Israel adheres to its commitments under the deal.

During the more than 15-month war on Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had consistently vowed to continue fighting until "destroying" Hamas through achieving "total victory" over the resistance movement and returning all captives.

Netanyahu, known as Bibi, doubled down on his claims in an Israeli cabinet meeting in April last year.

"We are one step away from victory (over Hamas). But the price we paid is painful and heartbreaking. There will be no ceasefire without the return of hostages. It just won't happen."

Later on, July 1st, Bibi escalated his war rhetoric directed at Hamas.

"I returned yesterday from a visit to the Gaza Division. I saw very considerable achievements in the fighting being carried out in Rafah. We are advancing to the end of the stage of eliminating the Hamas terrorist army; we will continue striking its remnants," Netanyahu said.

Israeli military officials have also repeatedly claimed that the regime's army had dismantled Hamas' military capabilities and killed thousands of resistance fighters in Gaza.

However, the strong presence of resistance fighters in the Gaza Strip after the implementation of the ceasefire showed that Netanyahu and his allies have been living in a fantasy world.

Besides, a new report burst the Israeli leaders' bubble.

On January 24, Reuters reported in an exclusive interview that Hamas "has recruited between 10,000 and 15,000 members since the start of its war with Israel".

Citing two congressional sources briefed on US intelligence, the report said resistance fighters "could remain a persistent threat to Israel".

Earlier this month, Antony Blinken let the cat out of the bag about claims that Hamas is experiencing a shortage of fighters.

On January 14, he said Washington believes that Hamas has recruited almost as many fighters as it had lost in Gaza.

"Each time Israel completes its military operations and pulls back, Hamas militants regroup and re-emerge because



there's nothing else to fill the void," the former top US diplomat noted.

According to official US figures, Hamas had between 20,000 and 25,000 fighters. Meanwhile, Israeli figures have put the total Hamas death toll in Gaza at around 20,000.

Currently, the report from Reuters, along with Blinken's remarks and the significant presence of resistance fighters

Halevi announced on Tuesday that he has decided to step down over his role in failing to prevent the Al-Aqsa Storm.

In a letter to war minister Israel Katz, he said the resignation would go into effect on March 6.

He noted that Israel has been unable to eliminate Hamas.

Apart from the war on Gaza, Israel also waged war on Lebanon.

The ceasefire deals with Hamas and Hezbollah have thrown a spotlight on the fact that Israel is unable to subdue resistance movements through military force. The truce agreements also indicate that Israel's attempts to drive a wedge among the populace against Hezbollah and Hamas have gone up in smoke.

Besides, prior to the Gaza ceasefire, Israel's use of military force to deter Yemen's Ansarullah from firing drones and missiles toward Israel remained futile.

Ansarullah like Hezbollah hit Israeli strategic military sites and targeted Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

Israel assassinated prominent resistance leaders, including Lebanese Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas leaders Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar with the purported aim of incapacitating resistance movements.

Israel also martyred senior Iranian military advisors in Syria who had been deployed to the country at the request of former president Bashar Assad to help Damascus in the battle against terror groups.

Such heinous plots also failed as resistance against Israel's atrocities continue to grow.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has consistently cautioned that Israel's malevolent plans are doomed to fail.

In a speech in December last year, the Leader stressed that resistance becomes stronger in the face of pressure. He said Nasrallah's martyrdom encouraged Lebanese people to put up resistance against Israel, forcing the regime to acquiesce to a ceasefire.

Pointing to Israel's plans in Gaza, Ayatollah Khamenei added, "The enemy thought that the people of Gaza would rise up against Hamas amidst the bombardments. However, the opposite happened. The people have become more supportive of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other Palestinian Resistance groups than ever before."

In reference to Israel's smear campaigns against Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei also had this to say, "That ignorant and uninformed analyst who believes that these events will weaken Iran should understand that Iran is strong and powerful and it will become even more powerful."

He also stressed that resistance will further spread in the region.

Israel has tried to demonize Iran, blaming the country for rising opposition to the regime's heinous crimes.

Iran has time and again stressed that the root cause of conflicts in West Asia stems from Israel's occupation.

Israel has killed more than 47,000 Palestinians in Gaza and about 4,000 people in Lebanon since October 2023. However, Israel's carnage has not succeeded in crushing regional resistance which has become the regime's recurrent nightmare.



## Alive and kicking: Four Israeli captives freed in good condition

Hamas released more Israeli captives from the Gaza Strip on Saturday as part of a ceasefire between the regime and the resistance movement.

Four female soldiers were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Gaza City.

They ascended a podium, where they waved and smiled before being escorted away. The captives seemed to be in good condition. They later arrived in Israel.

A total of 200 Palestinians also walked free from Israeli jails. More than 120 of them were serving life sentences behind bars.

It was the second captive-prisoner swap since the ceasefire took effect on January 19.

Hundreds of Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters gathered in Palestine Square where the release of the captives took place.

Palestinian civilians were present there, many hoisting the Palestinian flag. They doubled down on their support for the Palestinian resistance.

Israeli officials said following Saturday's release that 90 captives remain in Gaza. They said a third of them are dead. According to Palestinians, the slain captives have lost their lives during Israeli strikes on Gaza.

The remaining captives are set to be exchanged for Palestinian prisoners based on the truce agreement which will be implemented in three phases.

in Gaza, indicate that Hamas continues to be resilient.

Back in February 2024, assessments by Israel's military intelligence indicated that even if the regime dismantles Hamas's organized military capabilities, the movement will continue to operate in Gaza.

The assessments showed that "authentic support remains" for Hamas among Gazans.

In March, the US intelligence community said in its annual report that Israel will likely face Hamas resistance "for years to come".

Besides, Israeli military officials had already acknowledged that the regime's war ambitions in Gaza would remain futile.

Israel's military setbacks have further caused a tsunami of resignations.

Israel's military chief of staff, Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, is the most senior Israeli figure who has announced his resignation.

On September 23, 2024, Israel launched a massive bombing campaign in Lebanon and a week later sent its troops into southern Lebanon.

Israel was compelled to agree to a two-month ceasefire with Hezbollah in late November due to failing to achieve its military objectives.

However, Netanyahu said on Friday that the Israeli army will not withdraw from southern Lebanon by the 60-day deadline set under the ceasefire agreement which expires on Sunday.

Prior to Israel's extensive aerial bombardment of Lebanon, it had been engaged in cross-border exchanges of fire with Hezbollah in the wake of the regime's initiation of military action against Gaza.

Israel's brutal wars on Gaza and Lebanon were not only aimed at eliminating Hamas and Hezbollah but also were in line with the regime's attempts to pit Lebanese and Palestinian people against the resistance movements.

## Hamas reveals stunning details of October 7

From page 1 ▶ Deif, addressing military commanders, said, "We must change the course of history to be the vanguard in this stage and achieve a day of God's days when the banners will be raised."

The episode also presented secret documents, including the operation order signed by Deif on October 5, 2023, setting the attack time at 6:30 AM on October 7.

It also outlined key Israeli military bases to be targeted, such as Yiftach, Nahal Oz, and Kissufim.

The footage featured scenes with Hamas political bureau head Yahya Sinwar, who played a key role in directing the resistance during the war, alongside a special testimony from Ezzedin al-Haddad, a member of the al-Qassam Brigades' general military council and commander of the Gaza Brigade.

Al-Haddad stated in an interview conducted under complex security conditions that the military leadership had been in constant session since October 1 to coordinate the timing and supervise the operation.

He added, "The Israeli occupation leadership, empowered by America and the West, will have no choice but to comply with our just demands to stop the aggression and withdraw completely from Gaza."

In the early hours of October 7, thousands of fighters breached the wall separating Gaza from the occupied territories.

The documentary highlighted scenes of al-Qassam fighters inside their tunnels, planting explosive devices and detonating Israeli vehicles. It also showed elite fighters capturing an Israeli Namer armored personnel carrier.

According to the program, the operation resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Israeli soldiers and officers.

The episode also presented exceptional documents and testimonies from within the military operations room, showing precise coordination between the leadership of al-Qassam and the execution of the operation.

It shed light on Israeli efforts to target resistance leaders, including al-Haddad, whom Tel Aviv identified as one of the main figures behind the Al-Aqsa Storm operation.

The investigation revealed the depth of planning that characterized the operation, reviewing its details, which saw a surprise and complex attack by the al-Qassam Brigades on Israeli settlements and military bases in Gaza's perimeter.

The wall separating Gaza from the occupied territories was breached, and simultaneous ground, sea, and air attacks were executed. Footage showed al-Qassam forces storming an Israeli military base and taking control of tanks and military vehicles belonging to the occupation army.

The program also documented scenes of the bodies of Israeli soldiers killed during the clashes, as well as rare footage of the detonation of explosive devices planted by al-Qassam fighters to target Israeli military vehicles.

The footage included testimonies from al-Qassam fighters who participated in the raid.

One fighter who took part in the storming of the Be'eri kibbutz narrated details of the clashes inside the kibbutz, confirming that the fighters spared the lives of civilians and only fought those who engaged with them.

The fighters also revealed details of the operation to capture Israeli soldiers, which was carried out according to an independent security plan. One fighter noted that the number of prisoners was large, necessitating heavy Israeli reinforcements, which led to the intense bombing of the kibbutz and its complete destruction.

The program pointed out the operation was the result of a complex strategic deception. The al-Qassam Brigades managed to mislead the Israeli military into believing it would not respond to Israeli escalation in the West Bank and Gaza.

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

## US political meddling in Lebanon aimed to compensate for Israel's defeat

From page 1 ▶ According to the broad US-Israeli concept, "Israel's security needs" include all regional territories, i.e. what is called "Greater Israel".

Currently, in such a critical transitional phase in Lebanon and the region, Tel Aviv is betting on the US political pressure on Beirut to restrict the Hezbollah resistance movement by dragging it into a dramatic confrontation with the Lebanese government if it launches any righteous defensive operation against the occupation forces.

This was confirmed by a statement issued by Netanyahu's office in which it revealed a premeditated US-Israeli intention not to abide by the 60-day period "based on the fact that the ceasefire agreement was not fully imposed by the Lebanese state."

The statement was released following a lengthy cabinet meeting in which it was decided, without a vote, not to complete the withdrawal, while sending a boastful message stating that the army would respond - severely - to Hezbollah's "violations".

Netanyahu's office claimed that the Israeli occupation forces' withdrawal was conditional on the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south and north of the Litani River.

This implies a message stating that the Israel occupation force (IOF) is prepared to respond to any Hezbollah's defensive operation, in the foreseeable future, even if it does not rise to the level of a large-scale war based on the need not to inflame the political situation with the US proxies in Lebanon or the anti-Hezbollah team.

Thus, the nature, size and timing of the Israeli aggressive steps will be in harmony with the internal developments in Lebanon according to the US plans, which are drawn up and defined in terms of its colonial objectives.

Undoubtedly, this is nothing but compensation for the humiliating Israeli failure to achieve any strategic goal during roughly two months of intensive bombardment of Lebanon, despite all the severe blows that Hezbollah and its people endured.

Since October 8, 2023, the date Hezbollah rushed to support the Palestinians against Israel's war on Gaza, it has become necessary for the Israeli enemy to use new hostile tools, which will be implemented by Washington's proxies in the parliament and the future Lebanese cabinet at a more controlled pace.

Yedioth Ahronoth summed up these endeavors by saying, "Israeli leaders see that the current time is a historic opportunity to prevent the re-emergence of terrorist groups inside Lebanon" in an open reference to the Hezbollah resistance movement.

The newspaper further called for caution against an uncalculated step that would weaken Washington's influence in Lebanon and thus necessitate the need for resistance.

In any case, at this drastic stage, the primary and pivotal responsibility lies with the Lebanese state, which claimed that it is capable of diplomatically confronting the Zionist aggression and that there is no need for resistance.

## UK's '100-year partnership' with Ukraine is a meaningless political stunt

Ian Proud

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced a 100-year partnership between their countries during a meeting in Kyiv on January 16. On the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration as the 47th United States president, this was Starmer's attempt to position Britain as Ukraine's best friend at a time when Zelenskyy needs all the friends he can get. In truth, the 100-year partnership ap-

pears to offer nothing new.

Treaties are the circuitry that make relations between states function. Any VIP visit to another country prompts a scramble to agree deals that can be announced as a sign both countries are focused on strengthening their partnership. Since 1892, the United Kingdom has entered into over 15,000 treaties. This agreement with Ukraine must be seen in that light.

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

## UN Tourism chief visits Iran's pavilion at FITUR 2025



TEHRAN - Zurab Pololikashvili, the Secretary-General of the UN Tourism, formerly known as UNWTO, visited the Iranian pavilion during the opening of the 45th International Tourism Trade Fair aka FITUR 2025 in Madrid, Spain.

The visit highlighted Iran's diverse tourism potential and its rich cultural heritage on the global stage, according to a statement by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Pololikashvili explored the pavilion's displays and engaged with the present Iranian officials, including Mohammad-Hossein Hejazi, Advisor to the Minister of Cultural Heritage, and Shahab Malmir, spokesperson and head of public relations for the Touring and Automobile Club of Iran.

During the visit, Pololikashvili respected Iran's rich cultural heritage and natural diversity, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation in strengthening the global tourism industry.

He also reaffirmed the UN Tourism's support for sustainable tourism projects in Iran, recognizing the country's role in fostering cultural and sustainable tourism in the region.

The Iranian pavilion attracted considerable attention with its multimedia presentations showcasing the country's historical, cultural, and natural landmarks.

FITUR, one of the world's premier tourism exhibitions, provides a platform for countries and tourism-related companies to promote their capacities and offerings.

Iran's pavilion, presented under the slogan "Iran, Land of History and Nature," stood out as a significant attraction at the event.

The event serves as a unique opportunity for nations to connect with global stakeholders and showcase their tourism potential. With its exceptional participation this year, Iran highlighted its commitment to enhancing international collaboration and promoting its cultural treasures to a global audience.

## Deadline for 9th Fajr Intl. Handicrafts Festival registration extended



The festival's secretariat Seyyed Amin Sanaei-Mehri on Saturday announced the extension following numerous requests from artists for more time.

Initially, the deadline had been set for midnight on Friday, January 24, after which no entries were to be accepted.

The festival's opening ceremony is scheduled for February 20 at Tehran's historic Sa'dabad Palace. Winners will be celebrated at the closing ceremony on February 24, held at Milad Tower in Tehran.

Organizers encourage all artists to seize this extended opportunity to submit their works and be part of this prestigious event.

For registration and further details, visit the official festival website at [fajr.mcth.ir](http://fajr.mcth.ir).

## UN Tourism at FITUR 2025: a milestone event for sector-wide cooperation

UN Tourism has returned to the FITUR international trade fair to advance the sector's shift towards greater accessibility and growth propelled by investments and innovation.

On the eve of FITUR 2025, UN Tourism gathered high-level delegates to celebrate its 50th anniversary, reaffirming its long-standing commitment to making the sector a pillar of peace and understanding.

Looking to the next 50 years, UN Tourism once again used the platform of the leading tourism trade fair to advance priorities for the present and the future, with a focus on supporting new ideas and technologies and boosting investments into the sector.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "As UN Tourism celebrates 50 years, FITUR meets for the 45th time. Together, we have helped shape global tourism, building bridges between the public and private sectors, promoting dialogue and cooperation and advancing shared priorities around innovation, sustainability and resilience."

Within the framework of FITUR 2025, the UN Tourism leadership held a series of high-level meetings with delegates, including Ministers of Tourism, business leaders and representatives of its Member States.

In Madrid, UN Tourism welcomed key stakeholders for a special Investment Breakfast, hosted in partnership with the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF).

The event brought together experts to focus on the key opportunities and challenges for growing investments into the sector across the region. On this occasion, UN Tourism presented the latest additions to its growing portfolio of "Tourism Do-

ing Business" Investment Guidelines.

The two new publications focus on the investment landscape of Panama and also Brazil, partner country of FITUR 2025.

### Making tourism more accessible to all

Further advancing its commitment to making tourism and its benefits available to all, UN Tourism and Accessible EU hosted a special side event at FITUR (23 January).

Organized in collaboration with the ONCE Foundation, the European Network for Accessible Tourism and ILUNION Accesibilidad, the event "Accessible Tourism: Harnessing the Benefits of Inclusive Destinations for Companies and People" celebrated the progress made in this field, making clear the advantages to destinations of being more inclusive.

The event also assessed the challenges standing in the way of opening up destinations to visitors of all abilities, with a particular emphasis on infrastructure and the use of innovation to boost accessibility.

### UN Tourism affiliate members: new allies welcomed

UN Tourism welcomed its growing network of Affiliate Members to FITUR 2025, further strengthening ties right across the diverse sector. A special "Affiliate Members Corner" was held, focusing on "Targeting Traveler Segments". The event assessed key growth areas and other areas of potential for destinations looking to diversify their tourism offerings.

At FITUR, UN Tourism signed new Memorandums of Understanding with Affiliate Member CIFTT (Audiovisual Tourism Advertising), designed to advance creativity.

(Source: UN Tourism)

# Loan exhibit of Persian artifacts opens at Sichuan museum

TEHRAN - A loan exhibition titled Land of Kindness showcasing 151 historical artifacts from Tehran's prominent museums has officially opened at the Sichuan University Museum in Chengdu, China.

The exhibition, aimed at fostering cultural and artistic exchanges and enhancing cultural diplomacy between Iran and China, was inaugurated on Saturday.

The opening ceremony was attended by Parham Janfeshan, Advisor to Iran's Tourism Minister and Acting Supervisor for Tourism Services Evaluation, and a number of Chinese cultural officials and the governor of Sichuan.

"For the first time, 151 historical pieces from museums such as Reza Abbasi Museum, Glassware and Ceramics Museum, Carpet Museum, National Arts Museum, and the Moghadam



Museum are being displayed at the Sichuan University Museum in Chengdu," Janfeshan stated during the ceremony.

He added that the exhibition was organized with the approval of Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, and supported by Ali Darabi, Deputy

Minister for Cultural Heritage.

Additionally, China has committed to organizing a reciprocal exhibition of its historical artifacts in Iran in the near future.

Janfeshan noted that after its run in Chengdu, Land of Kindness will travel to museums in Guangzhou and Nanjing to continue its showcase.

The Head of the China Exhibition Exchange Center, for his part, expressed gratitude to Iran for sharing its historical treasures and organizing this exhibition.

He emphasized the importance of deepening cultural ties between the two nations, highlighting the upcoming reciprocal exhibition in Iran as a symbol of friendship and cooperation.

Land of Kindness celebrates the rich heritage of both nations and represents a step forward in strengthening bilateral cultural relations through artistic and historical exchanges.

The selected items span a remarkable historical range, from the third millennium BC to the later Islamic periods.

They include metal, ceramic, and glass objects, as well as textiles and carpets, reflecting the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Iran.

## Japan's ambassador visits UNESCO-registered Dome of Soltanieh

TEHRAN - The Japanese ambassador to Iran, Tamaki Tsukada, recently toured the Dome of Soltanieh, a UNESCO World Heritage site renowned as one of the largest brick domes in the world.

Dariush Naderi, the tourism chief of Zanjan province where the iconic structure is located in, shared details of the visit, noting Ambassador Tsukada's awe at the grandeur and extraordinary architecture of the historical site.

"The ambassador's visit to this remarkable monument underscores its global significance and could help attract more international tourists to Zanjan," CHTN quoted Naderi as saying on Thursday.

During his visit, Tsukada expressed admiration for Iran's rich cultural heritage. "I hope more tourists will travel to Iran, as the country possesses a wealth of valuable historical treasures," the envoy said.

The ambassador explored various sec-

tions of the Dome of Soltanieh, engaging with experts to gain deeper insights into the history and cultural significance of the site.

The monument is where Mohammad Khodabandeh better known as Oljaitu, the eighth Ilkhanid dynasty ruler from 1304 to 1316, is laid to rest.

The mausoleum is highly recognized as an architectural masterpiece particularly due to its innovative double-shelled dome and elaborate interior decoration. The very imposing dome stands about 50 meters tall from its base.

According to UNESCO, the Mausoleum of Oljaitu is an essential link and key monument in the development of Islamic architecture in central and western Asia.

Here, the Ilkhanids further developed ideas that had been advanced during the classical Seljuk phase (11th to early 13th centuries), during which the arts of Iran gained



distinction in the Islamic world, thereby setting the stage for the Timurid period (late 14th to 15th centuries), one of the most brilliant periods in Islamic art.

Meaning "Town of the Sultans," Soltanieh was briefly the capital of Persia's Ilkhanid dynasty (a branch of the Mongol dynasty) during the 14th century.

## 6th Sarein Winter Festival kicks off in northwest Iran



TEHRAN - The 6th Sarein Winter Festival has officially commenced in Iran's Ardabil province, inviting tourists from across the country to experience its unique winter attractions.

On Friday, Hassan Mohammadi-Adib, the provincial tourism chief, highlighted the region's exceptional potential in winter tourism.

"Ardabil province, particularly Sarein, boasts unparalleled winter tourism capabilities.

This festival aims to showcase these ca-

pacities," he said during the festival's inauguration.

After a hiatus of several years, the festival has returned to put Sarein's winter charms back on the map. "Sarein offers an array of facilities, including two fully equipped and operational ski resorts, Alvares and Oujor, which rank among the country's standard ski destinations," Mohammadi-Adib noted.

"These venues are ready to welcome both tourists and athletes."

Another major draw of the region is its hot mineral springs, which are especially appealing during the winter months.

"We warmly invite everyone to take advantage of Ardabil's dreamy winter landscapes while enjoying the therapeutic waters of Sarein's renowned springs," the official added.

The festival seeks to foster social enthusiasm and highlight the region's winter tourism potential.

Organizers anticipate a significant turnout from both locals and tourists.

Moreover, according to organizers, a rich program of cultural and artistic events is set to be the centerpiece of the festival, includ-

ing performances that showcase local traditions and customs.

"National and local artists and groups will participate in cultural and artistic presentations, adding vibrancy to the festival," Mohammadi-Adib explained.

These events are scheduled to take place every Friday until the end of Bahman (February 18).

Ardabil province, situated in northwest Iran with a population of 1.28 million and comprising 12 counties, is considered a significant destination for domestic and international tourists due to its natural, historical, religious, and economic attractions.

Ardabil, the provincial capital, has been selected as the 2023 ECO Tourism Capital by the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Situated on a high, windswept plateau, Ardabil is well known for its abundant natural beauty, hospitable people, and silk and carpet trade tradition.

It is also home to UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and the Shrine Ensemble. It is freezing in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year.

## Movie tourism: how the film industry impacts travel

From the serpentine Gotthard Pass in the Swiss Alps, which starred in Goldfinger, to the stunning landscapes featured in White Lotus, including Hawaiian golden hours and Sicilian coastlines hugging cliffsides, some movies and TV series inherently spark wanderlust. Movie tourism, also known as set jetting, goes beyond simply visiting a famous film location or tacking on a cinematic tour to an itinerary. It's about the way films and shows inspire viewers to pack their bags and explore movie destinations in real life.

Travel companies have taken notice of a sharp increase in movie tourism travel in recent years: In 2022, Expedia pinpointed movie tourism as a mounting

travel trend, and, the travel site's 2025 trend report found that a whopping two thirds of travelers say movies and TV shows have influenced their trips.

Film tourism is one of the most effective tools to promote a destination, Marta Soligo, the Director of Tourism Research & Professor of Tourism and Sociology of Leisure at University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV), told Forbes.

"Unlike a billboard advertising a vacation spot, which is limited to a specific geographic location and would be displayed for a limited amount of time, movies and TV shows offer a vastly broader reach, since they can be available worldwide and last

through time."

Movie tourism has received a lot of buzz in recent years, something that tourism experts are referring to as the "White Lotus" effect. Wanderlust grew when people were at home during the pandemic streaming shows set in idyllic locations, including HBO's first season of White Lotus set on the shores of Hawaii and filmed at The Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea.

"Set jetting, as it's called, has become a huge driver for tourism," says Debra Loew from Kensington Tours, a luxury travel company that specializes in personalized, private tours. "White Lotus is a great example of this by showcasing the destinations

where it films as an essential aspect to the storyline and overall series. Interest in Sicily surged after season 2 and we are already seeing interest in Thailand before the new season even debuts."

But movie tourism isn't something that's brand new to this decade. In fact, this type of travel surged after World War II as the movie and TV industries became increasingly popular, and people progressively began to travel to see their favorite movie locations, Soligo says.

Dude ranches have also long benefited from Western movies, long before the breakout success of shows like Yellowstone.

(Source: Forbes)

# Ministry of Energy, UNICEF to improve water supply to South Khorasan

TEHRAN –The Ministry of Energy, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has enhanced water quality and ensured consistent access to water with adequate flow pressure for households by supporting the construction and rehabilitation of the water network in eastern Birjand's villages in South Khorasan province.

Completed in December 2024, this initiative included the establishment of a new water distribution network in Dastgerd and Islamabad, connecting these villages to the main network in Darmian County, UNICEF website announced in a press release on January 20.

The project focused on rehabilitating and replacing outdated and non-functional infrastructure with high-quality materials, ensuring a sustainable water supply for the community.

These improvements have led to significant reductions in water loss from leaks, enhanced water quality, and ensured consistent access to water with adequate flow pressure for households. Additionally, the intervention has drastically decreased the number of water-related incidents, leading to significantly lower maintenance costs.

As a result of these significant enhancements, the consumers' satisfaction has greatly improved.

This effort directly benefits 1,729 individuals including children, enhancing community resilience and preventing environmental migration. It also promotes financial development, reduces water loss, and mitigates the risk of water borne diseases.

Given the success of this project in improving the water supply through decreasing water loss in the network, UNICEF, in collabo-



ration with the Ministry of Energy, plans to launch a pilot programme in the province to compare the efficiency of this method versus other usual water supply methods.

This pilot programme will compare the efficiency of reducing water loss versus the financial and environmental costs of water transfer from new and distant water resources, as a usual practice.

By tackling the critical issue of water scarcity, this project not only enhances the quality of life for residents but also fosters long-term sustainability in the region.

## Improving access to safe water

Following the devastating floods that struck Sistan-Baluchestan province, specifically in Chabahar and its vicinity, at the end of February 2024, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been providing critical assistance, including access to safe water, to the affected communities.

Access to clean and safe water has long been a challenge in the region, even before the floods.

Recognizing the urgent need to address this hazard, UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Ministry of Energy, initiated a comprehensive program to improve access to safe water,

har, Dashtiari, Konarak, Zarabad, Ghasreghand, and Nikshar, with a population of one million people, to ensure the safety and quality of the water."

This enhanced capacity for water quality testing helps protect the health of communities across the province, reducing the risk of waterborne diseases and improving resilience against future public health challenges.

UNICEF's support to the flood-affected children and their families in Sistan-Baluchestan, including the provision of hygiene kits, pre-fabricated latrines and showers, laboratory equipment, and water disinfection devices, was made possible through generous financial aid from EU Humanitarian Aid.

UNICEF responded swiftly to the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the floods. In the first phase, UNICEF procured 2900 essential hygiene packs including 2000 household hygiene kits, 300 baby kits, 500 Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits, and 100 incontinence kits to prevent disease outbreaks and promote children's overall well-being, the UNICEF website reported on April 30. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Ministry of Energy, prioritized the provision of safe water and sanitation services to households and communities affected by the disaster to ensure that children and families stay safe and healthy.

UNICEF also delivered ten water tankers and over 3 tons of perchlorine powder to the affected areas, ensuring access to safe drinking water.

This has also been materialized through generous European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) funding.

the UNICEF website announced in a press release on December 22, 2024.

This initiative aims to reduce waterborne illnesses, protect vulnerable families, and build resilience in the region's communities, ensuring sustainable access to clean and safe water.

UNICEF's response to the water crisis included critical support for water safety testing and purification efforts.

"Forty water disinfection devices have been procured and distributed.

These devices, which operate on solar energy, provide drinking water for approximately 200,000 people," explains Siavash Oveisi Arian, a UNICEF volunteer Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) officer. "In addition, water quality testing laboratory equipment was distributed across the province," he added.

The laboratory equipment provided by UNICEF plays a crucial role in ensuring water safety for a large population in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Fatemeh Fadaee, Water and Wastewater Quality Control Manager of Chabahar County, explains, "We assess the water quality in the cities and villages of Chaba-

## Clean energy ensures safer, better world for all

By Maryam Tavasoli

TEHRAN –Alternative sources of energy that are clean, accessible, and reliable will contribute to addressing climate change, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and empowering vulnerable communities worldwide.

Provided by the sun, wind, water, waste, and heat from the Earth, renewable energy sources are abundant, and emit little to no greenhouse gases or pollutants into the air.

They also benefit communities lacking ac-

cess to reliable power sources.

For populations without clean energy access, the lack of reliable power hinders education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Many of the developing regions still rely heavily on polluting fossil fuels for their daily life. If current trends continue, by 2030 around 1.8 billion people will still use unsafe, unhealthy, and inefficient cooking systems, such as burning wood.

The world needs to reduce dependence on

fossil fuels by investing in clean energy which is affordable, and sustainable.

Hence, in 2023, the International Day of Clean Energy on January 26 was declared by the General Assembly as a call to raise awareness and mobilize action for a just and inclusive transition to clean energy for the benefit of people and the planet.

The day highlights the key role of clean energy in promoting sustainable development and mitigating climate change effects.

## Over 485 people benefited from IRCS services in three days

TEHRAN –The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) provided rescue services to 486 individuals over the past three days.

From January 22 to 24, 373 IRCS teams conducted 284 operations, transferring 136 people to medical centers, IRNA quoted Mohammad Kobadi, an official with the IRCS, as saying. Since December 6, 2024,

the IRCS has started a winter relief program. The program is scheduled to continue till March 10. A total of 4,500 relief teams are attending the program to ensure road safety by providing life-saving aid and reducing road accidents.

## IRCS is a top organization

In September 2024, the International Federation of Red Cross

and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) project manager, Faisal Mahboob, lauded the capabilities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) as outstanding. The official said he was really impressed by the capacity and the wide range of activities carried out by the IRCS.

The IRCS is recognized as one of the five prominent societ-

ies worldwide thanks to its wide range of activities and great achievements both nationally and internationally. "The International Federation will support the activities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society to commence a new phase of collaboration with the society," Mahboob added, the IRCS website reported.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Iran will defeat COVID-19, we believe: Chinese envoy

Chinese Ambassador in Iran, Chang Hua, has said he believes that Iran would overcome the crisis of coronavirus outbreak.

"We believe that by sending humanitarian aid, Iran will overcome the crisis," he said in a meeting with Mahmoud Reza Peyravi, secretary general of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, IRNA reported.

The envoy praised Iran's Red Crescent Society as the first organization affiliated with the Red Cross and the Red Crescent societies which sent humanitarian shipments of aid to the Chinese people.

A delegation of Chinese medical experts arrived in Tehran on Saturday with a cargo of aid to help combat the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

## سفیر چین: باور داریم ایران بر بحران کرونا غلبه خواهد کرد

سفیر جمهوری خلق چین در تهران ابراز امیدواری کرد ایران بر بحران شیوع ویروس کرونا غلبه خواهد کرد. به گزارش ایرنا، چانگ هوا روز دوشنبه در حاشیه دیدار با محمودرضا پیروی دبیرکل جمعیت هلال احمر ایران گفت: ما باور داریم که با ارسال کمک های انساندوستانه از سوی دوستان دولت ایران از بحران این بیماری عبور خواهد کرد.

دیپلمات ارشد چین در ادامه ضمن قدردانی از جمعیت هلال احمر ایران به عنوان نخستین سازمان بشردوستانه عضو جمعیت های ملی صلیب سرخ و هلال احمر که محموله های کمک را برای مردم چین ارسال کرد، گفت: ما هم با شدت گرفتن ویروس کرونا در کنار ایران هستیم.

## Iran's first AI park to be set up in two years

TEHRAN –The first artificial intelligence (AI) park of the country is planned to be established in Tehran by the next two years, an official with the Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy has said.

The main objective of the plan is to showcase the technological developments of the country and provide practical AI-related services to the people, Mehr news agency quoted Mojtaba Alizadeh as saying.

These services cover a wide range of fields such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and demos of Iran's national AI Platform, he added.

The official went on to say that part of the AI processing infrastructure will be placed in the national AI park.

Public people as well as researchers who need the infrastructure to conduct their research will benefit from the AI park services.

Currently, government bodies, big corporations, and companies are working together to develop the park, Alizadeh further noted.

## Tehran to host intl. Conference on AI, future civilization

An international conference on AI and the future civilization is scheduled to be held in Tehran on January 29.

The conference will center on new world order geometry and new Islamic civilization; AI governance in the light of morals and values of the Islamic revolution; legal, economic, cultural, and social dimensions of AI; the relationship between AI and cognitive science; AI ecosystem architecture; education, training and empowering AI human capital; AI infrastructure (processing, network, tools, CPU, GPU, VPU, etc.); AI theory, knowledge and technology; AI models; AI structures; AI markets; algorithms, data, calculations and standards of AI; AI services and products; and AI security, the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology reported.

The event will attract participants from more than 20 selected domestic universities as well as 30 global top universities and scientific centers.

Appointed professors and researchers from China, Italy, Russia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Iraq, as well as nominated Iranian professors and researchers, will share their latest scientific and technological findings in the field of AI and future civilization in person and virtually.

Also, knowledge-based companies will showcase their latest products in AI in an exhibition that is planned to be held on the sidelines of the conference.

## Iran ranks 94th in Government AI readiness

In 2024, Oxford Insights, which provides data on preparedness to implement Artificial Intelligence in public service delivery, ranked Iran 94th among 193 governments across the world.

Governments are not only working to foster AI innovation and establish regulatory frameworks but also striving to integrate



this technology into public services.

However, understanding how to ensure that AI is adopted effectively for the public good remains a challenge. This index attempts to address this issue.

It includes 39 indicators across 10 dimensions, which make up 3 pillars: Government, Technology Sector, and Data and Infrastructure pillars.

According to the index, the country's best ranking was in the Data and Infrastructure pillar, 55.88. It includes infrastructure, data availability, and data representativeness indicators.

The country's score in the Technology pillar was 38.77. It included human capital, innovation capacity, and maturity indicators.

Iran's lowest score was in the Government pillar, 31.56, probably due to the absence of a national document on AI development. However, with the implementation of the document, the country's ranking is expected to rise in the future.

The United States, Singapore, and England ranked first to third, respectively.

In most countries, the Technology pillar including human capital, and innovation capacity had the lowest score.

However, most of the Arab countries were able to make significant progress in promoting governments' readiness to implement AI due to their investment in strengthening the infrastructure and developing strategies related to the establishment of AI. They were placed among the top 50 countries in the index.

According to a report released by the Web of Science database, Iran ranked first for the highest number of documents in artificial intelligence (AI) among Islamic countries.

The country issued 2,638 AI documents between 2013 and 2022.

Saudi Arabia (2,465) and Turkey (2,303) were ranked second and third, respectively, IRIB reported.

Iran also ranked 14th worldwide in artificial intelligence.

Based on the report, the country ranked second in 3D printing and robotics, fourth in the Internet of Things, fifth in 5th generation (5G) communication technologies and big data, seventh in drone technology, and eighth in blockchains among Islamic nations.



## Rescue and relief Olympiad underway

The Rescue and Relief Organization of the Iranian Red Crescent Society started a rescue and relief Olympiad on Wednesday, January 22, in northern Mazandaran Province.

The series of competitions include navigation (forest, valley, and mountain), rescue operations (water, road), and emergency sheltering.



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

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 43051601  
 Email: info@tehrantimes.com  
 Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
 Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430  
 Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 43051505  
 Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430



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

JANUARY 26, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Blessed is the man who always kept the life after death in his view, who remembered the Day of Judgment through all his deeds, who led a contented life and who was happy with the lot that Allah had destined for him.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:16 Evening: 17:42 Dawn: 5:43 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:10 (tomorrow)

## David Stasavage's "Decline and Rise of Democracy" available in Persian



TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book "The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today" written by David Stasavage has been released in the Iranian book market.

Lila Sazgar has translated the book that has been brought out by the Now Publishing House in 506 pages, Mehr reported.

The book presents a new understanding of how and why early democracy took hold, how modern democracy evolved, and what this history teaches us about the future.

Historical accounts of democracy's rise tend to focus on ancient Greece and pre-Renaissance Europe.

"The Decline and Rise of Democracy" draws from global evidence to show that the story is much richer—democratic practices were present in many places, at many other times, from the Americas before European conquest, to ancient Mesopotamia, to pre-colonial Africa.

Delving into the prevalence of early democracy throughout the world, David Stasavage makes the case that understanding how and where these democracies flourished—and when and why they declined—can provide crucial information not just about the history of governance, but also about the ways modern democracies work and where they could manifest

in the future.

Drawing from examples spanning several millennia, Stasavage first considers why states developed either democratic or autocratic styles of governance and argues that early democracy tended to develop in small places with a weak state and, counterintuitively, simple technologies.

When central state institutions (such as a tax bureaucracy) were absent—as in medieval Europe—rulers needed consent from their populace to govern. When central institutions were strong—as in China or the Middle East—consent was less necessary and autocracy more likely.

The author then explores the transition from early to modern democracy, which first took shape in England and then the United States, illustrating that modern democracy arose as an effort to combine popular control with a strong state over a large territory.

Democracy has been an experiment that has unfolded over time and across the world—and its transformation is ongoing.

Amidst rising democratic anxieties, "The Decline and Rise of Democracy" widens the historical lens on the growth of political institutions and offers surprising lessons for all who care about governance.

David Stasavage is an American political scientist known for his work on democracy and political economy.

He is the Dean for the Social Sciences and the Julius Silver Professor at New York University's Department of Politics and an affiliated professor in NYU's School of Law.

He uses both current and historical data to investigate long run trends in inequality and in the development of state institutions.

He has also published a number of articles on these and related topics.

## Cartoon of Day



Gaza  
 Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

# Palestinian filmmaker Abdallah Motan detained without trial by Israeli authorities

TEHRAN- On Thursday, the Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) released a statement expressing deep concern for the well-being of young Palestinian documentary filmmaker Abdallah Motan. Arrested by Israeli authorities on January 13, he has been sentenced to six months of "administrative detention" without trial or charges.

Motan, a 30-year-old film director, director of photography, and photographer from Ramallah, has a history of producing documentary films both in Palestine and internationally.

In December, his film "Deferred Reclaim" won the special jury award in the Gaza section of the 18th edition of the International Documentary Film Festival of Iran, known as Cinéma Vérité, held in Tehran.

Motan was unable to attend the closing ceremony due to the prevailing conditions in Palestine and Gaza. In a note addressed to the festival organizers, he expressed his gratitude: "Thank you for honoring the stories of the martyrs, the prisoners, and their families in Palestine; I wish I could have been present at the closing ceremony."

He has particularly strong ties with Italy, having spent eighteen months in Naples for a journalistic internship.

He is scheduled to return to Italy this February to participate in the 21st edition of the Al Ard Film Festival, organized by the Sardinia-Palestine Friendship Association.

In addition to his filmmaking, Motan has been instrumental in organizing local film workshops, including one in the Palestinian village of Al-Zubaidat in the Jordan Valley, aimed at empowering aspiring young men and women to use basic tools for documentation and editing to articulate



their daily experiences.

His body of work encompasses numerous local and international projects, including documentaries filmed across Latin America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and China. He has also participated in numerous film festivals worldwide.

According to the Israeli authorities, Motan was arrested at the Al-Karama crossing while attempting to leave the country for the United Arab Emirates via Jordan, though they provided no further details.

He is currently being held at the Gush Etzion detention facility near Hebron, which has faced criticism for its poor conditions and treatment of detainees.

The ARC has joined other organizations, including the International Coalition for Filmmakers at Risk (ICFR) and the IDFA Institute, in demanding Motan's release and urging the Israeli authorities to protect Palestinian artists and cultural workers.

Motan's family and these organizations are calling for his immediate release and dropping of all charges against him.

"Abdallah Motan's detention highlights the urgent need for action to protect Palestinian artists and cultural workers," said Julie Trébault, Executive Director of ARC.

"The targeting of artists and cultural professionals through Israel's mass arrest policy not only silences individual voices

but also undermines Palestinians' right to participate in and engage freely with cultural life—constituting a clear violation of international human rights law.

We call on the Israeli authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Abdallah and the hundreds of artists, journalists, and writers who are unjustly targeted throughout the occupied Palestinian Territories."

ARC has also recently addressed the arbitrary arrest of dancer and cultural activist Shaden Al Qous in East Jerusalem, as well as the tragic death of painter Fathi Ghaben, who was denied the right to travel outside Gaza for urgent medical treatment by Israeli authorities.

Motan is currently one of at least 43 film workers and journalists imprisoned by Israeli authorities in an effort to suppress coverage of the conflict in Gaza, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

This recent wave of arrests in the West Bank has occurred during a newly implemented ceasefire, which has temporarily halted Israel's military actions in Gaza and facilitated the exchange of Palestinian and Israeli captives.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has condemned the Israeli authorities' actions and called for Motan's release.

The detention of the award-winning filmmaker is viewed as an assault on freedom of expression and an attempt to silence voices that aim to expose the practices of the occupation to the international community.

The Tehran Times Newspaper also condemns Motan's detention, calling for his immediate release, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding artists' rights and freedoms in the region.

## 40th International Fajr Music Festival to host 6 international musicians, bands



By Mohamadreza Seyedagha

TEHRAN-The 40th International Fajr Music Festival aims to enhance the artistic quality of the festival based on the available resources, focusing on more serious and art music, said the head of the Music Office at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ahmad Sadri.

Speaking at a press conference held on Saturday at Vahdat Hall in Tehran, Sadri added: "To do so, we have invited professionals in the field to participate in the festival."

Also speaking at the event, the secretary of the festival Reza Mahdavi said: "We are all striving to make Iranian music flourish beyond its current state and establish an international reputation for it."

"The International Fajr Music Festival is a well-recognized festival globally, and many renowned musicians and prominent figures in the music world are eager to participate in it.

I hope that in the coming years, we can create competition in the international section, with foreign judges joining Iranian ones to evaluate both Iranian and international works," he noted.

Another speaker at the event was the executive director of the festival Mohammad Ali Merati.

He explained that for the upcoming edition of the festival, 10 venues in Tehran have been specifically dedicated to music performances.

"This year, we have 1,464 musicians participating in the festival, a 40% increase in the number of artists compared to the last edition," he said.

"There will be 106 bands attending the festival. Despite the challenges, we are hosting six international groups."

Answering the question by the Tehran Times about the nationalities of the foreign

participants, Merati said: "Musicians and bands from Spain, the Netherlands, Turkey, Tunisia, India, and Armenia will perform in the festival and more details about them will be announced in the coming days."

At the end of the press conference, the poster for the 40th Fajr International Music Festival, featuring a depiction of a nightingale, symbol of music in Iran, was unveiled.

The 40th International Fajr Music Festival, organized by the Deputy of Artistic Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, in collaboration with the Music Office of the Culture Ministry, the Iran Music Association, and the Rudaki Foundation, aims to showcase and honor the best works of Iranian musicians, promote the art of music, enhance the audience's taste and listening culture, preserve national identity rooted in religious and Iranian teachings, support creative art—especially ideas and performances by the younger generation—and identify and strengthen the quality of form and content in various genres of music.

The festival will be held in two competitive and non-competitive sections from February 11 to 17 in Tehran.

## Tehran center to host reading performance of "Rumors"

TEHRAN- Iran Boutique Theater in Tehran will be playing host to a reading performance of the American playwright and screenwriter Neil Simon's play "Rumors" on Monday.

The performance will be directed by Yousef Heidarirad with a cast composed of Ali Hashemi, Fatima Akbarzadeh, Sepideh Plangi and Ehsan Jalali.

"Rumors" is a comedy centered around a disastrous anniversary party for Charley Brock, the Deputy Mayor of New York, and his wife, Myra.

The chaos begins when guests arrive to discover that Myra is missing and Charley has accidentally shot himself in the ear while under the influence of Valium. Ken Gorman

and his wife, Chris, are the first characters on the scene, and Ken insists that Chris should not inform Charley's doctor about the incident.

As the couple grapples with the situation, more friends arrive, including Lenny and Claire Ganz, who are affected by their own misfortunes, having just been involved in a car accident.

Rumors begin to swirl among the guests about Charley and Myra's relationship, with Lenny and Claire suspecting infidelity.

As Ken tries to contain the situation, more characters enter, including Ernie and Cookie Cusack, and the contentious Glenn and Cassie Cooper.

Amidst the escalating confusion, Ken accidentally dis-

charges the gun while trying to dispose of it, adding to the absurdity of the evening.

After dinner, the truth about Charley's condition and the mounting rumors are finally revealed to all the guests.

Tensions rise when a police officer, Officer Welch, arrives to investigate Lenny's car accident, leading to frantic discussions among the guests about how to handle their increasingly precarious situation.

They decide to maintain the façade that everything is fine, claiming they had music playing too loudly to hear any gunshots.

As comedic misunderstandings abound, the characters engage in a series of ridicu-

lous antics to convince Officer Welch they have nothing to hide.

The situation escalates when Welch demands to see Charley, prompting Lenny to concoct an absurd story to cover for their friend, which inexplicably involves Myra being in the basement.

Just as the guests think they have escaped scrutiny, they hear Myra calling from below, heightening the comedy and tension of the scenario.

Ultimately, "Rumors" captures the themes of friendship, deception, and the absurdities of life, showcasing Simon's trademark wit and humor as the characters navigate the increasingly convoluted night.