



A man who asked not to be identified holds an Iranian flag and an upside-down U.S. flag while people gather for a “No War on Iran” protest on June 7, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Araghchi says Iran was ‘very close’ to deal with US before June attacks

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran was very close to reaching an agreement with the United States during Omani-mediated talks held earlier this year, but Washington’s refusal to accept any of Iran’s many solutions torpedoed the process, and its subsequent attacks further eroded trust in the U.S. commitment to diplomacy.

“We were very close to clinching a deal, and numerous solutions were discussed during the five rounds of talks brokered by Oman, and we worked out solutions that could have solved the problem. However, these solutions were rejected in Washington, and at the end of the day, hawks became the dominant force there and pushed the country and the region into a regrettable path,” said the Iranian foreign minister in an interview with Omani media. ▶ Page 2

Iran, Russia discuss stronger cooperation against money laundering

TEHRAN – Iran and Russia have held talks on expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, according to the Iranian Embassy in Moscow.

Kazem Jalali, Iran’s ambassador to Russia, met with Yuri Chikhanchin, head of Russia’s Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring), to discuss enhanced coordination between the two countries as well as within the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG), a regional body affiliated with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Chikhanchin thanked Iran for its initiatives and active participation in EAG meetings and expressed readiness to exchange expertise and provide technical guidance aimed at increasing Iran’s engagement with member states.

The EAG, one of nine FATF-style regional bodies, held its forty-third plenary in Minsk with 35 delegations from 18 countries and more than 15 international organizations. ▶ Page 4

Iran, Lebanon, and the fog of West’s psychological warfare

By Fatemeh Kavand

The recent remarks by Lebanon’s foreign minister about “Iranian interference” have triggered a wave of reactions across the region’s political landscape.

Before accepting such claims, a fundamental question must be answered: How did Lebanon fall from its zenith as the “Bride of the Middle East” to its nadir as a war-torn, indebted, and fragmented nation? Who bears responsibility for this collapse? And amidst this devastation, who has truly stood as the guardian of Lebanon’s independence, and who has schemed to seize its southern lands? ▶ Page 3

Sanctified semantics: Lebanon’s risky drift into the ‘Abrahamic’ politics

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT—President Joseph Aoun’s description of Lebanon as a place where “all the Children of Abraham can meet” was portrayed as a gesture of coexistence during his address to Pope Leo XIV.

But in today’s West Asian geopolitical climate—where religious vocabulary is routinely weaponized to cloak strategic realignments—the phrase cannot be read as benign or apolitical.

Instead, it was widely received as a rhetorical signal that echoes the ideological foundations of the so-called “Abrahamic project”: a project reshaping the region through normalization, security integration, and the erasure of historical memory under the veneer of interfaith harmony.

Venezuelan voices vs. America’s cannons

By staff writer

TEHRAN – Venezuelans took to the streets in Caracas and other cities this week to protest escalating U.S. military pressure. The demonstrations follow the continued presence of the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group in the Caribbean and thousands of U.S. troops in the region. The U.S. has also carried out more than 20 strikes on maritime targets in the Caribbean and Pacific since early September, killing over 80 people, actions that Caracas says go beyond anti-drug operations and threaten Venezuelan sovereignty.

Defending sovereignty

At rallies outside the Miraflores Palace, President Nicolas Maduro reaffirmed Venezuela’s commitment to peace—but only on terms that respect national sovereignty. “We do not want a slave’s peace, nor the peace of colonies! Colony, never! Slaves,

US–Maduro head-on: oil, hegemony, and the future of sovereignty

By Ranjan Solomon

GOA, India – The confrontation between the United States and Nicolás Maduro is one of the most revealing geopolitical conflicts of our time. It is not a clash of democratic ideals versus authoritarianism, as Washington tirelessly claims. It is not a moral crusade to rescue Venezuela from misrule, nor a humanitarian duty to “restore democracy.” These are the familiar tropes through which American foreign policy has historically masked its deeper intentions—from Iran in 1953 to Chile in 1973 and Iraq in 2003.

The real axis of the confrontation is simpler, harder, and more enduring: control over Venezuela’s vast oil reserves, the largest on the planet. The United States cannot tolerate a government that refuses to privatise these reserves, refuses to subordinate its energy policies to American interests,

Trump’s Africa posture is less about human rights though more about power politics

By Patricia Esami-Lubba

ABUJA – When Donald Trump turns his attention to Africa, it is rarely for reasons African policymakers recognize as grounded in fact or consistent principle. His latest escalation of tensions with Nigeria and South Africa, framed as a moral crusade against human rights abuses, reflects a recurring pattern: selectively invoking the language of rights to justify punitive diplomacy that ultimately serves domestic politics more than international justice.

In Nigeria, Trump has warned of potential military action and suspended aid over what he describes as systematic persecution of Christians.

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Indonesian remake of “Children of Heaven” set for 2026 release

TEHRAN- MD Pictures, one of Indonesia’s leading production companies, has announced its plans to release a remake of the acclaimed 1997 Iranian film “Children of Heaven”. Directed by renowned filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo, the new version is scheduled for release in 2026 and aims to bring the heartfelt story of sibling resilience to Indonesian screens, set against the backdrop of the city of Semarang.

“Children of Heaven” is an internationally celebrated film directed by Majid Majidi, which tells the story of a young brother and sister who share a single pair of shoes after losing their own. The film explores themes of poverty, innocence, and hope through the lens of a simple yet powerful narrative. Majidi’s classic family film received a nomination for the best foreign-language film in 1999, becoming the first Iranian film ever nominated for an Oscar. ▶ Page 8



Iran, SCO allies send ‘message to hegemonic powers’ as joint military drills expand

TEHRAN – The majority of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have begun their role in ongoing joint military drills scheduled to wrap up on December 5 in northwestern Iran.

The commander of the maneuvers and representative of the exercises’ executive committee, general Vali Ma’dani, broke the news during a press conference held on Tuesday.

“Most SCO member countries have dispatched their troops to join the special forces taking part in the drills. Some countries have also sent their representatives to join the Joint Chiefs of Staff for operations during the drills,” the commander explained. ▶ Page 2



Exclusive Interview
‘What is happening in Gaza is not collateral damage, it is policy’

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TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Silent wave of Asian diplomacy

Donya-e-Eqtasad examined Iran's simultaneous consultations with Japan and South Korea. The paper argued that these parallel talks could be seen as the activation of a quiet yet purposeful wave of Asian diplomacy. This wave does not necessarily take the formal shape of a "mediation initiative," but it follows a shared logic: the genuine concern of Asian powers over rising tensions in West Asia and their effects on energy security, market stability, and future geopolitical trends. These countries have clearly understood that the Red Sea tensions, the Gaza war, developments in Lebanon, and instability in energy markets are all directly and indirectly linked to Iran's nuclear file. From their perspective, a return to nuclear diplomacy is not only a political goal but also a key instrument for containing regional tensions and establishing a ceiling of control over crises. Thus, what matters most to Asian diplomats is creating a platform for dialogue and restoring predictability to regional interactions. Reviving the JCPOA is only one possible path toward this broader objective.

Sobh-e-No: The future of tactical cooperation between Tehran and Ankara

Sobh-e-No analyzed recent shifts in Tehran-Ankara relations following Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's visit to Tehran. The paper wrote that this trip should be seen as a symbol of consolidating a complex yet manageable pattern in Iran-Turkey relations. At present, the two countries are less direct threats to one another and more parts of each other's mechanisms for managing environmental risks. The main goals of this visit can be analyzed on several simultaneous levels: consolidation of cooperation in energy, trade, and transit; containing the consequences of developments in Syria and the Caucasus; coordinating positions regarding Gaza and Israel; and seeking to exploit structural gaps in the international system for mutual benefit. Fidan's trip can be considered a significant point in the ongoing recalibration of Tehran-Ankara relations. Although this process still carries elements of rivalry and historical mistrust, at the current juncture, it emphasizes more than ever the necessity of tactical cooperation and crisis management in the region. If this trajectory continues, one may expect the balance of power in West Asia—at least along the Iran-Turkey axis—to enter a new phase of balance and calculability.

Farhikhtegan: Negotiation conditions were not intended to be accepted

In a commentary, Farhikhtegan addressed three conditions set by the United States as prerequisites for any rapprochement with

Iran. The paper notes that the conditions announced by Trump—complete suspension of uranium enrichment in Iran, total cessation of support for resistance movements in the region, and reduction of missile ranges—form a clear picture when considered together. According to the analysis, the U.S. is not seeking an agreement but Iran's submission. Accepting and implementing these preconditions would provide no guarantee that Israel would refrain from destroying the military and economic infrastructure of a country whose missiles have a range of 500 kilometers. If the true aim were agreement, the conditions should have been framed in a way that allowed for negotiation between both sides, rather than disarming one party entirely while leaving the other in a superior position. Iran will not yield to such demands, and the U.S. is aware of this stance. Presenting such demands not only opens the door to blame-shifting and excuse-making but also enables the White House to begin any potential negotiation from a position of dominance and extract greater concessions. These conditions were never set to be accepted; they were designed to be rejected. Iran's refusal then provides Washington with the pretext to label Tehran as "the party rejecting negotiations" and to continue the path of maximum pressure.

Arman-e-Melli: Iran's approach is diversifying economic pathways

Arman-e-Melli emphasized that Iran, under current circumstances, is not seeking to replace its global partners but rather to diversify its economic pathways. While this strategy does not fully resolve the challenges of sanctions, it has the capacity to ease pressures and create new opportunities in markets, energy, transit, and investment. Recent visits by Turkish and Saudi delegations to Tehran should be viewed within this framework: reassessing Iran's regional role, shaping multilayered cooperation, and leveraging geography as an economic tool in the era of sanctions. The declared goal of reaching \$30 billion in annual trade between Iran and Turkey has been repeatedly mentioned by officials, though it remains far from reality. Nevertheless, Tehran hopes that Hakan Fidan's visit will help open new trade routes and counter some economic difficulties in bilateral relations. Some Iranian experts believe this visit is part of President Pezeshkian's "neighborhood diplomacy" strategy. Independent analysts, however, caution that Iran-Turkey relations have entered a stage requiring more precise redefinition of frameworks and boundaries of cooperation—a stage that, if mismanaged, could lead to greater misunderstandings.

Iran, SCO allies send 'message to hegemonic powers' as joint military drills expand



From page 1 ► A summary of the first phase of the "Joint Counter-Terrorism Drills Sahand-2025" will be presented on December 4, general Ma'dani added.

According an IRGC commander, the exercises are of utmost significance.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been the focal point of war on terror and terrorist groups, and upwards of 17,000 of our fellow countrymen, namely women and children, have been killed by terrorists," said the commander on Monday, highlighting the significance of fighting terrorism.

Also on Tuesday, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf emphasized that the large-scale joint counter-terrorism maneuvers carry an important message for hegemonic powers. "The drills show serious willpower among independent states to defend themselves against tyrannical approaches across the world," Qalibaf said.

He further noted that "the Islamic Republic of Iran's defense cooperation and joint measures with other countries are constantly growing."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tehran court orders U.S. to pay over \$22 billion in damages for inciting deadly riots

TEHRAN – A Tehran court has ordered the United States government to pay more than \$22 billion in material, moral, and punitive damages for Washington's involvement in the deadly riots that convulsed Iran in 2022.

The ruling was detailed by Iranian Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir during a press conference on Tuesday, who stated the verdict followed extensive hearings on a complaint filed by 607 families of victims – both killed and injured – from the 2022 unrest.

"The lawsuit targeted the U.S. government, senior American political and military officials, affiliated institutions, and individuals who played a role in provoking and supporting the unrest," he explained.

According to the ruling issued by Branch 55 of the International Relations Civil Court at the Shahid Beheshti Judicial Complex, the United States deliberately provided financial resources, encouragement, and both material and moral backing to the rioters, actions the court deemed a blatant violation of the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran and contrary to international law.

The court held that Washington's actions had inflicted irreparable physical injuries, severe psychological harm, and extensive financial and emotional damages upon the plaintiffs and their families. In its ruling,



the court invoked multiple Iranian legal frameworks, including the Civil Code, the Civil Liability Act, laws addressing U.S. human rights violations and regional adventurism, statutes granting jurisdiction over civil claims against foreign states, laws countering U.S. terrorist measures, and provisions mandating compensation for damages caused by American actions.

The 2022 unrest in Iran followed a consistent pattern seen in previous decades, where public protests are manipulated into violence by Western and Israeli interference.

The catalyst was the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who was detained by the morality patrol for an alleged dress code violation. Amini was

taken to a standard processing station in Tehran. Footage from the station shows her walking over to a female officer, speaking with her briefly, and collapsing unconscious shortly after the officer steps away.

Amini died days later in the hospital due to a pre-existing medical condition, for which she had received brain surgery as a child. Official investigations, including video testimony from her father at her bedside and intercepted phone calls where her brother noted she had fainted "again," found no evidence of foul play.

Initially, protests in Tehran focused on the morality patrol unit, which authorities ended up disbanding. But with the direct intervention of Western and Is-

raeli actors, as intelligence reports later showed, they escalated into widespread, violent riots that led to the deaths of at least 200 people including 75 security forces.

A key driver of the violence was social media propaganda (primarily on Meta-owned Instagram) that appeared to deliberately target teenagers and young adults—who made up most of those arrested during the riots. These young people were instructed online on how to make homemade explosives, seize weapons from security forces, and set fire to public infrastructure.

The social media campaign was part of a broader political effort where Western officials routinely turned up to claim they "stand by Iranian women." Their remarks resurfaced with the latest Israeli war in Gaza, an ongoing genocide in which the regime has killed over 30,000 women and girls since October 2023 with full Western backing. Western media and political leaders have also stayed silent on thousands of rape cases against Palestinians in the past two years. Westerners further backed Israel during the regime's bombings of Iran this past June, which resulted in the deaths of around 1,100 Iranians, many of them women and children.

Araghchi says Iran was 'very close' to deal with US before June attacks

Ongoing American intransigence blamed for the failure



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during an interview with Omani media

From page 1 ► Iranian officials say the U.S. has always obstructed efforts to reach an agreement, despite Tehran's willingness to negotiate and find a diplomatic solution. They have repeatedly emphasized that Iran would engage with the U.S. on equal footing to resolve outstanding issues but would never capitulate to its excessive and irrational demands.

Even following the recent war, Araghchi has reiterated on multiple occasions that Iran always favors diplomacy and remains

ready to negotiate with the United States, provided that the Americans act in good faith.

"We have not had any positive experience with the United States despite the fact that each time we came forward honestly and opened a way. However, even without trust, it is possible to have engagement with caution," the foreign minister said in another interview he held last month.

"We have never given up diplomacy if the Americans are prepared to get engaged in serious

talks on an equal footing, with an honest approach, seeking to secure an agreement that would serve mutual interests, and not a unilateral one, based on mutual respect, in a bid to work out a solution that would satisfy both sides," added the top diplomat.

Recently, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council rejected outright demands for the country to reduce the range of its missiles, which he said was one of Washington's latest conditions for de-escalation.

"Calls to reduce the range of missiles amounts to demand for submission and stripping the country of national security," said Ali Larijani. "The reduction of the range of missiles is tantamount to the undermining of the country's most important defensive tool."

Elsewhere in his remarks in his interview with Omani media, Araghchi referred to the U-Israeli aggression against Iran, saying the attacks undoubtedly inflicted heavy damage and losses on Iran, but at the same time had blessings for the country, too.

"The most important blessing

was that our missiles and weapons were, for the first time, tested in a real war," he explained.

"We fully utilized this potential, and all points of strength and witness became clear to us," he said.

The Israeli regime launched a flagrant and unprovoked military aggression against Iran on June 13, 2025, triggering a 12-day war that killed well over 1,000 people in the country, including military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians. The United States further escalated the conflict by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in gross violation of international law. U.S. President Donald Trump later admitted that he had been "in charge of" the aggression from day one. He had, meanwhile, scheduled a sixth round of nuclear talks with Iran for June 15.

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces struck strategic sites across the occupied territories, as well as the al-Udeid air base in Qatar—the largest U.S. military base in West Asia. The extensive destruction wrought by these strikes prompted the U.S. and Israel to seek a ceasefire.

1,200 religious leaders from SE Iran condemn Australia's blacklisting of IRGC

TEHRAN – More than 1,200 Friday prayer leaders, seminary teachers, elders, and tribal chiefs from both Sunni and Shia communities in Sistan and Baluchestan Province have voiced support for the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), denouncing Australia's recent move to label the force a state sponsor of terrorism.

The group criticized Canberra's designation as "illegal and influenced by the Zionist regime," arguing that it ignored the IRGC's role in safeguarding Iran's national security and fighting terrorism. They said the decision was aimed at diverting global attention from the ongoing atrocities in Gaza.

Australia formally listed the IRGC as a "state sponsor of terrorism" last week, asserting the group was responsible for two attacks on Jewish venues in Sydney and Melbourne in 2024 – allegations that Australian

police confirmed were unfounded after they were first raised by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

During a press conference in August, Albanese declared the expulsion of Iran's ambassador, citing ASIO intelligence assessments that blamed Iran for two "antisemitic attacks" – one at a Sydney restaurant and another at a Melbourne synagogue. At that time, Albanese indicated that blacklisting the IRGC would be his subsequent measure.

Nevertheless, Albanese provided no proof for the accusations. Prior to his announcement, Australia's federal police had already clarified that 15 reported antisemitic incidents nationwide—incidents cited to justify new laws restricting pro-Palestinian protests—were actually orchestrated by organized crime groups, not political or religious extremists.

The government's allegations were further weakened in October, when an official inquiry in New South Wales completely exonerated Iran from involvement in a series of purported antisemitic attacks. During a parliamentary questioning session concerning "Strike Force Pearl," which investigated 14 major attacks on Jewish institutions and properties, NSW Police confirmed it had "nil holdings" linking Iran or its agents to the events.

Historically, relations between Tehran and Canberra have been steady. Analysts attribute the sudden deterioration to pressure exerted on Australia by Israel after Prime Minister Albanese publicly endorsed a two-state solution in the occupied Palestinian territories. Iranians have said Australia was looking to "pay ransom to the occupying Israeli regime" with the sanctioning of the IRGC.

How the Iran-US mediator obsession sidelines what actually matters

The real barrier to diplomacy isn't that Tehran and Washington can't talk —it's that Washington insists on dictating all terms

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Hopes for a renewed diplomatic breakthrough between Iran and the U.S. have lingered ever since their last round of talks was shattered in June by Israeli and American airstrikes—an unprecedented bombing campaign targeting Iranian nuclear, civilian, and military sites that killed approximately 1,100 people and raised serious questions about Washington's choice to bomb a country it was negotiating with.

The recent frenzy of reports attributing made-up stories to every diplomatic encounter between Iranian officials and third countries may be a symptom of this global longing. The biggest such story was attached to a letter delivered last month to the Saudi Minister of Hajj by Alireza Bayat, the head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization. The letter, penned by President Masoud Pezeshkian, thanked Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman for heeding the president's previous correspondence and for facilitating travel for Iranian pilgrims. Nevertheless, several outlets claimed the letter had actually asked Bin Salman to act as a mediator between Iran and the U.S. during his upcoming visit to Washington, where he was scheduled to meet with President Donald Trump. The story grew so widespread that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, personally denied it in a televised address to the Iranian nation.

The reports may have also unnerved Oman, the established go-between during the five rounds of U.S.-Iran talks in April and early June. In an interview held last



month in Muscat, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi commended Oman for its “professional, honest, and constructive” handling of the indirect negotiations. His remarks also appeared to address a number of other countries, which some sources say are angling to replace Oman in any future talks.

“The door for negotiation and mediation is always open, and this possibility exists at any time,” Araghchi said. “But the first principle of diplomacy is that both parties come to the table with a genuine intention for a fair and equal exchange. If one party's goal is to impose its demands, such negotiations do not take shape and yield no results.”

How Trump – and the United States – views negotiations

Negotiation is supposed to be a collaborative process of communication between two or more parties that have differing interests and aim to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. It is not about winning or losing, but about finding a solu-

tion that all sides can agree to—even if it's not their ideal outcome. When negotiating is successful, each side concedes something and ends up reaping the benefits of a win-win agreement.

When it comes to the U.S. and the Trump administration, however, negotiation appears to hold a different meaning. It becomes about dictating terms and projecting power. Trump treats negotiation as a one-way imposition of demands; the other party must simply comply and become a resentful stakeholder in an agreement it does not want. For Trump, a negotiation requires a clear winner—and that winner must always be him.

In his recent interview, Araghchi argued that the core issue is the United States' own disbelief in negotiation, which is a stark contradiction to its leaders' frequent claims that Iran is the side unwilling to pursue diplomacy.

“The main obstacle preventing negotiations is the U.S. approach—

one based on imposing excessive demands,” Araghchi explained. “We have, unfortunately, seen this pattern repeatedly. If the American side demonstrates readiness for a fair, balanced agreement based on mutual interests, the Islamic Republic of Iran will certainly respond. We have never left the negotiating table; diplomacy remains essential to our principles.”

When Trump left the 2015 Iran nuclear deal—an agreement that limited Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for the lifting of sanctions—during his first term and reimposed sanctions, he declared he would remove them only if Iran signed a new deal to completely dismantle its nuclear program. What he gained, however, was the acceleration of Iran's nuclear activities and their unprecedented expansion.

Now, after the war he initiated in June, Trump says Iran should not only promise never to pursue a nuclear program but also cut ties with Resistance groups and limit the range of its missiles. Iranians have once again said they will not yield to his demands, though it is not clear what steps they will eventually take in response.

Those hoping to mediate between Iran and the U.S.—and those who circulate sensational stories about it—must look to Washington, not Tehran, argues Amir Ali Abolfathi, an expert on American affairs.

“A lack of flexibility and an insistence on intransigence from the U.S. side are what currently make new negotiations inaccessible,” he said, “and what could permanently derail diplomacy for the foreseeable future, not a lack of mediators.”

Iran, Lebanon, and the fog of West's psychological warfare

From Page 1 ► What is now labeled as “Iranian interference” is, in truth, a battle of narratives—a calculated effort to invert the identities of friend and foe in the Lebanese consciousness. Yet the unyielding record of history, the enduring memory of the people, and the undeniable facts on the ground in the south paint a starkly different portrait: Iran is not an interloper; it is a steadfast partner in Lebanon's pursuit of stability.

The true aggressors are Israel and the United States – architects of decades of destruction, relentless aggression, and a sustained campaign to dismantle Lebanese sovereignty.

Israel's ambitions and Washington's destabilization project

For decades, Lebanon has endured the front lines of an existential struggle – a conflict waged not merely over land, but over the nation's very soul and sovereignty.

Since 1948, Israel has launched repeated invasions, occupied the south, razed villages, and—in recent years—unleashed a relentless barrage of near-daily air and land assaults.

Israel's ambition to annex the south to the Litani River has never been concealed. To Tel Aviv, Lebanon is territory to be perpetually dominated, “for Israel's security,” whether by direct force, orchestrated chaos, or the systematic erosion of its state institutions.

The United States has been an unwavering accomplice, supplying the arsenal of war: military, intelligence, political, and media support. Much of Lebanon's political paralysis is engineered by Washington's pressure to cripple the resistance and shackle Lebanon's sovereign will.

Consider the evidence of the past two years alone:



- Relentless, overwhelming unreciprocated Israeli aggression against the south

- The wholesale ruin of border towns and the forced exodus of thousands

- Bombardments cynically branded as “preemptive” strikes

- Daily bellicose threats from Israeli officials to escalate the war

These are not matters of debate. They are the scorched-earth reality of modern Lebanon. No diplomatic language can whitewash them. Lebanon's enemy is the power that bombs its soil into submission—not the nation that has stood as a bulwark in its most desperate hours.

The Iranian solidarity painted as interference

Amidst the media clamor, Iran's role in Lebanon must be judged by its record, not its detractors.

Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran's policy has been consistent and principled. It has evolved around respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, non-interference in its domestic political choices, and unwavering support for the people

against foreign aggression.

Iran has never imposed a president, dictated to a government, or manipulated Lebanon's internal power structure. Even during profound crises—from presidential vacuums to political deadlocks—Tehran has maintained a single, clear stance: Lebanon must decide for itself.

Had other powers adhered to this basic principle, Lebanon might not be buckling under external pressure today.

Unlike some, Iran does not draft political roadmaps from afar, impose security timetables, or offer aid shackled by political conditions. The very actors accusing Tehran of interference are those who leverage every diplomatic and financial package to extract dozens of political concessions.

Iran's counsel is born of four decades witnessing Israeli aggression—it is a warning of tangible dangers, not an attempt to dictate Lebanese policy.

A central accusation against Iran focuses on its support for the Resistance. This critique willfully ig-

nores two truths.

First, the fact that the Resistance is a Lebanese creation, born of necessity in 1982, five years before the Islamic Revolution had even taken place. It emerged when Israel occupied the south, when the state could not defend its borders, and when villages faced relentless attack. The Lebanese people chose to reclaim their land; Iran merely supported that sovereign decision.

The second deliberately ignored truth is the fact that the Resistance is a pillar of national security, not a threat to it. That the south stands today, that Israel has not dared to reoccupy it, and that a credible regional deterrence exists, is due to this defensive shield. It has prevented Lebanon from becoming a permanent theater for Israeli expansion.

Therefore, Iran's support is not interference—it is solidarity with a nation's legitimate right to self-defense. Tehran did not supply the weapons of occupation; it provided the means for liberation and protection.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Women's handball into President's Cup

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Senegal 30-21 at the 27th IHF Women's World Championship 2025 Senegal Monday night.

Senegal were determined to take the main-round spot, and they showed it from the first whistle. They opened with a 4-0 run and held Iran goalless for six minutes, staying steady while Iran faced the same troubles seen in their first two games. However, everything changed as the midpoint of the first half approached.

Senegal started making mistakes and rushing their attacks, while Iran stepped up their game. The contest stayed tight for almost 20 minutes, but when Senegal pushed ahead to 13-8, it looked like they would have a calm end to the first half.

Iran had other plans. They found the recipe against Senegal's 6-0 defense, repeatedly reaching right wing Haniyeh Karimi, who led the charge in the first half. From trailing 12-16, Iran produced a 3-1 run to cut the gap to 15-17 at half-time, ihf.info reported.

Senegal entered the second half with a change in goal, as Justicia Toubissa Elbeco finally came on and immediately made an impact, saving four shots early and giving her side the platform to pull clear. Senegal first built a five-goal lead and then extended it in the 43rd minute, when Dounia Abdourahim netted for 23-17.

Iran showed fighting spirit and wanted more, but it was clear they lacked fresh energy, especially when trying to break through a Senegalese defense that grew more aggressive as the game went on. From that point, things went downhill for Iran. By the 50th minute, Senegal had a doubledigit advantage at 28-18 and an almost assured victory in their hands.

Goalkeeper Justicia Toubissa Elbeco stood tall, finishing with a 57% save rate, while 12 of Senegal's 16 players scored at least once. Karimi remained Iran's top scorer with six goals.

Just like in the previous two editions, Iran will continue in President's Cup Group I, where they will face Croatia, Uruguay and Paraguay. Senegal, meanwhile, move on to the main round hoping for a better finish than their last two 18thplace results as they travel to Rotterdam. There they will face Denmark, Romania and Japan, starting the next phase with zero points.

Gnonsiane Niombla of Senegal was named Player of the Match.

Kazemi selected for Tehran derby clash

TEHRAN – Vahid Kazemi will be the center referee for the Tehran derby between Persepolis and Esteghlal.

He will be assisted by Ali Ahmadi and Bahman Abdollahi, with Hossein Zamani serving as the fourth official at the IRALCO Stadium in Arak on Friday.

Esteghlal lead the 2025/26 Persian Gulf Pro League (PGPL) standings, while Persepolis sit second.

There have been 105 meetings between the rivals, with Persepolis claiming 29 wins, Esteghlal 26, and 50 drawn matches.

Iran's women's football team lose Uzbekistan

TEHRAN – Iran's women's national team fell 1-0 to Uzbekistan in a friendly in Tashkent on Tuesday, with Ilvina Abylakimova scoring the lone goal in the 71st minute.

The two teams had previously met on Saturday, when Uzbekistan won 2-0.

The matches served as preparation for next year's AFC Women's Asia Cup, which starts on March 1 in Australia.

Iran have been drawn in Group A with Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines, while Uzbekistan are in Group B with China, North Korea, and Bangladesh.

Asian Youth Para Games pave way for future: Koohpayehzadeh

TEHRAN – Jalil Koohpayehzadeh, head of Iran's Sports Federation for the Disabled, said the Asian Youth Para Games 2025 present an opportunity to identify talented athletes for the 2026 Asian Para Games and the 2028 Paralympic Games.

The press conference was held at the federation's headquarters on Tuesday.

Iran will compete in Dubai, UAE, as defending champions. The number of Iranian athletes participating has increased by 80 percent compared to the previous edition, and the delegation comprises 125 athletes across eight sports.

“Iran will participate in eight sports: para swimming, para athletics, para powerlifting, para archery, para arm-wrestling, bocchia, wheelchair basketball 3x3, and para table tennis,” Koohpayehzadeh said, adding that the events will run from Dec. 7 to 14.

“First of all, I would like to wish everyone a happy International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day reminds us of the need for society and leaders to pay attention to the 10 to 15 percent of the population living with disabilities. The World Health Organization has cited an 11 percent figure, and this day is an opportunity to highlight the capacities and capabilities of this community,” he said.

Team Iran; Ambassadors of Victory includes 46 female and 79 male athletes. Iran and Uzbekistan are expected to have the highest participation among the 1,350 athletes competing.

Highlighting Iran's historic position in the Asian Para Games, Koohpayehzadeh noted: “Since 2009, Iran has consistently been among the top teams, and in 2021 in Bahrain we secured first place. This year, the Iranian delegation is tasked with defending that position, although countries such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, India, and Thailand have improved but we are ready to defend our achievements.”

“Uzbekistan performed better than Iran at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris and will be one of the main rivals in this edition. Iranian teams have been preparing for more than a year in four sports—powerlifting, athletics, swimming, and arm-wrestling—as well as newly added sports like bocchia, 3x3 basketball, and table tennis,” he added.

Koohpayehzadeh concluded: “The Asian Youth Para Games are a valuable opportunity to discover talented athletes for the upcoming events. A year from now, we will participate in the 2026 Asian Para Games, and the 2028 Paralympic Games lie ahead.”

Mes Rafsanjan, Rasoul Khatibi part ways

TEHRAN – Iranian top flight football club Mes Rafsanjan parted company with Rasoul Khatibi.

Mes sacked Khatibi following poor results in the 2025-26 Iran Professional League.

Under leadership of Khatibi, Mes sit bottom of the 16-team table with seven points out of 11 matches.

Khatibi, 47, was shown the exit door after a 3-0 loss against Sepahan on Sunday.

Former Persepolis coach Vahid Hashemian is a candidate to replace him in the Rafsanjan-based club.

Insurance sector urged to adopt long-term investment strategy

TEHRAN – Iran's economy minister warned that the country's insurance industry lacks a coherent long-term investment strategy and must redirect capital toward export-oriented and foreign-currency-earning sectors to strengthen its economic role.

Speaking at the National Conference on Insurance and Development in Tehran, Economy Minister Seyed Ali Madanizadeh said the government is restructuring the sector to prevent future balance-sheet strains similar to those seen in the banking system.

He noted that insufficient supervision and weak digital infrastructure could expose insurers to risks that would spill over into the wider economy.

Madanizadeh cited the industry's low insurance penetration rate of 2.4 percent, far below the global average of more than seven percent, as evidence of an underdeveloped market with limited economic impact.

He said raising penetration—particularly through expanding health and complementary medical coverage—would help distribute risk more efficiently and reduce out-of-pocket payments, thereby supporting household financial stability and overall economic activity.

He argued that precise investment planning is essential for insurers, given their role as long-term institutional investors, and said his ministry is finalizing a new investment frame-

work for insurance entities. The minister also disclosed that 150 projects had recently been issued to affiliated economic bodies, including initiatives to modernize insurance regulations.

Insurance penetration rate should rise to 7

At the same event, First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref emphasized that insurance penetration is a key metric for assessing national economic development, likening it to telecom penetration rates that once drove sectoral growth.

He said inconsistent national statistics on insurance penetration—ranging from 1.9 percent in 2022 to 2.4 percent in 2023—complicate macroeconomic planning and called for a unified national data system.

Aref underlined that the insurance industry functions as the third pillar of Iran's financial system after banking and capital markets, with nearly 250,000 employees and agents.

He said increasing penetration to the development-plan target of around seven percent would expand risk-sharing, support businesses, and enhance economic resilience.

The 32nd National Insurance and 13th International Insurance and Development Conference (ICID 2025) was held on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at Tehran's Milad Tower Conference Center under the slogan "Rethinking supervision; rebuilding trust."

Iran, Russia discuss stronger cooperation against money laundering

TEHRAN – Iran and Russia have held talks on expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, according to the Iranian Embassy in Moscow.

Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, met with Yuri Chikhanchin, head of Russia's Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring), to discuss enhanced coordination between the two countries as well as within the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG), a regional body affiliated with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Chikhanchin thanked Iran for its initiatives and active participation in EAG meetings and expressed readiness to exchange expertise and provide technical guidance aimed at increasing Iran's engagement with member states.

The EAG, one of nine FATF-style regional bodies, held its forty-third plenary in Minsk with 35 delegations from 18 countries and more than 15 international organizations. Chikhanchin was selected as the group's next Delegates at the 43rd plenary meeting of the EAG approved a technical assistance package for Iran, marking a notable step in the country's engagement with regional and international financial-crime bodies.

Iranian representatives participated in both plenary sessions and specialist workshops, taking an active role in discussions on strengthening regional cooperation and upgrading national AML/CFT frameworks.

One of the key outcomes was the endorsement of a program designed to support Iran in addressing identified gaps in its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing systems. The package includes technical exchanges, joint training workshops and specialized advisory support offered by EAG member states. Officials said the decision reflects growing confidence in Iran's efforts to enhance transparency and align with global standards.

148 km of freeway to be inaugurated by late Mar. 2026

TEHRAN – The Head of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructure Company said that out of about 200 kilometers of freeway planned for the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), 52 kilometers have already been inaugurated and 148 kilometers will be ready for opening by the end of the year (March 20, 2026).

Houshang Bazvand announced during a joint meeting with investors and project man-

agers that the country is witnessing unprecedented acceleration in the completion and inauguration of freeway projects in the current year.

The deputy transport minister stated that by the end of the current year, a total of 198 kilometers of freeway will be inaugurated nationwide — a figure about 47 percent higher than the approved target.

Iran's renewable capacity exceeds 3,000 MW as govt. accelerates solar expansion

TEHRAN – Iran's renewable power capacity has surpassed 3,000 megawatts following the addition of 445 megawatts of new clean-energy generation, the deputy energy minister said at an inauguration ceremony for recently completed solar projects.

Mohsen Tarzatab said total renewable capacity has doubled from 1,700 megawatts at the start of the year to 3,100 megawatts today, marking the fastest annual growth recorded in Iran's renewables sector.

He said construction has also begun on 177 megawatts of new solar capacity across more than 90 sites nationwide.

He noted that bringing such a large volume of solar power online at once is unprecedented in Iran's development of photovoltaic infrastructure. With the latest additions, renewable plants



now account for more than three percent of the country's installed power fleet.

According to Tarzatab, the environmental gains from the new projects include avoiding 615,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually, saving over 251 million

cubic meters of natural gas and preventing the consumption of 197,000 cubic meters of water each year.

He said ongoing projects will push renewable capacity to 4,000 megawatts by next month, adding that solar developments are

now underway in 15 provinces. Recent projects in Golestan Province have already come online, with new phases planned elsewhere.

Tarzatab said the pace of expansion represents a major shift from previous years, when only 10 to 20 megawatts of renewable capacity were added annually. In some recent periods, the rate has reached 800 megawatts, a level he described as crucial for meeting national clean-energy goals.

Total investment in the latest 445 megawatts of new capacity and 177 megawatts of projects under construction amounts to 186.78 trillion rials (about \$373 million). The projects span regions including Isfahan, West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan, Khorasan Razavi, South Khorasan, Tehran and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces.

Iran-Afghanistan co-op in animal quarantine, phytosanitary being strengthened

TEHRAN- The head of Iran's Plant Protection Organization announced the enhancement of cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan in the areas of livestock quarantine and phytosanitary.

Maryam Jalili-Moghadam, during a meeting with members of the Afghan Chamber of Agriculture and Husbandry, emphasized the development of technical and commercial cooperation between the two countries in the fields of livestock quarantine and phytosanitary.

She added that the cooperation between the two countries in this area is based on a long-term and sustainable perspective.

The head of the Plant Protection Organization stated that Iran's Ministry of Agriculture supports easy trade between merchants in the agricultural, livestock, and fisheries sectors of both countries.

On November 27, Iran's minister of industry, mining, and trade, during a meeting with his Afghan counterpart in Istanbul, emphasized the removal of trade barriers between the two countries.

During the meeting between Nooruddin Azizi, the minister of commerce and industries of Afghanistan, and Seyed Mohammad Atabak, the minister of industry, mining, and trade of Iran, the two sides discussed and exchanged views on the development of trade cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan.

Atabak, in this meeting, emphasized the necessity of expanding trade relations between the two countries and called for the removal of trade barriers between them.

Azizi, for his part, stated: "Border trade with Iran is on the agenda, and we call for the facilitation of trade in this regard."

In this meeting, the two sides emphasized the removal of trade barriers and efforts to increase the volume of trade between Iran and Afghanistan, and understandings were reached in this regard.

The Iranian minister, had traveled to Istanbul to participate in the fifth meeting of ECO trade ministers.

Mahmoud Siadat, Head of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, has identified the development of transit and the smooth flow of customs procedures as one of Afghanistan's priorities, and said: "Afghanistan is ready for a leap forward and must prepare the ground by relying on the transfer of knowledge and modern technology; in this regard, Iran can be a good helper."

Spoking about social and cultural commonalities that should form the basis of agreements and cooperation, Siadat sated that a follow-up mechanism must be established, and efforts must be results-oriented, adding, "Perhaps we reach good agreements during negotiations and consultations, but what matters is the successful implementation of projects and achieving results."

Also, Hamidreza Salehi, the Secretary-General of the Federation for the Export of Energy and Related Industries of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA), noting that suitable infrastructure for a leap in relations between Iran and Afghanistan has not been provided, emphasized: "The private sectors of the two countries must pressure their governments to focus on necessary areas and provide the infrastructure."

He believes, "The capacities in both countries are high, and we must be able to meet each other's needs through proper needs assessment."

Salehi evaluated Iran's LPG production as being at a high level and added: "The groundwork for LPG exports exists, and we know that Afghanistan has an urgent need for it. Therefore, the best decision is to strive for a proper needs assessment and to plan for timely export and import."

He deemed it necessary to define a framework for joint investment in production through the cooperation of the private sectors of Iran and Afghanistan, relying on chambers, associations, and joint chambers.

During a meeting between members of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s trade delegation and the head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment, in Kabul on November 17, the need to develop relations between the chambers of both countries was highlighted, and major Iranian companies were invited to invest in Afghanistan.

Members of the Iranian Chamber's trade delegation, accompanied by the Iranian ambassador in Kabul, met with the head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment. This meeting focused on three key areas in Iran-Afghanistan relations: investment, exports, and transportation.

In all three of these areas, the two countries have not succeeded in having continuous and stable cooperation; therefore, it was emphasized that the chambers of commerce of the two countries should become active in these fields.

Furthermore, it was stressed that currently, numerous companies from various countries have invested in Afghanistan; however, Iran's presence in the country is very limited. This is not satisfactory for the Afghan side.

Additionally, it was mentioned that there are very high export capacities, but the inability to utilize them exists due to the lack of certain infrastructures, such as transportation and logistics.

Given these points, greater connection between the private sectors of Iran and Afghanistan, with the chambers of commerce setting the priorities, was confirmed. This is because it is essential to identify and resolve challenges online and in a timely manner, and in this regard, the chambers can play a key role.

At the beginning of this meeting, Alireza Bigdeli, the Iranian Ambassador to Kabul, pointed to some of the capabilities and capacities of the two countries for deepening trade and investment relations between Iran and Afghanistan.

He said: "Above all, Iran and Afghanistan should utilize their potential for neighborliness, proximity, and religious, cultural, and historical commonalities to become each other's primary partners in trade and investment."

Subsequently, Niloufar Asadi, the Director General of Asia and Oceania at the International Department of the Iran Chamber, stated that developing relations with Afghanistan is a priority in the Iran Chamber's work program. She emphasized: "The Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture seeks to develop a roadmap to pave the way for advancing the level of relations based on a precise plan."



She also pointed out the necessity of using the capacity of joint chambers, saying: "It is necessary for us to participate more robustly in the joint committees of the two countries and use this position to the advantage of removing legal obstacles and creating the necessary infrastructure."

A high-ranking Iranian economic delegation led by Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Seyed Mohammad Atabak arrived in Kabul on November 17 for talks on boosting trade and investment with Afghanistan.

Afghan Ministry of Industry and Commerce spokesman Abdul Salam Jawad Akhundzada said the visit aims to identify obstacles hindering bilateral trade and to improve cooperation in transport and joint investment.

The delegation also met officials from the prime minister's economic office, as well as the ministries of industry and commerce, mines and petroleum, and public works, along with Afghan private sector representatives.

Atabak told reporters upon arrival that Iran and Afghanistan share deep historical and cultural ties. He said the Pezeshkian administration has prioritized stronger relations with all neighbors, with Afghanistan regarded as a particularly important partner.

The delegation, which includes Iranian lawmakers and private sector members, will also travel to Herat province to inspect the railway, mines and the Islam Qala border crossing.

On the second day of the visit, Atabak met Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister for economic affairs, along with Afghan ministers of commerce, energy and water, mines, and public works. He welcomed Afghanistan's stance during Iran's recent 12-day conflict with Israel and said the upcoming seventh session of the Joint Economic Committee would be an opportunity to advance cooperation in rail, road and trade.

Talks also covered banking ties, greater use of Iran's Chabahar port, expansion of cargo movement via the Khaf-Herat railway, and joint work in the mining sector. Atabak is due to continue his trip with a visit to Herat's industrial city.

Senior representatives from Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and multiple Afghan economic bodies signed a series of cooperation agreements, on November 18, during a high-level visit to Kabul and the Imam Abu Hanifa International Exhibition, signaling a broad effort to expand trade, investment and technical collaboration across mining, agriculture, energy and healthcare.

At the exhibition's second day, ICCIMA Deputy Head Qadir Qiyafeh and Karim Hashemi, head of Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Investment, signed a cooperation agreement aimed at raising bilateral trade and strengthening institutional ties between the two chambers.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

‘What is happening in Gaza is not collateral damage, it is policy’

Azra Sayeed says the pattern of attacks proves intent, not accident

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN — In a revealing and timely conversation, Azra Talat Sayeed, Secretary-General of the International League of Peoples’ Struggle (ILPS) and one of the lead conveners of the International People’s Tribunal on Palestine (IPT), discusses the tribunal held on November 23–24, 2025, in Barcelona, Spain. The two-day tribunal convened activists, legal experts and witnesses to examine war crimes, ecocide, forced starvation and systematic violations of international law in Gaza and occupied Palestine, producing a historic verdict aimed at holding perpetrators accountable.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Sayeed outlines her personal role in coordinating the tribunal, explains the legal basis of the “Right to Resist,” and situates Gaza’s plight within a broader global struggle against imperialism. Her testimony reflects ILPS’s commitment to mobilizing public opinion and leveraging legal mechanisms to challenge oppression worldwide.

The following is the text of the interview:

As Secretary General of ILPS and one of the conveners of the IPT, what specific roles and responsibilities did you personally carry out during the tribunal process?

In June 2024, at the 7th International Assembly of ILPS, a resolution was passed for a tribunal to be held in solidarity with Palestine. I was elected General Secretary at the 7IA (7th International Assembly), and one of my main responsibilities was to coordinate the overall schedule and ensure that deadlines were met. This included selecting jurors and prosecutors,



bringing together all delegates, gathering witnesses, and ensuring confidentiality and security for everyone involved.

Together with the external vice president of ILPS, I was also responsible for planning, programming, and fundraising. Although the legal team handled the jurors and prosecutors, we were involved in every step to ensure the credibility of the tribunal and the safety of all witnesses.

The “Right to Resist” was a central legal principle in the IPT. Could you define this right within international law and explain why it was fundamental to the tribunal?

The “Right to Resist” is recognized in international law and under ICCPR, the right to freedom is stated clearly. We were very clear that the struggle for rights is legitimate and that this is a right recognized under international law.

Since ILPS is an anti-imperialist and anti-fascist organization, the concept of the “right to struggle” is at the heart of our movement. The “Right to Resist” is grounded in international law, and the UN resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 explicitly points out the right of self-determination. So, ILPS had

no difficulty basing the tribunal on this principle. The main issue is not the law itself but the refusal of many governments to recognize it.

Although the IPT is a people-driven tribunal, how do you ensure that the findings adhere to credible legal standards and avoid political bias?

The jury was composed of highly recognized legal personalities — most of them associated with Bar Associations or international legal bodies. They were selected for their professional expertise and their ability to apply a legal framework similar to that of formal courts.

One of our biggest challenges was ensuring their independence. We were careful in not choosing people with a strong political leaning to the Palestinian cause so that the tribunal would have an independent unbiased position. Our emphasis was to select jurors with a clear understanding of people’s rights and ongoing global issues, who would work with facts and scientific evidence.

For the witnesses, many were from Gaza, but we also included independent experts with no political affiliations. The testimonies came directly from people with first-hand experience — includ-

ing individuals who lived in Gaza during the tribunal period. Their evidence was combined with credible sources such as UN reports and academic studies.

The prosecutors were internationally represented. They were from the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region, USA and Europe. Prosecutors examined the testimonies and questioned the witnesses and expert witnesses. So, in terms of legal standards, the tribunal followed an approach comparable to internationally recognized courts.

You emphasize the link between Palestine and broader global patterns of imperialism. How does Gaza fit into a wider structure of Western militarism and neocolonial control?

What is happening in Gaza is part of a larger colonial project. For example, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor announced in India on the 19th and 20th of September — just a few days before the “Al-Aqsa Floods” on October 7 — included a trade route connecting to a port in Israel, which was intended to pass through Gaza.

This is part of an overall neocolonial strategy involving resources, oil, gas, and regional influence. Similarly, the Abraham Accords — which began in 2020 with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and recently Kazakhstan — reflect a global push for normalization that supports imperial interests. For US imperialism, control over the occupied Palestinian territories is central to its control over the oil in the Persian Gulf countries, the WANA region. We can see the extension of US imperialism towards Venezuela, the most oil rich country in the world.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

Sanctified semantics: Lebanon’s risky drift into the ‘Abrahamic’ politics

From page 1 ► The issue is not the symbolic figure of Prophet Abraham himself, whose story lies at the heart of the region’s spiritual and cultural consciousness. Rather, it is the political economy of phrases such as “Children of Abraham” and “Abrahamic coexistence,” which have become deeply entangled with the strategic frameworks promoted by Washington and Tel Aviv since 2019.

Within this context, such terminology carries an unmistakable ideological charge: it signals acceptance of a narrative that reframes West Asia’s destiny around a supposedly shared religious heritage, rather than around sovereignty, justice, or the right of peoples to resist occupation.

Critics argue that even the banner under which these phrases are marketed—peace—is anything but innocent. In this region, “peace” has long served as a diplomatic veneer used to sanitize coercive political designs.

Under the guise of peace, occupations are rebranded as security arrangements; structur-

al dominance is recast as partnership; and the dispossession of entire peoples is reframed as reconciliation.

Thus, “Abrahamic peace” becomes part of a larger semantic architecture: a sanctified vocabulary that erases victims and legitimizes a geopolitical order built not on justice, but on submission.

The problem, therefore, is not merely the phrase “Children of Abraham”—it is the entire linguistic edifice crafted to neutralize resistance while installing a new regional hierarchy.

The circulation of “Children of Abraham” today resembles Imam Ali’s warning about “a word of truth used for falsehood”: noble language deployed to sanctify unjust realities.

What matters is not the beauty of the slogan but the nature of its application—whether it empowers the oppressed or legitimizes the corrupt.

The narrative collapse becomes even clearer when measured against the Quranic archetype

of Prophet Joseph, whose brothers—literal sons of Abraham—betrayed him, abandoned him, and repented only after confronting their wrongdoing.

If betrayal could emerge from the heart of Abraham’s household, then invoking “Abraham” today cannot whitewash the violations committed by regimes and powers speaking in his name.

The modern political heirs of this rhetoric—those who occupy, displace, ethnically cleanse, rape, distort scripture, and desecrate sanctities—stand in direct contradiction to Abraham’s legacy of justice.

The true children of Abraham, then, are not those who invoke his name for geopolitical engineering, but those who follow his ethical path.

Since the 2020 Abraham Accords, the “Abrahamic era” has been marketed as a new horizon of tolerance and interreligious dialogue. Yet realities on the ground tell a starkly different story.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

No truce for truth-tellers: Wadi latest casualty of Israel’s war on journalism

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — Israel killed Palestinian photojournalist Mahmoud Wadi with a precise drone strike in Khan Younis, Gaza, on December 2, 2025.

Wadi, the owner of Alquds Studio, died instantly while filming in a street well inside Palestinian-controlled territory.

Another journalist, Muhammad Abdel Fattah Aslih—whose brother Hassan had been killed in an earlier drone attack on Nasser Hospital’s emergency ward—was wounded in the same attack.

Wadi’s final footage would have shown a Gaza still bleeding two months into a supposed ceasefire. Instead, the drone that killed him ensured those images never reached the world.

After Israeli strikes destroyed

his studio in April 2025, its Facebook page went silent for more than a year. It returned in December 2025 with a single post, capturing a wedding “despite all the difficult conditions and the war.”

Soon after, it abandoned celebrations entirely, turning instead to drone footage of hunger and endless rubble.

His drone shots juxtaposed memories of intact neighborhoods against the reality Israel left behind. That act of bearing witness made him a target.

The October 10, 2025, truce, brokered with American involvement, was supposedly meant to halt the carnage.

It has not. Gaza authorities and monitoring groups have documented more than 590 violations

in the first seven weeks alone, including artillery fire, tank incursions, and airstrikes that have killed at least 357 Palestinians since the agreement. Among the dead: at least twenty journalists, Mahmoud Wadi being the latest.

Since Israel’s military campaign began in October 2023, the toll on Gaza’s media community has been apocalyptic. Palestinian journalist unions report 274 killed, while the United Nations cites more than 260—the highest number of journalists killed in any single conflict in modern history.

The pattern is unmistakable: reporters wearing press vests struck while embedded with rescue teams; media offices flattened; entire families of journalists wiped out in overnight bombings; displacement tents hit while report-

ers slept beside the civilians they served.

Israel continues to bar foreign correspondents from entering Gaza independently, making local journalists the world’s only eyes on the ground. Killing them is the most effective way to blind international scrutiny.

The ceasefire was never extended to Gaza’s storytellers. Tanks still push past the arbitrary “yellow lines” Israel drew across the Strip. Drones still hunt. And journalists—those stubborn, essential witnesses—keep dying.

Wadi’s life and death crystallize what Gaza’s press corps has endured: ordinary people turned into essential witnesses, then systematically removed. That deliberate erasure amounts to a war on testimony and truth.

Trump’s Africa posture is less about human rights though more about power

From page 1 ► In South Africa, he has gone further, barring the country from the next G20 summit under the claim that its government is engaged in discrimination against white farmers.

Both accusations draw on contested narratives, many of which are heavily filtered through U.S. culture-war lenses rather than on-the-ground reality. Yet they form the basis for punitive actions with real diplomatic consequences.

The first layer of Trump’s motivations is domestic. His political base responds strongly to narratives of Christian victimhood abroad and to claims of “reverse discrimination” against white communities overseas. These are not accidental themes; they have been central to identity politics, the backbone of far-right movements globally. By positioning himself as the protector of these groups, Trump fortifies his standing among voters who see global affairs through cultural, not geopolitical, lines.

But domestic politics alone doesn’t explain the harshness of the measures. The second layer is coercive diplomacy, a strategic attempt to leverage American power to reshape African political behavior. By threatening Nigeria, one of the continent’s largest democracies, with military intervention, Trump signals a willingness to use force in a region where U.S. influence has been slipping.

His exclusion of South Africa from a major multilateral forum is even more striking: it weaponizes an international platform traditionally used to cultivate cooperation, not to settle scores.

Yet such tactics carry risks, particularly when they rest on shaky factual ground. Nigeria’s religious violence is tragically real, but it does not follow the simple Christian-persecution narrative Trump promotes; Muslims, Christians, and traditional communities have all suffered in complex, overlapping conflicts. In South Africa, the “white genocide” narrative has been debunked repeatedly by independent

analysts, including many conservative experts. Reanimating a fringe myth to justify diplomatic punishment not only distorts reality, but it also undermines Washington’s credibility at a time when the U.S. can ill-afford diplomatic missteps on the continent.

More troublingly, the moral selectivity of Trump’s Africa posture exposes the deeper issue: rights talk is being used as a geopolitical tool, applied where it aligns with domestic messaging and ignored where it doesn’t. That inconsistency is noticed. In capitals across Africa, policymakers read Trump’s moves not as principled advocacy but as transactional pressure masquerading as moral concern.

For African nations already navigating a multipolar world, this approach is likely to accelerate an existing trend: the search for partners who engage without politicizing internal affairs. If the U.S. wants to remain influential, it must offer something more stable than threats, exclusions, and ideologically charged narratives.

What Africa needs from Washington is engagement rooted in reality, not rhetoric tailored for American campaign rallies. What multilateral institutions need is leadership grounded in principle and not political theatrics. And what the United States risks, if this trend continues, is the erosion of its standing in a region whose geopolitical significance is only growing.

Trump’s posture on Nigeria and South Africa tells us less about human rights and more about how power, perception, and domestic politics now shape America’s global actions.

Africa has seen this before, though this time, the costs and the consequences may be far higher.

Patricia Esami-Lubba is a Nigerian journalist and foreign affairs correspondent whose incisive reporting explores global power dynamics, U.S.–Africa relations, and the nexus of international policy and human-rights diplomacy.

Venezuelan voices vs. America’s cannons

From page 1 ► “never!” he told crowds waving flags. Maduro condemned the campaign of “psychological terrorism,” pointing to 22 weeks of sustained U.S. pressure, including sanctions, threats, and military posturing. Meanwhile, the government has deployed troops and displayed military equipment to protect key areas such as the capital, main highways, and coastal zones.

Second strike controversy

Tensions have further deepened following an initial U.S. military strike on a vessel in the Caribbean on September 2, which is said to have killed nine people. According to reports, War Secretary Pete Hegseth gave a verbal instruction regarding a follow-up strike, described in some accounts as an order “to kill everybody.” The mission commander, Admiral Frank Bradley, is reported to have carried out the second strike, which allegedly killed two survivors clinging to debris. International law experts and some U.S. lawmakers have expressed concerns that such actions may constitute a potential war crime under international law. Both Democrats and some Republicans in Congress have expressed concern, and committees in the House and Senate have opened inquiries into the incident. International law forbids such attacks: The UN Charter (Article 51) allows force only in response to an actual armed attack. The Geneva Conventions prohibit attacking individuals hors de combat—people who are incapacitated, shipwrecked, or no longer a threat. The September 2 follow-up strike could also constitute a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

U.S. contradictions

The Trump administration’s handling of the incident shows internal contradictions. Pres-



ident Trump said he “wouldn’t have wanted that—not a second strike,” while the White House defended the operation as legal and necessary to protect U.S. interests in international waters. Hegseth framed the victims as “narco-terrorists” linked to Maduro’s government, despite intelligence showing no direct connection. These justifications illustrate a pattern of U.S. interventions justified by selective claims and strategic objectives.

Regime change and oil control

Beyond military pressure, Trump has openly threatened to attack inside Venezuela if Maduro refuses to leave power. In a call revealed by U.S. media, Trump warned Maduro to step down “or face U.S. military force.” He later declared Venezuelan airspace “closed in its entirety,” intensifying fears of imminent invasion. Analysts note that Trump’s Venezuela policy is inseparable from regime change ambitions and control over oil reserves. His administration revoked Chevron’s license to operate in Venezuela and imposed crippling sanctions on the state oil company, moves widely seen as attempts to weaken Maduro and secure leverage over the world’s largest proven crude reserves.

US–Maduro head-on: oil, hegemony, and the future of sovereignty

From page 1 ► and refuses to fall in line with U.S. geopolitical directives in Latin America. Strip the conflict down to its essence and the truth is unmistakable: the United States wants Maduro gone because he stands as a barrier to U.S. access, influence, and dominance over Venezuela’s petroleum wealth. That is the ABC of the story.

Venezuela possesses over 300 billion barrels of proven crude, surpassing even Saudi Ara-

bia. For Washington, this makes Venezuela too strategically important to be left outside U.S. hegemony. Since Hugo Chávez first nationalised oil assets and redirected revenues towards social programs, the United States has sought to reverse Venezuela’s energy sovereignty. Under Maduro, that resistance to American pressure has only intensified. Washington’s hostility is therefore structural, not personal.

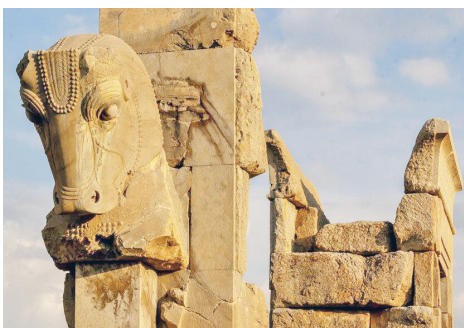
(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

Cultural heritage minister: Persepolis has not suffered any deformation or damage

TEHRAN--Based on technical reports and periodic assessments of Persepolis (also known as Takht-e Jamshid) in Fars province, no new or worrying events have been observed so far regarding the deformation of structures or damage related to subsidence, Minister of Cultural Heritage Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri has said.

Referring to the recent remarks of Head of Iran's Department of Environment (DoE), he told Shafaqna: "Recently, the head of DoE announced that 30 provinces of the country have encountered the phenomenon of land subsidence. After raising this issue, concerns arose about the vulnerability of the country's historical monuments, and especially the world-class complex of Persepolis in the public space."

He added: "In this regard, I presented a report to the Parliament's Cultural Commission on the extent of subsidence and its possible consequences on ancient monuments. After expert reviews, the commission approved the formation of a National Taskforce to Combat Subsidence, headed by the First Vice President; a headquarters that is currently on the Government's agenda and whose goal is to coordinate between agencies to manage the consequences of this phenomenon."



He continued: "Regarding Persepolis, I must emphasize that this complex is continuously monitored. I myself have made several field visits to this site in recent years, and in addition, our colleagues are there permanently. Based on technical reports and periodic assessments, no new or worrying events have been observed so far regarding the deformation of structures or damage related to the subsidence."

Salehi-Amiri emphasized: "Of course, the subsidence phenomenon is a very serious issue at the national level and requires long-term planning, but in the case of Persepolis, monitoring shows that the situation is under control. We are obliged to increase geological and structural monitoring so that if any changes are observed, the necessary measures can be taken quickly."

Restoration work begins on centuries-old water mill

TEHRAN - Restoration and revitalization work has begun on an ancient water mill in Qaleh Bala, a touristic village in Shahrud county of Semnan province, according to the local heritage authority.

Seyyed Mohammad-Sadegh Razavian, head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Office of Shahrud, noted that the mill has long been an integral part of the village's historical identity and traditional architecture, and restoring it marks a key step in safeguarding the region's valuable heritage.

"Our goal is to repair the structure and its internal components while preserving its authenticity," Razavian said. "This will allow visitors to gain a better understanding of traditional rural life and the role such mills once played in sustaining local communities."

Once the project is complete, tourists will be able to observe the mill's mechanisms up close and experience a tangible connection to

the region's history, the official underlined.

Razavian added that the revival of the mill could significantly strengthen Qaleh Bala's position as a cultural and tourism hub. The water mill, he explained, offers both cultural appeal and the capacity to narrate aspects of past rural life to domestic and international visitors.

Qaleh Bala, known for its unique stepped architecture and proximity to the Touran Protected Area, is one of the province's key tourism destinations. In recent years, the village has gained national recognition for its community-based development model, cultural initiatives, and active local participation.

Nestled on the southern slopes of Mount Shahvar where the desert meets the wind-shaped hills of the Kharturan buffer zone, the village has emerged as a remarkable example of grassroots rural revitalization and ecotourism.

Chenarestan petroglyph site proposed for national registration

TEHRAN - The Markazi Cultural Heritage Department is seeking the national registration of the Chenarestan petroglyph site near the city of Delijan to preserve its cultural history and ensure its scientific protection.

Hossein Mahmoudi, the cultural heritage chief of the province, announced the submission of the dossier of the Chenarestan petroglyph site to the Office for Registration and Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Miras Aria (CHTN) reported.

The national registration process for the historical site of Chenarestan petroglyphs has entered the planning stage in the National Registration Council after conducting specialized studies and field surveys, he pointed out.

Stating that this site is one of the province's historical landmarks, he added that archaeology experts have conducted a comprehensive study of the existing designs, accurately recorded all petroglyphs, determined the boundaries of the site's expansion, and conducted the necessary comparative studies. This data shapes the main basis of the dossier, he said.

He clarified that the dossier was prepared after being reviewed and approved by the Markazi Registration Committee in accordance with legal criteria and procedures. It is hoped that this valuable site will be registered on National Heritage List with the planning and approval of the



National Registration Council.

Mahmoudi continued that due to their antiquity, diversity of motifs, and cultural importance, Delijan's Chenarestan rock carvings are among the sites whose national registration will play an important role in conservation, management, and research and tourism planning.

He emphasized that Markazi Cultural Heritage Department has been seriously pursuing the process of protecting the historical sites, and national registration of the works is an important step in preventing the possible damage and enhancing the status of the province's ancient heritage.

He concluded by noting that it is hoped that the national registration of this valuable site will provide the basis for a wider introduction, attracting specialized research, and developing cultural tourism in Delijan county.

Tehran signals renewed regional engagement as ECO Cooperation enters 'new horizon'

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has said constructive dialogue with member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has opened "a new horizon" for regional collaboration, marking what he described as a pivotal moment for cultural, tourism and economic synergy between the member states.

Speaking to reporters on Monday evening, on the sidelines of a ceremony marking the anniversary of ECO's establishment, Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri said the organization's member states are "on the verge of entering a new era of regional convergence," where Iran is prepared to play a central role.

Salehi-Amiri underlined that the Iranian government's approach is rooted in "constructive" diplomacy and co-operation, noting that regional countries have shown a clear willingness to expand joint initiatives. "President Pezeshkian has repeatedly underlined the importance of strengthening regional convergence, and this has created the foundation for a new leap forward in our rela-



tions with ECO member states," he said.

The minister then highlighted recent structured and results-oriented discussions with ECO partners aimed at modernizing and activating shared capacities in cultural heritage and tourism. "Today, more than ever, there is an opportunity to create fresh potential in these sectors. The capacities we have must be reviewed, updated and mobilized in a targeted way," he stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Salehi-Amiri also pointed to the recovery of Iran's tourism industry, calling it a sign of the sector's "return to a stable and

reliable path." He reported that 7,399,000 tourists visited Iran during the last [Iranian calendar] year (ended on March 20, 2025), and the ministry aims for at least 5 percent growth this year. Despite "some interruptions" in June and July, we achieved strong performance in October and November. Today we can confidently say that Iranian tourism is reinforcing its position, he added.

Calling "regional cohesion" a prerequisite for building a new architecture of cooperation within ECO, the minister said the organization has the potential to become a powerful hub in economic, cultural and

tourism fields if it strengthens its shared narrative and coordinated policymaking. He also stressed that cultural and tourism exchanges should be elevated to a strategic level to support economic development and cultural diplomacy among member states.

"We believe that the ECO region, with its shared historical and cultural assets, can transform into a center of sustainable synergy in the world, and Iran is ready to contribute actively and effectively to this process," Salehi-Amiri concluded.

Initially founded in 1964 as the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) by Iran, Pakistan and Türkiye, the body was renamed the Economic Cooperation Organization in 1985. Today, ECO covers more than 8 million square kilometers and is home to over 460 million people, linking Asia to Europe and Eurasia to the Arab world. One of the oldest intergovernmental organizations in the region, ECO's core mission is to foster conditions for sustainable economic development and shared prosperity among its member states.

Yazd hosts sign-language workshop to support accessible tourism

TEHRAN - A sign-language training workshop for staff of tourism facilities was held in Yazd on Tuesday to promote accessible tourism in the UNESCO-listed city, organizers said.

During the event, which was hosted by the Museum of Light and Illumination, participants from various museum departments raised their communication needs in the presence of a sign-language interpreter and received training on how to interact effectively with deaf visitors, CHTN reported.

The workshop is set to be extended, in collaboration with the State Welfare Orga-

nization of Iran, to other tourism facilities and related associations in the province.

The organizers added that the initiative followed a museum tour by the Zarch Deaf Association on the International Day of the Deaf, when members visited the Museum of Light and Illumination and the Tar-o-Pud Museum, a nearby institution dedicated to the rich history of Iranian textiles, and highlighted the need for improved communication.

Accessible tourism seeks to ensure destinations and services can be used by all travelers, including people with disabilities, older adults and families with young chil-

dren, by removing barriers and providing features such as ramps, audio descriptions and detailed information.

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

Zagros women wear Golvani, a scarf with 3,000-year-old history

TEHRAN—A customary headscarf of Lor women called 'Golvani' is not just a piece of clothing. It is a combination of history, veil, and identity that has a record of 3,000 years in Zagros land.

Traditional clothing is not just a collection of fabrics and patterns; it is a living document of the identity, cultural memory, and social history of a nation, Mehr news agency wrote.

In Lorestan, women's clothing, and especially the authentic Golvani headscarf, not only has an artistic and aesthetic place, but also carries layers of meaning, history, and ancient beliefs of local people.

In recent decades, while waves of modernization and lifestyle changes have marginalized many cultural elements, part of this heritage in Lorestan has remained intact and has continued to exist as a symbol of dignity, modesty, and the roots of Iranian culture.

Head of Lorestan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department Ata Hassanpour explained that Lori traditional clothing is a collection of colors, diversity, and beauty that has been able to embody the spirit of culture, authenticity, and identity of a Lor woman. In addition to its visual effects, this dress is also perfect in terms of modesty and truly shows the elegance of a Lor

woman.

He added that each of the components of this dress, from the headscarf to the bodysuit, slippers, and shoes, has a specific place and function, and it forms a harmonious and distinctive set.

This cultural researcher added that according to a research conducted and based on archaeological findings in excavations in Lorestan, Khuzestan, and the western regions of the country, this headband is about 3,000 years old and even more.

It is true that this headband is seen on the heads of Lor women, but in the past it was also widely used to decorate men's clothing, he said. Lor men would tie Golvani around their felt hats during battle to make the hat resistant to wind and give their appearance a special awe and effect, he added.

He also said that during the festivals, men would also use Golvani; they would either tie it around their hats or wear it around their necks, which shows the prominent role of this headband in Lor clothing culture. He added: "This headscarf in Lori culture is not just a piece of clothing; it is part of the collective memory of our people, which has also been manifested through poetry and music."

Hassanpour emphasized that

the variety of colors in Lori dress is one of the outstanding features of this clothing. These colors not only create visual beauty, but also represent the vitality, culture, and life-loving spirit of Lor people, he added.

He stated that one of the components of the Lor women's clothing is Giveh, a traditional footwear, which has been very popular among women. He explained that Givehs have been the best choice for nomadic living conditions and long trips in nature due to their lightness, strength, and comfort.

Today, among young girls, wearing wristbands is a fashion and a beauty aspect, but in the past, these decorations were part of the traditional clothes of Lor women. Alongside these wristbands, they would also hang a very small bell. The use of this bell was not only decorative. When migrating, walking through plains, deserts, forests, and pastures, the delicate sound of this bell would drive away snakes and scorpions.

He emphasized that this means that the decorations on women's clothing were not only designed for beauty, but also had a protective and safety role and were part of the awareness of Lor women about nature.

"If you visit the Anthropology Museum of Falak-ol-Aflak Castle, you will see a complete women's

dress in one of the showcases."

Hassanpour continued that along with all the decorative, aesthetic, and identity features of Lor women's clothing, the most important characteristic of this clothing is that the Lor woman's hijab was completely observed from head to toe.

He added: "This feature is not limited to Lorestan; rather, such covering and dignity can be seen in the clothes of Kurdish, Azari, Sistani, Baluchi and even in northern Iran. These are the characteristics of an Iranian woman; a dignified and at the same time fully covered woman."

This covering and complete hijab is not specific to the Islamic era; rather, it existed and is rooted in this land for centuries before Islam. This fact can be seen in many inscriptions, historical images and Iranian miniatures.

Also, Nahid Parvizpour, a senior official of Lorestan Governor-General Office, emphasized the long-standing position of the original covering in the Zagros region. "In the cultural zone of Zagros, especially among the Lor, Kurdish, and Bakhtiari tribes, traditional clothing has always been a sign of decency, dignity, and identity of Iranian women, and this meaning has been institutionalized in the minds and lives of the local people."

National campaign on healthy diet to be held

TEHRAN – The national campaign to promote healthy eating habits will kick off on December 6 and will run for over two weeks.

Held annually, the campaign aims to raise public awareness of the importance of healthy eating. Themed ‘health and bread’, this year’s campaign highlights the significance of consuming healthy bread, the health ministry reported.

Each day of the week will be centered around a specific topic as follows.

Saturday, December 6, ‘Choosing healthy bread’

Sunday, December 7, ‘Healthy bread and family’

Monday, December 8, ‘Healthy bread and non-communicable diseases’

Tuesday, December 9, ‘Healthy bread and media’

Wednesday, December 10, ‘Healthy bread and policymakers’

Thursday, December 11, ‘Traditional bread and industrial bread’

Friday, December 12, ‘Healthy bread and its nutrients’

Saturday, December 13, ‘Healthy bread and bakers’

Sunday, December 14, ‘Healthy



bread and people’s demand’

Monday, December 15, ‘Enriching bread’

Tuesday, December 16, ‘Healthy bread and ways to keep it’

Wednesday, December 17, ‘Bread waste in the country’

Thursday, December 18, ‘Healthy bread and its price’

Friday, December 19, ‘Healthy bread and women’s role’

Saturday, December 20, ‘Healthy bread and food industry’

Sunday, December 21, ‘Healthy

bread and manufacturers’

Boosting nutrition literacy in rural areas

The health ministry is planning to improve nutrition literacy among people in rural communities to address nutritional health concerns in these regions.

Despite the high quality of food in rural areas, the lack of nutritional knowledge, which affects the choice of food for consumption, has highly affected the people, Mehr news agency quoted Ahmad Esmaeilzadeh, an official

with the health ministry, as saying in January.

Malnutrition, in all its forms, including undernutrition (wasting, stunting, underweight), inadequate vitamins or minerals, overweight, and obesity, occurs among children in rural areas because some parents are ignorant about children’s nutrition, the official noted.

The prevalence of diabetes, high blood fat, and hypertension in villages is the second reason that necessitates the need for nutrition experts, he added.

The official went on to say that some 350 nutrition experts will start their work in rural areas by the end of the current Iranian year (March 2025).

The nutrition experts will promote nutrition literacy and consequently the health of people in villages, the official added.

It is essential to raise people’s knowledge and awareness and train them to take care of themselves and prevent obesity and disease by eating healthy food and taking enough calories, as well as exercising for half an hour per day.

Tehran to play host to 13th Iran Lab Expo

TEHRAN –The 13th exhibition of Iranian-made laboratory equipment and materials called ‘IRAN LAB EXPO’ is scheduled to be held from December 13 to 16 at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

The main objectives of holding Iran Lab Expo are to develop laboratory and test equipment technology, lower domestic laboratories and industries’ dependence on imported equipment, help form a stable domestic market for laboratory equipment and materials, and support domestic production by promoting the purchase of Iranian goods, the event’s secretary, Abdolhassan Bahrami, said in a press conference on Tuesday.

Identifying qualified companies in the manufacturing of laboratory equipment and materials, and showcasing the country’s capabilities in the field, are among the other goals of the exhibition, he added.

The 2025 exhibition will display Iranian-made products in 14 fields including, oil and petrochemicals, electronics, software and simulators, civil engineering and construction, mechanics and metallurgy, agriculture and environment, basic physics, general laboratory equipment, equipment and machinery in strategic technologies, medical engineering, biomaterials, educational equipment, industrial equipment and technology, industrial testing equipment, modern technologies, and calibration services.

Bringing together over 250 domestic and international knowledge-based companies, the exhibition will lay the groundwork for holding B2B and B2G meetings, sharing knowledge, and creating business opportunities.

Iran welcomes foreign investment in pharmaceutical industry

In October, Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi announced the country’s readiness to attract foreign investment in its pharmaceutical industry.

By providing necessary infrastructure and a big market, Iran welcomes any constructive cooperation in this regard, IRNA quoted Zafarqandi as saying.

The official made the remarks while addressing a conference titled ‘Health Investment: A Bridge for Regional Prosperity’, held on the sidelines of the eighth edition of the Global Health Exhibition, running from October 27 to 30 at Riyadh Exhibition and Convention Center, Saudi Arabia.

Highlighting Iran’s capabilities in the

pharmaceutical industry, Zafarqandi said, “Today, Iran is a leading pharmaceutical manufacturer in the region, which has been able to address a large part of its needs through domestic production, ranging from generic drugs to biotechnology and biosimilar products.”

High production capacity, innovative leadership in cell therapies and biopharmaceuticals, expert human resources, adhering to global quality standards, and competitive pricing are among the outstanding features of the health products manufactured in the country, the official added.

“Our goal is to boost cooperation through establishing collaborative ventures in the fields of research, development, and production, sharing technology in complex generic drugs and biopharmaceuticals, as well as developing a resilient regional supply chain for active pharmaceutical ingredients,” he further noted.

Generic drugs are those that are biologically identical to brand-name drugs, but are sold under their chemical or generic name, Zafarqandi said.

Underscoring the importance of promoting ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the health minister said, “Let’s utilize the two countries’ scientific capabilities, financial resources, and prospects to turn into a regional power in the health field, and make a healthier future for our people.”

On January 13, the head of Iran’s Union of Medical Equipment Manufacturers and Exporters said that medical equipment worth around \$20 million is exported to more than 60 countries annually.

More than 70 percent of medical equipment and 100 percent of normal hospital beds are domestically made, IRNA quoted Abdolreza Yaqoubzadeh as saying.

Also, over 95 percent of specific ICU and CCU beds and more than 85 percent of operating room medical equipment, such as anesthesia machines and other equipment, are manufactured with cutting-edge technology in the country, he added.

Yaqoubzadeh went on to say that the country’s need for medical equipment production is three to four billion dollars per year, some one billion dollars of which is imported.

Some 600 medical equipment companies are active in the country, producing around 99 percent of the medicine supplied to the domestic market.

First intl. AI exhibition slated for January

TEHRAN – Tehran will play host to the first international artificial intelligence (AI) exhibition, known as AIX Expo, which is scheduled to be held from January 12 to 15, 2026, at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

Over 50 top knowledge-based companies operating in the AI and technology sectors will participate in the exhibition, with the support of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), IRNA reported.

According to the Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, the exhibition aims to boost interactions among innovation ecosystems, knowledge-based firms, the financial industry, and leading industries in AI.

The event will showcase the latest innovations and achievements in AI at national and global levels.

The exhibition will organize specialized panels on AI applications in various industries, such as healthcare, energy, urban development, finance, and manufacturing.

Conducting hands-on educational workshops, the exhibition will serve as a great opportunity to share expertise, promote business cooperation, and hold B2B and B2G networking in different sectors

With the rapid growth in AI startups and tech-enabled industries in the country, AIX Expo 2026 is expected to stimulate large-scale investment and lay the ground for the export of indigenous AI technologies.

Iran advances in AI scientific research index

According to Nature Index, the country’s ranking in scientific production in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has improved from 33 to 30, placing the country among the top 50 leaders, Hossein Afshin, an official with the vice-presidency of science and technology, has said.

Iran’s ranking in the region fluctuates between 14 to 17, which is mainly due to focusing on quality, he said, adding, “We’re optimistic to improve the country’s scientific position within the next two years,” IRNA reported.

The official went on to say that the country is following up on developing AI infrastructure, including the AI platform and the AI assistant, in the near future.

Government AI Readiness

According to the latest report by Oxford Insights index, which measures government readiness for implementing AI in public services, Iran ranks 91st among 188 countries, moving up three positions compared to 94th in 2023.

AI has a key role to play –not just in governing the technology, but in helping governments perform better.

The Government AI Readiness Index has become a trusted resource for policymakers, adopted as an official benchmark by national governments.

In this year’s edition, the AI readiness of 188 countries is examined at a time of growing complexity, where governments face evolving citizen needs and challenges like economic uncertainty, climate risks, and ris-



ing inequalities.

The 2024 index examines 40 indicators across three pillars: Government, Technology Sector, and Data & Infrastructure. It highlights progress, identifies gaps, and provides actionable insights for policymakers working to integrate AI into public service delivery.

At its core, the index asks, ‘How ready are governments to implement AI in the delivery of public services?’ By answering this question, it aims to offer a practical tool that supports evidence-based decision-making and helps policymakers unlock AI’s potential to serve citizens better worldwide.

Accordingly, the country’s best ranking is in the Data and Infrastructure pillar, 66.29, which has improved compared to 55.88 last year. It includes infrastructure (70), data availability (43), and data representativeness (121) indicators.

ENGLISH IN USE

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‘Further measures required to preserve forests’

Iran’s forest area is approximately 12 million hectares with 0.2 hectares per capita, which is one quarter of the world average, so attention to preserve the forest areas must be four times the global attention, faculty member of the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands has said.

Mohammad Darvish made the remarks on the occasion of the National Tree Planting Day.

Unfortunately, forests have been taken for granted in the country, as 2 million hectares of the northern forests has been depleted since 1330s (1950s), thus no serious protection measures have been taken, he said.

حفظ جنگل ها نیازمند اقدامات بیشتر است

بر اساس آخرین آمار موسسه تحقیقات جنگل ها و مراتع، وسعت رویشگاه های جنگلی ایران حدود ۱۲ میلیون هکتار و سرانه هر ایرانی از جنگل، کمتر از دو دهم هکتار است که یک چهارم سرانه جهانی می شود بنابراین باید توجه ما به حفظ رویشگاه های جنگلی، ۴ برابر توجه جهانی باشد.

محمد درویش عضو هیات علمی موسسه تحقیقات جنگل ها و مراتع کشور روز چهارشنبه همزمان با روز درختکاری و آغاز هفته منابع طبیعی این مطلب را عنوان کرد.

او در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: به نظر می رسد در کشور آن طور که باید به درختان و حفاظت از آنها توجه نمی شود، نابودی دو میلیون هکتار از جنگل های شمال از دهه ۳۰ تاکنون گواه این ادعاست.



DECEMBER 3, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who commands you to improve your soul is the best whom you obey.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:11:54 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:29 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:58 (tomorrow)

Poster for 19th Cinema Verite unveiled in Tehran

TEHRAN – The poster for the 19th Iran International Documentary Film Festival “Cinema Verite,” emphasizing a fresh, bold perspective inspired by Iranian culture, has been unveiled.

The unveiling ceremony for the poster of the 19th Cinema Verite was held on Monday in Tehran, IRNA reported.

Speaking about the poster, Mohammad Hamidi Moghadam, the secretary of the festival, said: “Our consistent colors in recent years, after 2019 and following the artistic direction of Reza Abedini, have been green and orange; colors and designs that, over time, have become identifiers of the Cinema Verite. This year, while preserving those colors and that identity, we sought to create a fresh visual atmosphere. The collaboration of Bahram Kalhornia helped shape this new space and move toward a new experience.”

“This year, the festival needed to experience renewal and open a new window to the world and to the concepts of documentary cinema. This has taken shape in the poster through the collaboration with Master Bahram Kalhornia,” he added.

Bahram Kalhornia, 73, is a veteran drawing artist, sculptor, graphic designer, painter, researcher, and educator in the field of art.

Hamidi Moghadam pointed to the diversity of films and filmmakers in this edition of the festival and said: “In both the national and international sections this year, we have outstanding films in the lineup, and we will see works by major filmmakers on the screen. The national and international sections of this edition offer many attractions for documentary cinema enthusiasts.”

“The documentary photo collection section, which will be held at the Iranian Artists Forum, has received significant attention. Also, in the student section, we are witnessing remarkable enthusiasm,” he noted.

Also speaking at the event, Siavash Yaghoubi, a member of the poster design team, said: “Despite the challenges, we tried to present a new transformation in the poster. Therefore, aside from the main poster, we also tried to offer something different in the posters for the various sections. For example, in the Iran section, we sought to present a symbol of Iran and referenced the 6th century and Nishapur pottery, unique to Iran and reminiscent of our civilization.”

“In the international poster, we used works by the Dutch artist M. C. Escher. The Eastern orientation of his works carries special significance,” he stated.

Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898-1972) was a Dutch graphic artist who made woodcuts, lithographs, and mezzotints, many of which were inspired by mathematics. His work features mathematical objects and operations including impossible objects, explorations of infinity, reflection, symmetry, perspective, truncated, and stellated polyhedra, hyperbolic geometry, and tessellations.

Iran International Documentary Film Festival “Cinema Verite” is organized by the Documentary & Experimental Film Center (DEFC). The festival tries to express the relationship between reality and truth through documentary films.

The 19th edition of the festival will be held from December 10 to 17 in Tehran.

Cartoon of Day



Ceasefire Violations in Gaza

Cartoonist: Mikail Ciftci from Turkey

Indonesian remake of “Children of Heaven” set for 2026 release

TEHRAN– MD Pictures, one of Indonesia’s leading production companies, has announced its plans to release a remake of the acclaimed 1997 Iranian film “Children of Heaven”. Directed by renowned filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo, the new version is scheduled for release in 2026 and aims to bring the heartfelt story of sibling resilience to Indonesian screens, set against the backdrop of the city of Semarang.

“Children of Heaven” is an internationally celebrated film directed by Majid Majidi, which tells the story of a young brother and sister who share a single pair of shoes after losing their own. The film explores themes of poverty, innocence, and hope through the lens of a simple yet powerful narrative. Majidi’s classic family film received a nomination for the best foreign-language film in 1999, becoming the first Iranian film ever nominated for an Oscar.

The Indonesian adaptation retains the emotional core of the original, focusing on the siblings’ struggles and their unwavering bond, but relocates the story to Semarang, a city known for its rich cultural tapestry and vibrant urban life. The film follows the journey of a poor brother and sister, Ali and Zahra, who live on the outskirts of Semarang. When their shoes go missing, they must conceal the truth from their parents, leading to a series of covert efforts to navigate daily life. The boy’s desperate hope to win a third-place prize in a local race becomes a pivotal point in the story, symbolizing his desire to restore dignity and happiness for his family.



A scene from Indonesian remake of “Children of Heaven”

The key roles of Ali and Zahra are played by young Indonesian actors Jared Ali and Humaira Jahra. Both actors are making their debut in significant roles, bringing fresh energy and authenticity to the beloved characters. Slamet Rahardjo, a veteran actor and respected figure in Indonesian cinema, joins the cast, adding depth and gravitas to the project.

Director Hanung Bramantyo, known for his versatility and successful films, is at the helm of this remake. Bramantyo recently led a session titled “Children of Heaven: The Art of Film Adaptation” at the MD Pictures booth during the Jakarta Asian Film Festival (JAFF) market, where he discussed the challenges and creative process involved in adapting a foreign masterpiece

for Indonesian audiences.

Produced by Manoj Punjabi under the banner of MD Pictures, the film is part of the company’s ambitious lineup for 2026. MD Pictures is betting heavily on remakes and franchise productions, aiming to strengthen its position both domestically and internationally. The company’s slate includes diverse projects ranging from literary adaptations to genre films and franchise extensions, reflecting Indonesia’s growing influence in regional cinema.

The remake of “Children of Heaven” is set to be a grounded, emotional family drama, emphasizing authentic storytelling and cultural relevance. The film’s setting in Semarang offers a fresh perspective, allowing Indonesian viewers to connect with the sto-

ry’s universal themes through a local lens.

Indonesia’s film industry is experiencing a renaissance, with a surge of high-quality productions that seek to balance artistic ambition with commercial appeal. “Children of Heaven” joins a roster of projects that showcase Indonesia’s cinematic versatility and growing confidence in producing films with international appeal.

Slated for release in 2026, the Indonesian “Children of Heaven” is expected to be a major cinematic event, drawing audiences who are familiar with the original and new viewers alike. The film aims to evoke the same emotional response that made the Iranian version a worldwide success, inspiring hope, resilience, and compassion.

Iran, global partners unite to foster cinematic collaboration at Shiraz conference



TEHRAN– An international conference on cinematic cooperation was held Monday evening on the sidelines of the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival (FIFF) with the participation of Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

The session was also attended by the Fars Governor-General Hossein-Ali Amiri, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei, and representatives from 23 countries, including Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Bosnia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, Greece, India, Armenia, France, Bolivia, Uruguay, Russia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Niger, and Senegal, ISNA reported.

The event aimed to explore the potential for organizing film weeks and joint cinematic productions alongside the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival. The gathering provided a platform for dialogue among international delegations seeking to strengthen cultural ties through cinema.

In his remarks, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance emphasized the importance of expanding collaborative productions—encompassing feature films, documentaries, animation, and other cinematic formats—as essential to realizing a more humane global vision through cinema. He stated: “Our ability to develop joint ventures and envision a more human-centered world depends on fostering international cooperation in filmmaking.”

He also highlighted Iran’s ongoing efforts in pioneering innovative cinematic technologies and shared experiences. “Iranian cinema boasts a distinguished history and has initiated collaborations with various countries, including a joint project with Pakistan on the renowned poet and philosopher Allama Iqbal Lahori and another with Turkey on the Persian poet and mystic Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi,” he noted. “We have also begun explor-

ing modern cinematic technologies, which are shareable assets with our friendly and brotherly nations.”

Furthermore, he stressed the significance of exchanging educational experiences and developing human resources through joint workshops, courses, and institutes. “Understanding each other’s natural and human environments can facilitate better location scouting; Iran’s diverse landscapes and climate offer numerous opportunities, alongside the unique attractions of other participating countries,” he added.

Raed Faridzadeh, the Head of the Iranian Cinema Organization, also addressed the gathering, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts in the field of cinema.

The 43rd Fajr International Film Festival officially commenced on November 26 in Shiraz, hosting approximately 200 international guests. The festival continues through Wednesday, with eight films screened daily across four main sections. Additionally, two restored films will be presented as part of the program.

Five Iranian movies will compete in 16th Baku International Film Festival

TEHRAN – Five films from Iran will compete in the 16th Baku International Film Festival, set to be held in Azerbaijan from December 5 to 9.

The Iranian participants in the festival include the feature film “Guardian of the Field” directed by Mohamadreza Kheradmandan and short films “Burial Permit” by Hashem Aliakbari, “The Mould” by Mohammad Reza Nourmandipour, “To Be” by Puya Mofid, and “Gharghalan” by Hamid Kermani, ILNA reported.

“Guardian of the Field” is about a retired wildlife ranger who is called to rescue a missing girl in a northern Iranian village and the story goes viral.

In “Burial Permit,” a couple

is about to emigrate when the husband’s mother dies. Instead of being able to mourn, they face unexpected rules and paperwork that make burying her a challenge. What should have been a time of grief turns into a struggle with bureaucracy, showing how even the final moments of life can be controlled by complicated regulations.

“The Mould” follows Reza, who faces challenges with his only son after the death of his wife, as he tries to raise his child in his own way.

The story of “To Be” takes place in an elementary school. After a teacher severely punishes a black student, the student develops a severe stutter and speech impairment. Doctors diagnose the

issue as a result of psychological trauma. The student’s family obtains a legal warrant for the teacher’s arrest, and the teacher faces a difficult choice, eventually being forced to endure a similar punishment to escape legal consequences.

“Gharghalan” happens on a snowy day, when a midwife is going from the village to the city. On the way, a village man blocks her path and begs her to come with him to help save his wife and child from death.

The Baku International Film Festival was established in 2004 by the Young Filmmakers Center of Azerbaijan.

As the meeting point for young cinematographers, the festival

gives a great beginning opportunity for creative people. Each author carries ideas and wants to share them. Such festivals are the platforms for sharing and self-affirmation. This festival combines high human values, artistic taste and a cinematic approach.

Baku International Film Festival is the longest-running festival in Azerbaijan, bringing to the country films that have won awards and success at Cannes, Venice, Berlin Film Festivals, and Oscar award.

The goal of the festival is to review and discuss films, select the best ones and reach a wide audience, and familiarize local authors with international practices and trends.