

Leader: Enemy Seeks Iranian Mind Shift as Only Path Towards Success



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Iran strengthens ties in Central Asia as Pezeshkian visits Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian departed Tehran on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, for a two-day regional tour, beginning with an official visit to Kazakhstan and followed by a trip to Turkmenistan.

The visits mark a significant effort by Tehran to strengthen regional diplomacy, expand economic cooperation, and promote cultural and scientific collaboration. ► Page 2

Tehran condemns US tightening of restrictions on Iran's UN diplomatic mission

TEHRAN – Iran has roundly condemned the intensification of restrictions, by the United States, against the Iranian diplomatic mission to the United Nations (UN) in New York, saying the U.S. government's abuse of its host-country status disrupts the efficiency and credibility of the world body.

In a statement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry also called for the UN secretary general's more serious intervention to stop Iranians' legitimate rights from being trampled underfoot.

The U.S. government, under President Donald Trump, has imposed new restrictions on Iranian diplomats stationed in or visiting New York. ► Page 2

Israel's aggressive blueprint: A rebuttal to Lebanon's pro-Israel propaganda

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT—In early December, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once again peeled back the last veneer of diplomatic pretence.

Addressing Israeli ambassadors on December 7, Netanyahu proudly recalled his declaration—made just one day after Operation Al-Aqsa Flood—that the Israeli overarching strategic ambition was nothing short of “reshaping the Middle East.”

The path, Netanyahu explained, required the sequential elimination of Hamas, Hezbollah, and ultimately Iran.

This is the real timeline—not the fabricated narratives pushed by Lebanon's “Israel Support Front,” those domestic propagandists parroting the claim that Hezbollah “dragged Lebanon into war.”

Netanyahu's own words expose this talking point for what it is: fiction designed to mask Israeli escalation as Lebanese provocation.

Piracy and pressure: US push against Venezuela

By staff writer

TEHRAN – The confrontation between the United States and Venezuela in late 2025 is not a sudden flare-up but the continuation of Washington's long-standing pressure campaign.

The Trump administration's 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS), released just a week ago, frames narcotics interdiction and hemispheric dominance as national imperatives. Yet even before its publication, U.S. forces had already launched deadly attacks on vessels in the Caribbean, leaving nearly 90 people dead since early September.

The recent seizure of the Guyana flagged tanker Skipper and the confiscation of its oil underscores the reality: what Washington labels “enforcement” increasingly resembles militarization and piracy, undermining international law and destabilizing the wider region.

Gaza truce at a crossroads

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Growing international pressure and unexpectedly strong Palestinian compliance are reshaping calculations around advancing the Gaza truce.

The relative “success” of the first phase of the Gaza truce deal is prompting questions about whether conditions are now ripe to launch the second phase.

For Washington, ending the genocidal war and preventing the occupying Israeli regime from resuming daily large-scale massacres depends largely on the Palestinian side fulfilling its commitments and avoiding retaliatory measures.

The first phase unfolded amid severe difficulties, including repeated Israeli ceasefire violations justified with flimsy pretexts.

The Israeli regime also rejected multiple proposals from mediators, and at one point resumed its widespread indiscriminate aggression, killing and wounding hundreds. On the ground, the IOF pushed toward and beyond the so-called “yellow line,” while the Zionist regime failed to reopen the Rafah crossing in both directions or allow in the agreed quantities of humanitarian aid.

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DOE fostering environmental diplomacy at UNEA-7

TEHRAN – Attending the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), the head of the Department of Environment (DOE), Shina Ansari, is promoting environmental diplomacy by holding talks with participating countries.

UNEA-7 is taking place from December 8 to 12 at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ansari, in separate meetings with Qatari Minister of Environment and Climate, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie, Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment, Andreas Bjelland Erikson, and Pakistani Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Musadik Malik, has discussed ways to promote cooperation in the environmental sector, IRNA reported.

Ansari and Al Subaie met on Friday. Highlighting the two nations' historical and friendly relations, Al Subaie announced Qatar's readiness to bolster collaborations with Iran in the environmental sector. ► Page 7

Swimmers shine at Dubai 2025 AYPG

TEHRAN – Iranian swimmers won 13 gold medals at the Dubai 2025 Asian Youth Para Games.

Sepehr Seifi in the 200m Individual Medley Multi-Class SM7/8, 100m freestyle, 100m Backstroke and 400m Freestyle Multi-Class S7, Sepanta Navidi in 100m freestyle and 400m freestyle Multi-Class S10, Sepehr Hooshmand in the 100m freestyle Multi-Class S11, Taha Azizi in the 100m freestyle Multi-Class S10, Ali Hassanzadeh Karimabad in the 100m freestyle Multi-Class S11, Mohammad Taha Baqeri in the 400m freestyle Multi-Class S11, Erfan Jafaripa in the 400m freestyle Multi-Class S12, Abolfazl Zarif Pouresmaeilizadi in the 100m Backstroke Multi-Class S9 -10, and Ali Hassanzadeh Karimabad in the 100m Backstroke Multi-Class S11-13, claimed 13 gold medals.

Iran has sent a total of 194 Para athletes to the Games in 11 sports.

The fifth edition of the Asian Youth Para Games runs in Dubai from Dec. 10 to 13



Putin calls strategic pact with Iran a 'turning point' as implementation advances

TEHRAN – Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian have underscored a shared commitment to accelerating the implementation of the comprehensive strategic cooperation agreement signed between the two countries.

The two presidents held high-level talks on Friday in Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat, marking the most consequential bilateral engagement on the sidelines of the International Conference on Peace and Trust. ► Page 2

Exclusive Interview

U.S. actions, not Iran's behavior, triggered nuclear standoff: Chinese analyst

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Scan this QR code to watch the video.

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

Beirut's cautious letter to Tehran

Shargh analyzed the letter sent by Lebanon's Foreign Minister, Youssef Rajji, to his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi. According to the paper, Rajji formally informed Araghchi that, at the present juncture, he could not accept Tehran's invitation for an official visit. However, he emphasized that this refusal should not be interpreted as a rejection of dialogue. This letter can be read within a framework of multilayered political considerations: First, Rajji's cautious language and diplomatic timing reveal that Lebanon is facing unprecedented political and security pressures. Second, Lebanon's request to hold talks with Iran in a "neutral third country" indicates Beirut's effort to manage relations with Tehran in a controlled format, distanced from regional sensitivities. Third, Rajji's message reflects Lebanon's attempt to preserve its "room for maneuver" with all actors. Beirut does not wish to sever or weaken ties with Iran, rather it seeks to define them in a managed, low-tension framework acceptable to external pressure groups. This situation suggests that Lebanon's understanding of the new regional and international environment is that Tehran-Beirut relations must enter a "regulated and supervised" phase—one in which Lebanon balances continued engagement with Iran against mounting Western-Arab pressures.

Etemad: Middle East in America's new National Security Strategy

Etemad commented on the U.S. National Security Strategy of November 2025. The paper argued that in this document, the Middle East no longer holds its former central position in American foreign policy, though vital interests in the region remain intact. The strategy effectively redefines the Middle East from a "zone of threat" into a "zone of opportunity." Washington's reassessment is driven by three structural shifts: First, America's relative self-sufficiency in energy production and its emergence as an energy exporter. Second, the transformation of the international order from superpower rivalry to great-power competition, with East Asia—not the Middle East—as the main arena. Third, the weakening of Iran as a significant player in the global order, due to military and coalition pressures. From this perspective, the United States is moving away from costly wars and heavy military presence toward a new strategy that can be described as "offshore balancing": maintaining influence and interests through a network of regional allies—from Israel to Saudi Arabia—without the burden of direct intervention.

Tehran condemns US tightening of restrictions on Iran's UN diplomatic mission

From page 1 ▶ Under these restrictions, Iranian diplomats are prohibited from shopping at wholesale stores and purchasing certain goods in the United States without obtaining special authorization from the U.S. Department of State.

The Office of Foreign Missions of the U.S. Department of State announced that diplomatic membership in wholesale stores, as well as the ability to purchase items such as watches, jewelry, handbags, wallets, perfume, tobacco, and automobiles, are considered "benefits" and therefore require U.S. government approval.

According to the notices published online, Iranian diplomats and their dependents must also obtain authorization from the U.S. Department of State before "joining or maintaining membership in any wholesale store in the United States, including Costco, Sam's Club, or BJ's Club, and purchasing items from these stores in any form."

Elsewhere in the statement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said the imposition of wider restrictions on Iranian diplomats' residences, bank accounts and daily shopping is part of the pressure and harassment aimed at disrupting the regular and legal duties of the diplomats.

"This decision adopted based on hollow arguments and unfounded claims not only is another clear sign of U.S. political decision-makers' animosity and enmity toward the Iranian nation but also constitutes a blatant violation of the principles and objectives of the UN Charter and a violation of the Iranian government's sovereign rights," the statement read.

In September, Iran's ambassador and

Sobh-e-No: Snapback did not work

In an article, Sobh-e-No said Iran's annual oil sales set record despite sweeping sanctions and the activation of the snapback mechanism. It said Iran's oil exports reached a seven-year high, generating nearly \$4 billion in monthly revenue. According to the oil minister, this production increase was achieved with Russian assistance in providing equipment and technology, while China has remained Iran's main oil buyer under long-term agreements. Following the sanctions, Iran has actively sought new partners to strengthen its oil and gas industry, with China and Russia considered principal allies. Beijing continues to purchase a large share of Tehran's oil despite sanctions, while Moscow cooperates in technology and equipment. New tanker-tracking data shows that Iran's exports have reached their highest level since U.S. sanctions intensified in 2018. This record has been set even though the U.S. sanctions framework against Iran's energy sector and tanker fleet has not been lifted. In fact, in recent months, under the so-called activation of the snapback mechanism, sanctions on individuals, companies, and ships have been further expanded.

Iran: A strong and important partner for Kazakhstan

In an interview with the Iran newspaper, Ali Akbar Jokar, Iran's ambassador to Kazakhstan, discussed President Pezeshkian's visit to Kazakhstan. Jokar stated that the president's visit to Kazakhstan provides an opportunity for a shared understanding of current conditions and exploration of new paths for investment and trade exchanges. The combination of private sector participation with high-level political talks creates a chance for Tehran and Astana to design new formulas and mechanisms for security and economic cooperation, elevating their already positive and solid relations to a higher stage. The meeting between the Iranian and Kazakh presidents at the highest political level signals a convergence of views and shared approaches on security issues. With its focus on economic development and creating a secure environment for growth, Kazakhstan regards Iran as an important partner and influential power. The ongoing visit sends a clear message to the region: through bilateral consultations, Tehran and Kazakhstan can design new formulas for cooperation and further strengthen relations that have already been in very good condition.



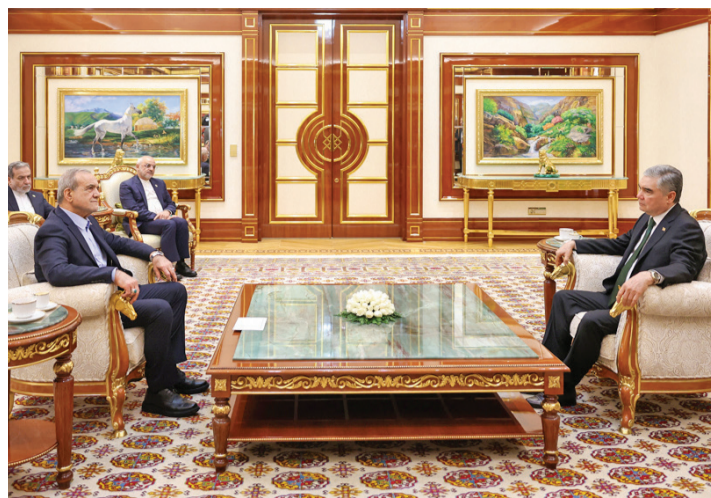
permanent representative to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, urged UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to take "appropriate" action after the United States—the host country of the UN Headquarters—imposed "illegal" restrictions on the high-ranking Iranian delegation attending the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly.

Iravani condemned the U.S. decision to confine the movements of President Masoud Pezeshkian, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, and other delegation members to an area of less than half a mile around UN Headquarters, and to require prior requests with "appropriate justifications" for any travel outside the designated zone, saying the measures violated Washington's treaty obligations as host country.

The United Nations has also said the U.S. must allow accredited Iranian diplomats to carry out their work freely, affirming the world body's position that Washington, as host country, is obligated to permit the unrestricted movement of all UN-based diplomatic personnel.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran strengthens ties in Central Asia as Pezeshkian visits Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met his Kazakh counterpart Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Astana (L), and Turkmenistan's National Leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in Ashgabat (R).



From page 1 ▶ Roadmap in place to boost Iran-Kazakhstan trade to \$3 Billion: Pezeshkian

During his visit to Kazakhstan, President Pezeshkian signed 14 bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding covering a wide range of areas, including transportation, transit and logistics, cultural exchanges, legal assistance, health-care, and diplomatic and media cooperation. Eight of these agreements were formally exchanged between the two countries. In addition, both nations signed a joint statement outlining their commitment to deepen collaboration.

Accompanied by a delegation of 100 Iranian business leaders, Pezeshkian was formally welcomed by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the Presidential Palace in Astana on Thursday, December 11.

Speaking at the bilateral meeting, Pezeshkian highlighted a 40 percent growth in trade between Iran and Kazakhstan over the past year. While acknowledging this progress, he emphasized that much greater economic potential remains untapped. A roadmap aiming to raise bilateral trade to three billion dollars has been prepared and is ready for implementation, with an emphasis on mobilizing private sector capacities on both sides.

Pezeshkian praised the deep cultural and historical ties between Iran

and Kazakhstan, describing them as the legacy of centuries of interaction along the historic Silk Road. "These historical connections provide a strong foundation for political, economic, and cultural cooperation," he said. He also noted that friendly relations have existed between the two countries since Kazakhstan's independence and stressed the strategic importance of close relations with neighboring nations. "The Leader has consistently emphasized strengthening brotherly ties with neighboring countries, particularly Muslim-majority states," Pezeshkian added.

Iranian President stresses Tehran-Astana relations must develop with greater diligence

The Iranian president emphasized Tehran and Astana's close alignment on regional and global issues, citing successful collaboration in multilateral forums including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Caspian region. Pezeshkian stressed that maintaining this trajectory is critical to consolidating and deepening bilateral cooperation.

Addressing the sensitive regional and international context, he observed that unilateralism in global politics continues to threaten the independence and sovereignty of nations, citing the actions of some Western powers. "In such circum-

stances, it is vital that our bilateral relations develop with greater diligence and strategic attention," he said. Pezeshkian also underscored the need to resolve banking and financial connectivity challenges to facilitate trade and noted that fully implementing the Iran-Eurasian Economic Union free trade agreement will create further opportunities for economic expansion.

As part of his visit, President Pezeshkian toured an exhibition of historical Iranian documents related to Central Asia, the broader Syrdarya region, and the Kazakh Khanates. The exhibition featured manuscripts, historical correspondence, old maps, governmental documents, and periodic reports that highlighted the historical significance of the region and the long-standing relations between the two peoples.

Experts at the exhibition briefed the Iranian delegation on Iran's historical presence in Central Asia, the region's role in Silk Road trade, and the deep-rooted connections between the peoples of the Syrdarya region and Iran. The delegation paid particular attention to documents reflecting enduring linguistic, cultural, and economic ties between the regions.

Pezeshkian calls for sustainable network of investment at joint Iran-Kazakhstan business forum

During a joint Iran-Kazakhstan business forum, President Pezesh-

kian emphasized that today's global economy relies on trust, transparency, and regional integration. He highlighted Iran's commitment to building a sustainable network of cooperation and mutual investment between the private sectors of both nations, reaffirming that the Iranian government supports initiatives that enhance the welfare of citizens in Iran and Kazakhstan.

Pezeshkian described Kazakhstan as a strategic partner and emphasized that Tehran has no limitations on developing relations with Astana. "Our relationship is rooted in shared history, longstanding cultural connections, and mutual respect. This visit symbolizes our enduring friendship and represents a significant step in expanding economic and commercial cooperation," he said.

Pezeshkian receives honorary doctorate at Nazarbayev University

In addition to diplomatic and economic meetings, President Pezeshkian visited the Kazakhstan University Medical Center and attended a ceremony at Nazarbayev International University, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate.

He described the university as one of the region's most important scientific centers, particularly in advancing medical knowledge and fostering regional research collaboration.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Putin calls strategic pact with Iran a 'turning point' as implementation advances

From page 1 ▶ Referring to the long-term strategic partnership treaty signed by Iran and Russia on January 17, Putin called it a "turning point" in bilateral relations and highlighted expanded trade, reporting 13 percent growth last year and an additional 8 percent in the first nine months of 2025. He said cooperation in power-plant construction, transport corridors, and energy transmission would continue, and that Moscow is now evaluating new mechanisms to supply gas and electricity to Iran. The Russian president reaffirmed that Russia's consistent support for Iran at the United Nations "will continue," and conveyed greetings to Iran's Leader.

Pezeshkian, for his part, pressed for immediate movement from commitments to delivery. "We are determined to put into effect and operationalize the agreement we have signed," he said, noting that Iran will complete all domestic preparations for major corridor projects by year's end. He urged Russia to finalize its side of the work. The Iranian president cited agricultural cooperation as a successful model that could be expanded and



emphasized the need for joint action through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, BRICS, and other platforms to confront unilateralism.

Iran and Russia are both subject to illegal Western sanctions. They have over the past years strengthened their relations in various fields.

Russia has repeatedly defended Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear energy program.

The bilateral meeting set the tone for a full day of Iranian diplomacy in Ashgabat, where Pezeshkian paired a forceful conference address with a series of targeted discussions with regional leaders.

Inequality is the root of conflict: Pezeshkian

Earlier in the day, President Pezeshkian delivered a comprehensive address to the International Conference on Peace and Trust, warning that sustainable peace is impossible while systemic inequality and double standards persist in global governance.

He thanked Turkmenistan for hosting the event, which coincides with the 30th anniversary of its neutrality, and endorsed the initiative to establish a UN-supported Group of Friends of Neutrality. Speaking on behalf of "the great and peace-loving people of Iran," he reaffirmed Iran's support for any measure that strengthens global and regional cooperation.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Lebanon's frustrated FM sees public bickering with Iran cool

In latest exchange, Araghchi welcomes an invitation to visit, aiming to address anger Lebanese people say must be directed at Israel

TEHRAN – A public back-and-forth between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Lebanese counterpart, Youssef Rajji, may now be entering a lull. The de-escalation follows Araghchi's announcement on X that he had accepted Rajji's invitation to visit Beirut to sort out their differences—a move prompted by Rajji's apparent unwillingness to travel to Tehran.

Earlier, Rajji had suggested the two meet in a "third country," a proposal that came off as somewhat unusual given the frequent visits Iranian officials have made to Lebanon over the past year alone. Araghchi himself was in Beirut just this June and was received "warmly" by Rajji.

In his Thursday post on X, Araghchi said he

was "bewildered" by his Lebanese counterpart's refusal to accept Iran's invitation to visit Tehran following Rajji's "warm hospitality during my last trip to Lebanon."

"It goes without saying that the foreign ministers of countries which enjoy brotherly and full diplomatic relations do not need a 'neutral' location to hold a meeting," Araghchi explained.

"Given the Israeli occupation of [parts of] Lebanon and Tel Aviv's gross violation of the ceasefire, I completely understand why my Lebanese counterpart is not ready to travel to Tehran. Hence, I accept his invitation to visit Beirut with pleasure," said Araghchi.

The diplomat added that Tehran, like Beirut, favors opening a new chapter in bilateral relations based on mutual respect.

This diplomatic saga began a month ago when Rajji stated in an interview with Arab media that he wished to negotiate with his Iranian counterpart. Araghchi's reaction was one of immediate surprise—a response mirrored in his latest comments. In a post on X, he said there was no need for the Lebanese diplomat to resort to interviews or mediators if he wished to speak, given the longstanding and direct channel between them.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Leader: Enemy seeks Iranian mind shift as only path towards success

TEHRAN – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Aytaollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei met with a large number of elegists and eulogists in Tehran on Thursday to mark the birth anniversary of Lady Fatimah Zahra (pbuh), the beloved daughter of the prophet (pbuh).

Ayatollah Khamenei congratulated the birth of Lady Siddiqah al-Tahira (pbuh) and conveyed that the virtues and qualities of the Lady Fatimah Zahra surpass human understanding and comprehension. He added that one must strive to be Fatemi and follow that exemplary Lady in all aspects of life, including religious devotion, the pursuit of justice, Jihad of Clarification, being a good spouse, raising children, and other essential areas.

Ayatollah Khamenei then defined National Resistance as resilience and steadfastness in the face of the various pressures imposed by hegemonic powers. He stated that sometimes these pressures are military, while at other times they take economic, media, cultural or political forms.

Ayatollah Khamenei described the agitation and noise-making by Western media agencies and political-military officials as an example of the enemy's propaganda pressure. He stated that the aim of these pressures on nations, and especially on the Iranian people, is sometimes territorial expansion, as seen in what the US is currently doing in Latin America. He went on to say that at other times, the goal is to control underground resources. In some



cases, it is to alter lifestyles, and most importantly, to carry out an identity transformation, which he identified as the core objective of hegemonic pressures.

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that arrogant global powers have been attempting for over a century to change the religious, historical and cultural identity of the Iranian nation. He stated that the Islamic Revolution rendered all those attempts ineffective, and in recent decades, the Iranian people, through their resilience and refusal to submit, have continued to thwart the extensive pressures of their enemies.

The Leader described the spread of the concept and language of Resistance from Iran to regional countries and even beyond as an undeniable reality. He stated that some of the actions the enemy carried out against Iran and its people would have completely destroyed any other nation.

Referring to the deeply influential, Zainabi-inspired role of eulogies in preserving the memory of the martyrs and strengthening the concept of Resistance, he said that today, beyond the military confrontation recently witnessed, the country is at the center of a large propaganda and media war being waged by a broad enemy front. He added that the enemy has come to understand that this divine and spiritual land cannot be subdued or occupied through military pressure.

The Leader added that some repeatedly raise the possibility of renewed military conflict, and that certain individuals deliberately fuel such talk to keep people anxious and unsettled, although, God willing, they will not succeed.

Ayatollah Khamenei considered the objective and strategic direction of the enemy to be the erasure of the symbols, aims and principles of the Islamic Revolution and the fading of Imam Kho-

meini's legacy. He stated that the US stands at the center of this broad and active front, some European countries surround it, and mercenaries, traitors and rootless individuals in Europe seeking personal gain occupy its margins. He emphasized the need to understand the enemy's goals and its operational formation. He said that just as in a military front, the country must shape its own formation in this media and propaganda confrontation in accordance with the enemy's structure and objectives, focusing attention on what the enemy targets: Islamic, Shia and Revolutionary teachings.

He described standing firm in the face of the Western propaganda and media war as difficult but entirely possible. He stated that in this effort, eulogists should turn religious gatherings [heyats] into centers of loyalty to Revolutionary values. Through the development and transmission of the language of Resistance, eulogies and gatherings today significantly reinforce this essential task.

The Leader concluded his remarks with several recommendations for the eulogists. These included explaining religious teachings and teachings of struggle based on the lives of all the Imams (pbuh), attacking the enemy's weak points while mounting an effective defense against the doubts it spreads, and clarifying Quranic concepts across personal, social and political spheres and in confronting the enemy.

'This is piracy': Iran condemns US seizure of oil tanker off Venezuelan coast

TEHRAN – Iran has roundly condemned the seizure of an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela by U.S. forces.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Es-mail Baqaei denounced the move as a clear example of "state piracy."

"The United States' detention and seizure of trade vessels belonging to other countries amounts to flagrant disregard for international law and is a blatant violation of principles ruling international maritime security and safety," the spokesperson said.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday admitted that U.S. forces had taken control of an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela, a move which risks a sharp escalation in tensions with Venezuela.

"We have just seized a tanker on the coast of Venezuela - a large tanker, very large, the largest one ever seized actually," Trump told reporters at the White House.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Baqaei underlined that referring to U.S. local laws and the country's illegal sanctions to justify the seizure cannot, by any means, change the illegal and criminal nature of this "armed piracy."

The spokesperson warned against the repercussions that the perpetuation of such bullying behavior could have for international peace, security and trade, saying all governments and competent international bodies have a responsibility to oppose such illegal moves and hold the United States to task.

Meanwhile, the Iranian embassy in Caracas

also dismissed the seizure of the oil as "piracy in the Caribbean Sea" and a gross violation of international laws and regulations.

In a statement on Thursday, the embassy strongly condemned the US move as contravening fundamental international principles and regulations.

"The illegal move by the U.S. government to seize a Venezuelan oil tanker in the Caribbean Sea without any justified or legal reason constitutes a blatant violation of international laws and regulations, including the inviolable principle of freedom of the seas and navigation," it said.

"Piracy in the Caribbean Sea' is the most appropriate title for this unlawful and unjustified move by the U.S., which seeks to achieve its goals by resorting to illegitimate measures, violation of national sovereignty, infringement of others' rights, and the promotion of anarchism," it added.

The Iranian embassy expressed solidarity with the Venezuelan government and people in defending their national sovereignty and absolute rights.

In the meantime, the Venezuelan government also said in a statement that the US has been engaged in an "international act of piracy."

It added, "Under these circumstances, the true reasons for the prolonged aggression against Venezuela have finally been revealed... It has always been about our natural resources, our oil, our energy, the resources that belong exclusively to the Venezuelan people."



This comes amid a sharp increase in U.S. military deployments across the Caribbean, carried out under the pretext of anti-drugs operations.

Since late August, Washington has sent warships, surveillance aircraft, and special operations units to the southern Caribbean, culminating in the deployment of the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group.

The U.S. has since launched dozens of strikes on vessels, killing more than 85 people, claiming they were drug traffickers, while failing to provide any evidence to back up the claims. Legal experts have condemned the U.S. military's extrajudicial killing of victims as unlawful.

U.S. actions, not Iran's behavior, triggered nuclear standoff: Chinese analyst

Professor Jin stresses that progress is impossible unless Washington demonstrates genuine commitment.

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – On the sidelines of the Conference on "People's Rights and Legitimate Freedoms in the Thoughts of Ayatollah Khamenei," the Tehran Times spoke with Professor Jin Liangxiang, a senior research fellow at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, to explore the shifting dynamics of global governance, human-rights discourse, and power politics in West Asia.

Widely recognized for his

analyses of China–Middle East relations, Professor Jin offers a sharp critique of Western human-rights narratives, the destructive impact of U.S. policies in the region, and the growing weight of emerging platforms such as BRICS. In this conversation, he outlines why justice requires resistance, how Iran has been misrepresented by Washington, and why the future international order demands patience and strategic endurance.

The following is the text of

the interview:

How do you assess China's role in shaping global norms on human rights, especially in non-Western contexts?

I think there are different kinds of narratives and efforts to shape international norms. The Americans like to talk about liberal democracy and, when doing so, they link it to human rights. They even intervene in the domestic affairs of countries in the Middle East—such as Iran and many others—in the name of humanitarian concerns.

But in Gaza and Palestine, we have witnessed atrocities committed by Israel, resulting in more than 70,000 deaths. In this regard, the Americans have turned a blind eye. So, I believe the United States is not in a position to lecture others about liberal democracy or to intervene under the banner of humanitarianism. In fact, what we are seeing is the collapse of the so-called liberal democratic model.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran take eight golds at Para armwrestling

TEHRAN – Iranian athletes took eight gold medals at the Para armwrestling at the Dubai 2025 Asian Youth Para Games.

Fatemeh Hazbiyan in the sitting women open left, Vida Jabarzadehjeyhoooni in the visual Women 60kg right and in the visual women 60kg left, Kosar Gharaeifarima in the visual Women +60kg right, Ali Nazhatialanjagh in the visual Men +65kg left, and visual Men +65kg right, Reyhaneh Roostaei in the sitting Women open right, and Kosar Gharaeifariman in the visual Women +60Kg left won eight gold medals.

Iran move down in FIFA Futsal Women's World Ranking

TEHRAN – Iran moved down one place to 10th in the FIFA Futsal Women's World Ranking released on Friday.

Brazil stretched their lead atop the Ranking following their emphatic triumph at the FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup Philippines 2025, which ran from Nov. 21 to Dec. 7.

Iran lost to Brazil and Italy and defeated Panama in the inaugural edition.

The year will conclude with Brazil also atop the FIFA Futsal Men's World Ranking. The six-time world champions have extended their advantage slightly over 2nd-ranked Portugal and 3rd-ranked Spain, with the leading seven nations remaining unchanged. The only movement in the top 10 has seen Ukraine (now 8th) and Kazakhstan (now 9th) swap places, while further down, Poland (19th, up 3) and Vietnam (20th, up 6) have each entered the top 20 – in the Vietnamese's case, for the first time.

Iran win 2025 ISF U15 World School Volleyball C'ship

TEHRAN – Iran's boys' team defeated Chinese Taipei 3-1 (15-25, 25-18, 25-22, 25-17) at the 2025 ISF U15 World School Volleyball Championship final on Friday.

Iran had defeated Nigeria, China, Saudi Arabia, China and India on their way to the final match.

Iran's girls' team also finished in sixth place in the competition.

The ISF U15 World School Volleyball Championship 2025 officially opened on Dec. 5 at the Shangluo Gymnasium, China and brought together 30 teams from 17 delegations for eight days of international school sport competition and cultural exchange.

Launched in 1972, the ISF World School Volleyball Championship is the highest-level school volleyball event worldwide.

Earlier this year, Shangluo was awarded hosting rights for four consecutive editions from 2025 to 2028, covering both U15 and U18 age categories—an exceptional commitment that highlights the city's ambition to become a rising hub for volleyball development in China.

Para taekwondo athletes snatch three golds

TEHRAN – Iranian Para taekwondo athletes won three gold and one silver medals at the Dubai 2025 Asian Youth Para Games on Friday.

Abolfazl Imani defeated Uzbekistan's Fayyozbek Valijonov 2-1 in the final of the Seniors Male-K44 -58 / Seniors -58kg.

China's Weiyu Bao and South Korean Pyeonggang Lee settled for bronze in the weight class.

Amirhossein Alizadeh seized a gold medal at the Seniors Male-K44 -63 / Seniors -63kg

after defeating Uzbekistan Muhammadsodik Usmonov 2-1 in the final match.

Lin Pan of China and Bahrain's Ebrahim Samqa won two bronze medals.

Maryam Abdollahpour beat her compatriot Zahra Rahim 2-1 in the final bout of the Seniors Female-K44 -57 / Seniors -57kg.

China's Ziyue Xu and Kamola Juraeva from Uzbekistan claimed two bronzes.

Furthermore, Zahra Soltani of Iran lost to China's Bo Yan in the final of the Seniors Female-K44 -47 / Seniors -47kg.

Uzbekistan's Kizlarkhon Isomidinova and Renu Tamang of Nepal claimed two bronze medals.

Iran has sent 194 Para athletes to the Games in 11 sports.

The 2025 edition of the Asian Youth Para Games features 11 sports – archery, athletics, badminton, boccia, goalball, powerlifting, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, wheelchair basketball and armwrestling.

The fifth edition of the Asian Youth Para Games runs in Dubai from Dec. 10 to 13.

Para powerlifter Pouladi optimistic about future

TEHRAN – Zahra Pouladi Jarfi, who won the first gold for Iran delegation in the 2025 Asian Youth Para Games, is optimistic about the future.

Pouladi Jarfi, 18-year-old, secured a gold medal in the 41kg NextGen category, proudly marking the first gold medal for Team Iran at AYPG 2025.

"This is the sweetest and most worthy thing in my entire life" – she said in the interview with dubai-aypg2025.ae.

"I am happy to earn the first gold medal for the Iran team," she said. "I hope I can earn more medals in the future and take bigger steps and bring pride to my country."

For Pouladi Jarfi, competing internationally for the first time and doing so under pressure made the victory even more meaningful. "According to the challenges and the hard weight I went through, the medal is the sweetest thing for me and the worthiest thing in my entire life."

Her confidence on the platform was unshakable: "I had my full confidence on the stage. My stress was low, and everything was okay."

She also shared how her teammates reacted when they learned she would compete in Dubai.

"Every single friend was happy for me; they cheered for me. I wish for my friends that they can earn medals as well."

As she lifted her medal proudly, she dedicated it to the person who shaped her journey: "Today is World Mother's Day, and I want to give my medal to my mother."

Iran move up in FIFA Women's World Ranking

TEHRAN – Iran's women's football team moved up two spots to 68th in the latest FIFA Women's World Ranking.

World champions Spain (1st, unchanged) retained their UEFA Women's Nations League crown to stay in pole position in the ranking after regaining top spot in August.

Further down the top 10, Sweden (now 5th) have tumbled two places following their semi-final defeat to Spain in the UEFA Women's Nations League, while France (7th, down 1) and Canada (10th, down 1) also lost ground. Moving in the other direction, FIFA Women's World Cup 2027 hosts Brazil (6th, up 1) and Korea DPR (9th, up 1) have climbed the standings.

Those two latest additions have brought the number of FIFA Member Associations (MAs) in the women's standings up to a record 198. Finally, Poland (24th), Venezuela (42nd), Cabo Verde (119th) and Saudi Arabia (161st) find themselves sitting at all-time highs.

Transit of goods through Iran's land borders nears 11m tons in 8 months

TEHRAN – Iran's road transit of goods reached 10.97 million tons in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–November 21), driven by stronger activity in international freight corridors, the country's road transport authority said.

Javad Hedayati, director-general of transit and international transport at the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, said the volume was moved through more

than 496,000 truck trips.

He said exports accounted for more than 8.82 million tons transported in 370,309 trips, while imports totaled about 1.69 million tons carried in 76,666 trips.

Hedayati said the latest figures highlight the capacity of Iran's land-transport network to support expanding trade with neighboring countries.

Export of commodities, services from free zones increases 19%

TEHRAN– The value of commodities and services export from Iran's free zones increased by 19 percent during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–November 21), as compared to the same period of time in the previous year.

As reported, the worth of exported products and services from the country's free zones stood at \$994 million in the mentioned eight-month period.

On December 10, Reza Masrou, the secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free Trade and Special Economic Zones, announced the finalization of the transformation document for free zones and the drafting of the digital economy document for free zones within the government, stating that the implementation of these documents will transform the future roadmap of the free zones.

Elaborating on the details of the transformation document, the official stated: "This document has been formulated based on an examination of the systemic issues and an assessment of these zones against global experiences. Each free zone has been specialized according to its real advantages. For example, Kish is defined as a financial and digital economy hub, Aras is focused on logistics and transit, and other zones have been defined based on their capacities."

According to Reza Masrou, the free zones are required to develop and submit their five-year roadmaps based on this document.

Pointing out that one of the axes of the seventh generation of free zones globally is the digital economy, he added: "The digital economy document for free zones will also be finalized within the next two weeks. This document includes the legal requirements for transforming free zones into the country's digital economy hubs."

The official further stated that a significant part of development challenges are rooted in existing laws, emphasized: "The amendment to the Free Zones Law has been reviewed in the High Council and approved in a specialized workshop, and it has now been submitted to the relevant ministry as a bill to undergo legal procedures so that it can be sent to the parliament after government approval."

Regarding the progress of completing unfinished projects, Masrou said: "Dozens of infrastructure projects are underway in the free zones, ranging from small-scale projects to projects worth tens of billions of to-mans. The main challenge for these projects is financing."

He added: "With the notification of the guideline for partnership with the private sector and the use of modern financing methods, the pace of project completion has accelerated. Monthly meetings are also being held to monitor and remove construction obstacles."

The Free Trade and Special Economic Zones High Council has recently announced that the process of converting customs offices located in free zones into specialized customs for importing specific goods will be accelerated with the aim of facilitating trade processes and providing better services to importers.

According to the announcement by the Supreme Council, the proposal for the Secretariat of the Supreme Council of Free Trade and Special Economic Zones regarding the establishment of specialized customs has been submitted to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), and necessary cooperation and coordination are underway by the customs authorities. This measure aims to effectively utilize the four-billion-dollar import quota to the main-

land through free zones and accurately identify entry points with trade advantages.

It should be noted that the establishment and development of specialized customs offices will not only accelerate trade processes but also play a significant role in enhancing safety, creating sustainable employment, and strengthening the local economy in free zones.

On November 20, Economy Minister Seyed Ali Madanizadeh said that Iran plans to create an independent banking system dedicated to its free trade zones as part of a broader effort to overhaul the country's economic governance, adding that free zones will serve as the launchpad for structural reform.

Speaking at a meeting with business leaders in the Aras Free Zone, Madanizadeh said the government aims to expand economic freedoms, lift restrictions and accelerate decentralization in the country's most commercially active regions.

He said the administration has begun implementing a new transformation plan for free zones, built around decentralization and specialization of activities in each zone. The pilot phase will begin in East Azarbaijan Province, centered on the Aras Free Zone.

Madanizadeh said the government is moving to establish an independent bank dedicated to the financial needs of free zones. Aras will also be assigned a lead commercial bank to coordinate services, and steps are being taken to establish an independent chamber of commerce for the zone.

He said the government has adopted a supportive stance toward investors and producers operating in free zones, and confirmed that all ministerial directives limiting trade activity in these areas will be revoked. A new Free Zone Development Secretariat has been launched inside the Ministry of Economy, with Aras designated as its pilot site.

The minister also announced new tax policies aimed at relieving pressure on businesses, including maximum instalment options for tax payments. A unified "free-zone citizen card" will be issued for all free zone residents and operators, he added.

Other measures under review include the removal of price-setting rules in free zones. Madanizadeh said a number of restrictive regulations in the past had originated from within the ministry itself, and the government was now working to eliminate them. He urged private-sector actors to pursue their demands directly, and said a new communication channel would be established to allow businesspeople to engage with the minister's office.

He said the government is committed to mobilizing all available tools to expand investment across the free zones, calling on companies to "step forward" as reforms advance.

As the senior officials said at a national investment forum in early September, Iran's government is moving to overhaul its free trade zones by focusing on privatization, exports, and greater private-sector participation.

The National Conference on the Capabilities and Investment Opportunities of Free Trade and Economic Zones was held in Tehran, bringing together government ministers and private-sector representatives.

The secretary of Iran's High Council of Free Trade Zones said many restrictions on the zones had been lifted, making them valuable tools under sanctions if their legal advantages were restored.

South Pars gas output rises 6m cubic meters

TEHRAN – Iran has raised daily gas extraction from the South Pars gas field, it shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, to 722 million cubic meters, up six million cubic meters from last winter, after a year of targeted drilling and overhaul work, Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing the field, announced.

Touraj Dehghani, managing director of the company, said the increase reflects a package of technical and operational measures, including new wells, equipment upgrades and efforts to improve the reliability of



production facilities.

He said the enhanced output underscores progress at Iran's largest shared gas field, which he described as the backbone of the country's gas supply network.

Dehghani added that higher winter-season capacity will improve the resilience of nationwide gas deliveries during peak demand.

The South Pars field, shared between Iran and Qatar, is the world's largest gas reservoir and a vital source of energy for domestic use, industries, and exports.

Iran's export to Turkey up 4% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN– The Turkish Statistical Institute announced that the value of this country's imports from Iran in the first ten months of 2025 increased by four percent compared to the same period last year, reaching \$2.035 billion.

However, Turkey's exports to Iran from January to October 2025 amounted to \$2.53 billion, representing a four-percent decrease compared to the same period last year.

Trade between Turkey and Iran in the first ten months of the current year reached \$4.565 billion.

The trade between the two countries during this period did not show a significant change compared to the same period last year. In the ten months of 2024, the trade volume between the two countries was reported to be \$4.585 billion.

On December 6, a Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TC-CIMA) delegation, visiting the Plast Eurasia 2025 exhibition in Istanbul, met with a group of board members and managers of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce.

In this meeting, both sides, referring to the longstanding friendly, cultural, and economic relations between Iran and Turkey, emphasized strengthening connections through the exchange of trade delegations, participation in exhibitions, and joint investment.

Munur Ustun, a member of the executive board of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, referring to the memorandum of understanding signed between the two chambers last year, described the presence of Iranian companies in Turkey and specialized exhibitions as valuable and stated: "The current volume of trade between the two countries falls short of the existing potential."

He then addressed the impact of global economic developments and the constraints caused by sanctions, and emphasizing the need to facilitate the foreign trade environment and create a secure path for private sector cooperation, said that direct meetings between merchants are an important step to compensate for shortcomings.

Addressing the meeting, Hervik Yarijaniyan, head of the TCCIMA Industry and Mining Committee, stated that with over 47,000 members, this chamber has extensive capacity for cooperation with Turkish economic actors, adding: "The social, political, and cultural relations between the two countries are at a high level, but the level of trade exchange does not correspond with these realities. Therefore, through the exchange of trade delegations, participation in exhibitions, and joint investment, cooperation between the two countries can be strengthened."

He also invited the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce to travel to Tehran as a trade delegation to further expand the grounds for joint cooperation.

Subsequently, Hesameddin Hallaj, deputy for international affairs and trade development at the TCCIMA, referring to the continuous dispatch of trade delegations in recent years and the active presence of the Tehran Chamber at Plast Eurasia 2025, said: "Face-to-face dialogues between Iranian and Turkish actors can lead to the development of economic relations."

He also announced the continuation of cooperation between the two chambers based on last year's memorandum of understanding and expressed hope that the Tehran Chamber would soon host a delegation of Turkish merchants.

During this meeting, Kamran Davari-Nikou, Consul General of Iran in Istanbul, referring to the increase in the trade between the two countries to \$19.4 billion, said the diversity of Iran's export goods to Turkey has increased from 700 items in previous years to 1,383 items.

Referring to the presence of 45 Iranian companies at the Plast Eurasia exhibition and several dispatched trade delegations, he de-

scribed this trend as a sign of the high potential for economic cooperation between Iran and Turkey.

Uzcan Tokul, Deputy Secretary General of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, in his remarks, deemed the current trade volume between Iran and Turkey insufficient and stated that the Istanbul Chamber would seriously continue its policy of receiving and supporting Iranian trade delegations.

At the end of this meeting, it was also decided that the Tehran Chamber of Commerce would prepare the groundwork for a trade delegation from the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce to travel to Tehran through official correspondence.

The TCCIMA delegation, visiting the Plast Eurasia 2025 exhibition, also met with senior officials of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry, proposing strategic partnerships between Iranian and Turkish private-sector companies, particularly in technology-driven sectors.

Trade between Turkey and Iran has potential for a significant leap: Iranian industry, mining, trade minister

During the joint session, both sides highlighted the long-standing commercial ties between Iran and Turkey and agreed to strengthen industrial cooperation through B2B meetings and reciprocal expert delegations.

Mehmet Akif Meral, director of international and EU affairs at the Istanbul Chamber of Industry, introduced the body as an institution with 23,000 members established in 1923. He described past cooperation with Iran as positive, citing a 2013 business mission to Tehran and multiple meetings in recent years on technology, energy and industry.

He said the chamber maintains extensive links with Europe and neighboring markets and actively participates in global exhibitions, including major events in Chicago and the Netherlands.

Meral outlined measures taken in response to U.S. tariff shifts, noting that the chamber supports Turkish manufacturers through market advisory services, specialized training and e-commerce development programs. He added that 40 percent of Turkey's exports go to Europe, where the chamber plays a central role in maintaining industrial ties.

Hervik Yarijaniyan, head of the TCCIMA Industry and Mining Committee, said current trade levels fall short of the two countries' long-standing economic links. He called for closer coordination between the Tehran Chamber and the Istanbul Chamber of Industry and invited a Turkish industrial delegation to visit Tehran.

Hesameddin Hallaj, deputy for international affairs and trade development at the TCCIMA, pointed to Iran's renewed industrial momentum after difficult economic years. He said the current environment is suitable for joint ventures and shared manufacturing projects.

Highlighting the zero-tariff and reduced-tariff opportunities available to Iran under its free-trade framework with the Eurasian Economic Union, he encouraged Iranian and Turkish businesses to pursue co-export strategies in plastics and polymers, textiles and apparel, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and food products.

Meral noted that Iranian companies hold competitive strengths in several technology domains and can form strategic alliances with Turkish producers. He said shifting global supply chains and rising logistics costs have made Turkey an attractive base for regional industrial cooperation. He cited broad collaboration potential in electrical equip-

ment, parts manufacturing, machinery, home appliances, electronics, fisheries and caviar.

He added that at the upcoming Moscow exhibition, where Turkey will field 200 booths, the chamber can help connect Turkish companies with Iranian partners.

Plast Eurasia 2025, one of the region's leading plastic-industry exhibitions, hosted participants from dozens of countries in Istanbul.

The Tehran Chamber of Commerce operated a dedicated pavilion and held multiple meetings to showcase Iran's industrial capacities and expand bilateral business links.

In late November, Iran's minister of industry, mining, and trade, during a meeting with the minister of trade of Turkey, emphasized the need to remove obstacles to the development of Tehran-Ankara economic cooperation and announced a \$2 billion increase in the value of trade exchanges next year, reaching a total of \$10 billion in trade between the two countries.

Seyed Mohammad Atabak, the minister of industry, mining, and trade of Iran, who traveled to Turkey to attend the meeting of ECO trade ministers, met with Omar Bulat, the minister of trade of Turkey, on November 26, and discussed trade relations between Iran and Turkey.

He described Turkey as one of the most important trade partners of Iran and stressed the need to increase trade between the two countries.

Atabak said: "Trade between Turkey and Iran has the potential for a significant leap, and we hope to achieve this major goal by resolving some minor obstacles."

Omar Bulat, the minister of trade of Turkey, also pointed to the five percent increase in the value of trade between Turkey and Iran in the current year and added: "We have now reached an \$8 billion in trade between the two countries, and for the next year, we have set a target of \$10 billion."

He stated that based on the historical background and neighborly relations of the two countries, Turkey is ready to develop trade relations with Iran.

In this meeting, the minister of industry, mining, and trade of Iran and the minister of trade of Turkey reviewed some bilateral trade issues and reached understandings in this regard.

In early October, senior Iranian and Turkish trade officials held talks in Tehran on ways to deepen economic ties, with Iran's Chamber of Commerce calling for tariff reforms to unlock the two countries' trade potential.

Hamed Asgari, deputy for international affairs at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), told Turkish commercial attachés that the current level of trade is "not satisfactory" and urged a revision of tariff policies to strengthen bilateral economic relations.

He said Iran and Turkey have the capacity to expand trade to between \$15 billion and \$20 billion annually, but tariff barriers and restrictions have prevented Iranian goods from reaching their full potential in the Turkish market. Products such as cement and clinker were cited as key examples.

Asgari emphasized Iran's comparative advantages in energy and competitive goods and called for faster, less bureaucratic cooperation between Iranian and Turkish firms, especially in sectors such as steel and petrochemicals. He also stressed the need to leverage the Turkish embassy's support to facilitate tariff reform and boost bilateral exchanges.

The Turkish delegation, including commercial attachés Bilge Dinmez and Orhan, underlined the importance of removing trade barriers and clearing up commercial misunderstandings. They described Turkey as Iran's "gateway to Europe" and highlighted extensive ties, including a large Iranian community in Turkey.

Storm Byron kills newborns and buries families as Gaza's bombed ruins collapse

TEHRAN – The skeletal remains of Gaza's neighborhoods have become a site of renewed tragedy as Storm Byron batters the enclave, claiming over a dozen lives since Wednesday.

The dead include women and newborns, victims of a catastrophic intersection between extreme weather and a man-made humanitarian desert.

According to the Ministry of Interior, the toll is rising as gale-force winds and torrential rains trigger the collapse of structures previously fractured by months of Israeli bombardment.

In the harrowing early hours of Thursday, a newborn froze to death in the al-Mawasi area, while another infant succumbed to the cold in the Shati refugee camp Friday morning.

These are not merely weather-related casualties; they are



A woman fixes her tent as children shelter inside it at a makeshift camp for displaced Palestinians after heavy rains in Gaza City [AFP]

the direct result of a landscape stripped of its defenses.

Since October 2023, Israel's war on Gaza has killed over 70,000, decimated over 60% of the enclave's housing, and obliterated its civil infrastructure.

Now, around 1.9 million homeless Palestinians are forced to shelter in the ruins of bombed-out apartments or flimsy tents.

Over 27,000 of these tents have been swept away or submerged in what UNRWA's Jonathan Fowler

describes as "lakes of untreated sewage" caused by the systematic destruction of sanitation networks.

The crisis is exacerbated by a calculated blockade on "winterization" materials. Despite thousands of tons of aid sitting at the border, Israeli authorities continue to bar the entry of timber, tarps, and heavy-duty tents.

This "political choice," as Fowler calls it, has left the population in a state of total vulnerability. Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem characterized the deaths as a "continuation of the war of extermination," noting that the storm is completing the destruction initiated by the bombs.

With over 4,300 distress calls received in 24 hours and rescuers digging through rubble with bare hands, Gaza's winter has become the latest frontier in a relentless campaign of attrition.

Gaza truce at a crossroads

From page 1 ▶ Despite these obstacles, Palestinian resistance forces met their obligations, especially regarding the exchange of prisoners and remains. Only one IOF body remains unrecovered, defying earlier U.S., Israeli, and mediators' expectations that retrieving all remains would be nearly impossible amid Gaza's destruction.

This removed a major Israeli regime's argument and placed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bind: either defy the mediators, who consider phase one complete and Palestinian compliance sufficient to proceed, or accept their position and move to phase two.

The latter would trigger backlash within Netanyahu's far-right government, since the next phase requires IOF withdrawal to a new line near Gaza's barrier, the deployment of international forces, expanded humanitarian access, reconstruction efforts, and interim governance by a Palestinian technocratic cabinet supervised by a proposed "peace board."

Reports suggest the United States wants phase two underway before Netanyahu's scheduled visit later this month, hoping to block any Israeli attempts to stall the process.

Washington is also reportedly seeking to re-

assure the Israeli regime that American coordination with regional guarantors, particularly Turkey, Egypt, and Qatar, can address its fears about a lingering "security threat" from Gaza.

The Zionist regime insists on the full disarmament of Palestinian groups, while mediators argue that laying down arms, or neutralizing them through agreed mechanisms, is far more realistic. U.S. officials are said to believe states like Turkey and Qatar can negotiate such arrangements with Palestinian resistance forces in ways that would solidify the ceasefire.

The U.S. administration is also reportedly pressing the occupying Israeli regime to accept that its genocidal campaign has reached its limits and that diplomacy must now take precedence to restore the regime's regional and international image.

This approach also led the U.S. to heed Arab and Islamic requests, echoing Palestinian concerns, to block former British prime minister Tony Blair from taking an administrative role in Gaza, citing his close alignment with Zionist positions. Washington is instead seeking candidates acceptable to all sides.

Palestinian compliance in phase one, contrary to the occupying regime's intelligence assess-



ments, has compelled Washington to increase pressure on the regime not to collapse the deal and instead to open a credible diplomatic track.

This has renewed criticism of the security establishment's inability to anticipate or understand the calculations of Palestinian resistance forces, whose decision-making remains opaque to the regime's intelligence even after more than two years of genocidal war.

Ending the genocidal aggression and preventing the Israeli regime from regaining American cover to resume it ultimately hinges on the Palestinians' continued adherence to their commitments and on avoiding the tit-for-tat dynamic that Netanyahu is seen as trying to provoke.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel's aggressive blueprint: A rebuttal to Lebanon's pro-Israel propaganda

From page 1 ▶ "The question was whether to attack Lebanon or focus on Gaza. We did not want to sink into two quagmires. So we kept Lebanon under active deterrence, destroyed Hamas's military capabilities, and then planned to turn north," Netanyahu said.

Additional revelations from inside the Israeli establishment dismantle the myth further. On December 8, Yedioth Ahronoth—via a detailed report by military correspondent Yoav Zitun—confirmed that the Southern Command had presented a comprehensive plan for a pre-emptive offensive against Gaza in 2022.

The operation included assassinating top Hamas leaders, demolishing production sites, and launching a brief ground incursion aimed at crippling the resistance's rocket infrastructure.

Why was the operation shelved?

Because the Israeli military and political leadership were prioritizing preparations for a large-scale confrontation with Hezbollah and Iran.

Gaza was ordered to remain "quiet at any price" until the northern front was ready. Further testimony collected by the committee led by Gen. (res.) Sami Turgeman revealed that Israel had operational plans to assassinate Mohammed Deif and Yahya Sinwar in the two years prior to the war.

These operations were repeatedly postponed—not out of restraint, but to avoid igniting a major conflict before the northern campaign was fully synchronized.

Simply put: the Israeli enemy set the clock, the battlegrounds, and the sequence of targets long before October 7. Lebanon was always next!

Despite this mountain of evidence—public, documented, and acknowledged by Israeli commanders

themselves—Lebanon's pro-Israel propagandists continue their recycled refrain that Hezbollah somehow "pulled Lebanon into conflict."

What conflict, exactly, when Israel itself announced its intention to attack Lebanon, prepared for that attack, postponed other operations to prioritize it, and openly broadcast its strategic timeline?

Their argument collapses the moment it encounters facts. Even more delusional is their insistence on selling the fantasy of "peace" with the Israeli enemy.

Netanyahu shattered this illusion himself. His strategy is not to coexist with Lebanon but to neutralize it—politically, militarily, and territorially.

For Tel Aviv, "peace" is merely a PR slogan masking a long-term project of domination.

Hezbollah's involvement in the current confrontation is not what

triggered war; it is what prevented Israel from executing its preplanned northern blitz.

The Resistance's deterrence posture—sharpened over years of accumulated capability—is the only factor that forced Israel to rethink its timing, pace, and cost calculations.

Without that deterrence, the northern assault Netanyahu described would not be a hypothetical future phase. It would already be underway.

The Israeli enemy's own confessions erase any ambiguity: Israel wanted this war; Israel prepared this war; and Israel scheduled this war.

The single miscalculation was Israel's enduring underestimation of the Resistance—its endurance, its strategy, and its ability to expose both Israeli aggression and the hollow narratives spread by those who speak on the enemy's behalf.

Russia's Vladimir Putin has, meanwhile, reaffirmed support for Maduro, promising expanded cooperation, while Colombia's leadership suggested asylum as a peaceful option.

In this context, Venezuela's opposition faces its own credibility crisis. Opposition leader María Corina Machado, speaking after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, declared that Maduro will soon have no choice but to leave. Some analyses claim that he lost the 2024 election to Edmundo González; however, the opposition's reliance on foreign threats undermines its legitimacy. By invoking U.S. missiles and external intervention, opposition figures risk turning Venezuela into a proxy battlefield rather than building democratic strength at home.

The seizure of the Skipper also fits into Washington's broader campaign against "dark fleet" tankers that move oil between sanctioned states. While the NSS frames this as disrupting illicit trade, the decision to treat these ships as "legitimate military targets" raises serious questions about escalation and legality.

With hundreds of such vessels operating worldwide, militarizing their interdiction sets a dangerous precedent for global commerce and threatens to destabilize maritime norms far beyond the Caribbean.

Besides, the opposition's embrace of foreign intervention only deepens the crisis, leaving Venezuelans caught between external aggression and internal division.

Eurovision exposes ethical erosion



Pro-Palestinian protesters hold a flag and a banner outside the Irish public service broadcaster television studios to call for an Irish boycott of the 2026 Eurovision Song Contest if there is Israeli participation, in Dublin, on November 1, 2025.

TEHRAN – The European Broadcasting Union's (EBU) decision to allow Israel into the 2026 Eurovision contest has triggered a wave of condemnation. The Swiss winner of 2024 announced they would return their trophy, arguing that Eurovision's stated values of "unity, inclusion and dignity for all" are fundamentally at odds with Israel's ongoing war on Gaza.

This protest is not symbolic alone; it exposes a deeper contradiction. By permitting Israel's participation, the EBU undermines its own credibility. International bodies, including the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry, have concluded that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to genocide. Ignoring such findings while celebrating cultural unity transforms Eurovision from a festival of music into a platform for political whitewashing.

The boycott by Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, Iceland, and the Netherlands adds weight to this

critique. These nations recognize that engagement with Israel in cultural arenas risks normalizing violence and erasing accountability. Their refusal highlights a growing divide: institutions that claim to defend human rights versus those that prioritize spectacle over principle.

Israel's inclusion is not a neutral act. It legitimizes an entity accused of destroying homes, hospitals, and schools, and of restricting humanitarian aid. Such actions violate international law and erode the moral foundation of any institution that accepts them.

The Swiss winner's rejection of the trophy crystallizes the issue: integrity cannot coexist with complicity. Eurovision now stands as a case study in how cultural platforms collapse when they ignore justice. The broader lesson is clear — Israel's actions demand accountability, and silence only deepens the crisis of legitimacy. Photo y.

Tucker Carlson condemns 'abominable' human cost in Gaza after visiting maimed children

TEHRAN – In a landmark episode of The Tucker Carlson Show released Thursday, prominent media personality and political commentator Tucker Carlson issued his most blistering condemnation to date of the ongoing atrocities in Gaza.

Following a visit to a Qatari medical and rehabilitation facility hosting evacuated Palestinians, Carlson confronted what he termed the "abominable" human cost of Israel's war on Gaza.

Accompanied by a team visibly shaken by the experience, Carlson showcased harrowing footage of survivors, including infants and young children with "mangled faces" and "limbs blown off."

Reflecting on the sheer scale of the devastation, Carlson rejected the standard explanation of "collateral damage," implying that the high number of non-combatant deaths is a deliberate policy.

"They murdered them. It's just a fact," Carlson told his audience, describing the scenes as a moral catastrophe that should leave any observer in tears.

This systematic destruction of Gaza's youngest generation has left the survivors with life-altering injuries and psychological trauma that may never heal.

Since October 2023, the scale of the carnage

has reached unprecedented levels, with reports indicating that Israel has killed over 70,000 Palestinians—a staggering figure that includes tens of thousands of children.

To ensure this devastation remains hidden from the global public, Israel has engaged in what press freedom groups call the deadliest assault on media in modern history.

Since the start of the war, Israeli forces have killed over 250 journalists and media workers.

Carlson addressed this directly, asserting that the military has "shot dozens and dozens and dozens of journalists so that no one can film what's happening."

Carlson leveled a scathing indictment against American political and religious leaders who provide "theological cover" for the slaughter.

He argued that justifying the killing of children based on "blood guilt" or collective punishment is not only a crime but the "enemy of Western civilization."

The segment has ignited a massive wave of praise on social media, with clips garnering millions of views.

Supporters have lauded Carlson for shattering the media blackout and challenging the moral cost of the U.S.-Israel alliance by centering the voices of Gaza's most vulnerable survivors.

Israel launches heavy strikes across southern and eastern Lebanon in new ceasefire violation

In another ceasefire violation, the Israeli military carried out heavy attacks on southern and eastern Lebanon on Friday, claiming in a statement that it struck Hezbollah military infrastructure and a "training camp." The Cradle reported.

In south Lebanon, airstrikes hit Al-Jarmaq, Jbaa, Al-Rihan, the area between Ansar and Al-Zrayriya, Tebnine, and the area between Wadi Houmein and Roumine.

Large clouds of black smoke were seen in photos and videos on social media as a result of the strikes. Four Israeli strikes also hit Wadi Zalaya in the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon.

Without offering any evidence, Israel's mili-

tary claimed in a statement that it bombed "a training and preparation compound" used by the "Radwan Force unit" of Hezbollah.

In the past two months, Israel has significantly escalated its aggression against Lebanon despite the ceasefire.

Dozens of Lebanese have been killed since the start of November alone, including Hezbollah's top military official, Haytham Ali Tabtabai, who was assassinated in an Israeli strike on Beirut on November 23.

Israel has threatened to launch a major offensive against Lebanon unless Hezbollah surrenders its weapons by the end of 2025. Washington has publicly backed Tel Aviv's threats.

Iran proposes academic cooperation council at Ancient Civilizations Forum in Athens



TEHRAN - Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts on Friday urged ancient nations to develop joint mechanisms to protect cultural heritage, warning that armed conflicts and neglect of historical identity pose the greatest threats.

Speaking at the 9th ministerial meeting of the Ancient Civilizations Forum at the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri proposed establishing a "cooperation council of universities of ancient civilizations" to support scientific collaboration and safeguard shared heritage.

Salehi-Amiri said accelerating technological change and intensifying global competition required a return to ethical and civilizational principles. He said this tradition spanned from Greek philosophy to Iranian-Islamic scholarship, adding that knowledge without ethical foundations "could be dangerous."

He listed organized trafficking of cultural property, climate-related damage, unbalanced development, digital forgery and historically inaccurate AI-generated content as current threats to global heritage. "Armed conflict remains the most destructive risk," he said, adding that war targeted both physical structures and collective memory.

Referring to a recent attack by Israel's regime

on Iranian territory, Salehi-Amiri said the incident violated international law and showed the vulnerability of cultural heritage during military crises.

He said Iran had more than 34,000 nationally registered sites, 29 World Heritage properties and 27 elements of intangible heritage on UNESCO's lists, with 58 additional sites on the tentative list.

Destruction of a historical site is "an assault on the identity and cultural dignity of a nation," he underlined.

Salehi-Amiri said the Ancient Civilizations Forum, active since 2017, needed to move beyond issuing statements and establish operational mechanisms. He said Iran's experience in recovering artefacts and using new technologies could support joint efforts.

Outlining Iran's formal proposal, he said the new academic council would act as the forum's research arm, analyzing the impacts of conflict and climate change, producing studies and drafting shared standards for member states.

He said Iran's Jondi-Shapur University Jondi-Shapur University (aka Academy of Gondishapur), recognized by UNESCO in connection with its 1,750th anniversary, was prepared to host and coordinate the initiative.

Tehran on path to becoming city of life and tourism

TEHRAN--Measures taken in various areas of Tehran in recent years have brought the capital city one step closer to transforming from a 'city of work' to a 'city of life and tourism' destination.

Announcing this on Thursday, Mostafa Fatemi, the director of domestic tourism development office at the tourism ministry, explained the impact of recent investments in the field of urban tourism in Tehran, IRNA reported.

"Tourism is an inseparable part of the structure of cities and cannot be separated from the urban development process. Every city must pass through tourism in order to become a suitable city for living."

"When we prepare our homes for hosting the guests, the residents also benefit from it. Therefore, every urban action in the field of

tourism ultimately benefits the citizens of that city."

Stressing that Tehran's urban brand is still not a 'tourism city,' he mentioned that Tehran is mainly known as a city for administrative and business activities, and this has made tourism components less visible. The duty of urban managers is to guide Tehran from a business city to a city of life and tourism, he added.

Fatemi stated that Tehran Municipality has implemented significant measures and initiatives in this field in recent years. "Tourism-related groups in the municipality have tried to reduce this gap and direct Tehran towards a tourism destination. Of course, we believe that every urban project is actually a new capacity for tourism development."

Persian art of Ayeneh-Kari added to UNESCO intangible heritage list

TEHRAN - Ayeneh-Kari, the art of mirror-work in Persian architecture, was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on Thursday following a decision by the Intergovernmental Committee meeting in New Delhi.

According to the nomination file, Ayeneh-Kari involves decorating architectural surfaces such as ceilings, walls, domes, columns and panels with cut pieces of mirrors. Practitioners cut and shape mirrors into geometric or organic forms and glue them onto surfaces to create patterns that reflect light.

The craft combines several skills, including design, mirror cutting, plastering, painting and mosaic work. Communities regard mirrors and water as symbols of purity and illumination, and the practice is associated with ideas of light and enlightenment.

Transmission of the craft occurs informally through apprenticeships and workshops and formally through universities, non-governmental organizations and training institutes. In many families, the skill is taught across generations by elder relatives. According to the file, Ayeneh-Kari masters hold a respected position and the art is used in religious sites, royal palaces, private homes and modern spaces.

The practice of Ayeneh-Kari is passed down both informally through apprenticeships and workshops and formally through universities, non-governmental organizations and training institutes. In most cases, Ayeneh-Kari is a career transmitted across several generations, taught by grandfathers, fathers and uncles to descendants. Ayeneh-Kari masters occupy a highly respected social



A view of the centuries-old Talar-e Ayeneh (Mirror Hall) in the UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran.

position, and the art is recognized simultaneously as a luxurious and spiritual expression, ornamenting all kinds of traditional and contemporary spaces, from holy shrines and religious sites to royal palaces and private residences. An inclusive art form, Ayeneh-Kari is practiced across various groups and continues to hold significance in both historical restoration and modern design.

According to historical sources, Venetian glassmakers in the 15th century pioneered the production of small mirrors by cutting open blown glass cylinders, which were then polished and silvered. By 1507, they perfected a method using an amalgam of tin and mercury to coat sheets of glass, a development that eventually enabled the production of plate glass in the late 17th century. During this period, Persian glassmaking had declined to the point where craftsmen often resmelted old glass, resulting in inferior material. The industry was later revitalized when Safavid monarch Shah Abbas I invited Venetian glassmakers to Iran, marking a significant turning point in

Persian decorative arts.

Ayeneh-kari flourished during the Qajar period as a prominent form of architectural decoration. Imported European mirrors—typically rectangular and framed with elaborate glasswork—were used as luxurious focal points or as full mirrored revetments on building facades. These mirrors often adorned transitional spaces between exterior and interior areas, creating a striking interplay of light and reflection. An early and exemplary instance of Ayeneh-kari appears in the 17th-century Chehel Sotun Palace in Isfahan.

The Zand and Qajar periods saw the widespread adoption of mirror decoration across a range of architectural elements, including portals, overdoors, window frames, walls, ceilings, and columns. The technique was applied in pavilions, private residences, tea houses, royal buildings, shrines, and traditional Zurkhanehs (athletic houses). Multiple mirrors with etched and painted glass frames formed the traditional rectangular units used for facades, creating a harmonious integration of art and architecture.

In the Pahlavi period, Ayeneh-kari found renewed expression in modern interpretations of traditional Iranian architectural elements such as talars (porches or halls) and iwans (rectangular vaulted spaces open on one side). These structures incorporated mirrored glass to enhance visual impact, maintaining the legacy of Ayeneh-kari within contemporary architectural design.

The process of Ayeneh-kari is meticulous and labor-intensive. Artists begin by designing patterns inspired by geometric forms, floral motifs, and calligraphic scripts. Once the design is finalized, mirrors are cut into specific shapes and sizes, then carefully arranged and embedded into a layer of plaster. The precision required to position each fragment ensures the creation of a cohesive and shimmering mosaic of reflective glass.

Ayeneh-kari is more than a decorative technique; it embodies Iran's cultural and historical heritage. Its reflective surfaces carry symbolic associations with divine light and spiritual illumination. The interplay of light and reflection can transform architectural spaces, imparting a sense of depth and tranquility. The technique has long been used to adorn mosques, palaces, and mausoleums, lending these structures an ethereal quality.

Despite the passage of time, Ayeneh-kari continues to inspire artists and architects. Contemporary interpretations appear in modern Iranian architecture and interior design, where craftsmen integrate mirrored glass into new forms and environments. Its enduring appeal lies in the ability to create beauty through light and reflection, reflecting the ingenuity and artistic skill of Iranian craftsmen.

Iran, Greece discuss joint action plan to expand tourism, heritage cooperation

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri and Greek Tourism Minister Olga Kefalogianni met in Athens on Thursday to discuss plans for expanding cooperation in tourism, museums and cultural heritage.

Salehi-Amiri, who arrived in Athens early Thursday to attend the 9th ministerial meeting of the Ancient Civilizations Forum at the Acropolis Museum, called for drafting a joint action plan focused on facilitating tourist travel, strengthening museum and restoration cooperation, exchanging experts and holding joint exhibitions.

He said Iran and Greece possessed extensive tangible and intangible heritage that could form the basis for long-term cultural and tourism partnerships. "Today the twenty-seventh element of Iran's intangible heritage, 'Ayeneh-Kari, the art of mirror-work in Persian architecture,' was inscribed on UNESCO's list," he said, adding that Iran also had 29 registered tangible and natural sites and

many more eligible for inscription.

Salehi-Amiri said Iran was ready to expand cooperation with Greece across health, marine, nature, cultural and spiritual tourism, and noted that Iran had 299 branches of handicrafts and a large collection of historical objects.

Moreover, the Iranian minister invited Kefalogianni to attend the Tehran International Tourism and Handicrafts Exhibition in February and a summit dedicated to the countries, which celebrate Nowruz (Persian New Year) in Tehran.

Kefalogianni, for her part, welcomed Iran's proposals and said Greece was committed to expanding cooperation. She described Iran and Greece as custodians of significant global heritage and said UNESCO's lists had been enriched by both countries' sites.

The Greek minister noted that Iran had recently been elected to the Executive Council of the UN Tourism (formerly named the World Tourism Organization or UNWTO), while Greece

had been selected as the European representative in the same body. She called for updating a 1997 bilateral memorandum and drafting a new joint program "based on real implementation".

Kefalogianni identified the lack of direct flights between the two countries as the main barrier to tourism growth. She said Greece received 40 million tourists in 2024 and was seeking to diversify and enter new markets. "Iran has significant potential, and with proper promotion, Greek and European tourists will be attracted," she said.

Elsewhere in her remarks, the Greek minister said she would participate in the Tehran international exhibition and support the signing of a bilateral memorandum during the visit. She also called for promoting diverse tourism fields, including gastronomy, health, marine and sports tourism, saying tourism was a bridge between nations and should be strengthened between the two nations.

Cultural tourism is effective tool of public diplomacy, Iranian ambassador to Turkey says

TEHRAN--Cultural tourism is effective in increasing mutual understanding, bringing nations closer together, and developing sustainable cooperation, and this area is an effective tool of public diplomacy, said Iranian Ambassador to Turkey Mohammad-Hasan Habibollahzadeh.

He gave lecture at the opening ceremony of the Third World Cultures Festival in Ankara, Turkey, on Friday, IRNA reported.

The three-day event is being held at the ATO Convention Center from December 11 to 13.

The World Festival of Cultures is being held with the aim of strengthening cultural diplomacy, introducing tourism capacities, and expanding interactions between nations. Representatives from 63 countries, cultural, and

diplomatic institutions are present in the event.

In the cultural pavilion of the Islamic Republic of Iran at this festival, numerous cultural works and tourist attractions of our country were also exhibited for visitors.

This prestigious international event creates a powerful bridge for global cooperation and business networking.

The festival features the Diplomatic Pavilion and Municipal and Local Development Pavilion, offering participants the opportunity to build global partnerships, discover international investment opportunities, and showcase their brands on the world stage. With over 20,000 participants, the festival promises three days of networking, culture, and innovation.

First Announcement



Brief Notice of International Two-Stage Tender No. 860068-2

It is hereby notified that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) intends to purchase **Fire resistance hydraulic oil (HFDFU 68)** as per the submitted technical specifications through two-stage international Tender. Accordingly, all the prospective bidders are kindly requested to visit ESCO's website www.esfahansteel.ir so as to obtain the tender document no later than **20.12.2025** and upload their techno-commercial offer to ESCO's website (through Sourcing Field) max. up to **21.12.2025 at 14:00 p.m.**

It is evident that this letter is only for notification purpose.

Yours Respectfully,
V, Hanaei Nezhad
Goods & Equipment Purchasing Management
Esfahan Steel Company

First Announcement



Brief Notice of International Two-Stage Tender No. 859303

It is hereby notified that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) intends to purchase **Fire resistance hydraulic oil (HFC 46)** as per the submitted technical specifications through two-stage international Tender. Accordingly, all the prospective bidders are kindly requested to visit ESCO's website www.esfahansteel.ir so as to obtain the tender document no later than **19.12.2025** and upload their techno-commercial offer to ESCO's website (through Sourcing Field) max. up to **20.12.2025 at 09:00 a.m.**

It is evident that this letter is only for notification purpose.

Yours Respectfully,
V, Hanaei Nezhad
Goods & Equipment Purchasing Management
Esfahan Steel Company

DOE fostering environmental diplomacy at UNEA-7

TEHRAN – Attending the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), the head of the Department of Environment (DOE), Shina Ansari, is promoting environmental diplomacy by holding talks with participating countries.

UNEA-7 is taking place from December 8 to 12 at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ansari, in separate meetings with Qatari Minister of Environment and Climate, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie, Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment, Andreas Bjelland Erikson, and Pakistani Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Musadik Malik, has discussed ways to promote cooperation in the environmental sector, IRNA reported.

Ansari and Al Subaie met on Friday. Highlighting the two nations' historical and friendly relations, Al Subaie announced Qatar's readiness to bolster collaborations with Iran in the environmental sector.

The Qatari official empha-



Ansari (left middle) meets with Qatari Minister of Environment and Climate, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Subaie.

in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, marine pollution control, and the prevention of wildlife trafficking.

The Iranian and Norwegian officials primarily focused on tackling plastic pollution. Lauding Iran's efforts in supporting global debates on plastic, Erikson highlighted the need to lower plastic production, manage plastic waste more effectively, and exchange successful experiences between the two countries.



The Norwegian delegation also met with DOE head Shina Ansari.

sized cooperation in the field of monitoring air quality, utilizing modern technologies for early forecasting of air pollution and dust, as well as rapid information systems, water quality control, water conservation, and recycling, which are shared priorities between Iran and Qatar.

Ansari, for her part, assessed environmental cooperation between the two nations as being positive and constructive. The official stressed the need for the development of joint efforts in dealing with sand and dust storms, saying that benefiting from modern monitoring technologies and satellite observations is essential for the identification of sand storm hotspots and management.

She also emphasized enhancing cooperation on protecting the environment and biodiversity

For her part, Ansari emphasized the hazardous effects of plastic pollution on the environment, saying that decisions in the field should be made based on the economic and social conditions of the countries, transferred technologies, and shared experiences to ensure the interests of the nations and achieve global participation.

Referring to the national policies and regulations aimed at reducing single-use plastics and plastic waste, Ansari highlighted the capacity of the private sector and investment attraction in the recycling industry.

The official went on to propose fostering scientific and technical collaborations between Iran and Norway on plastic waste management and oil industry pollution, which was well-received by the Norwegian official.

crisis, dust storms, as well as the protection of shared water areas in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

In a post in X, Mlongo Barasa wrote, "I welcome Iran's strong commitment to deepening collaboration in climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, the protection of endangered species, and capacity building, especially in the training of rangers."

During a meeting with Ansari, "our discussion centred on the ongoing negotiations of key resolutions, particularly those sponsored by Kenya, covering critical areas such as the environmental role of Artificial Intelligence, tackling Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), and advancing the use of sports as a driver for sustainability.

We also reviewed progress on the MoU, the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), technical capacity support, and our coordinated engagement in multilateral environmental processes. These joint efforts continue to strengthen our shared vision for environmental stewardship and sustainable development."

UNEA background

The UNEA is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment. Established in June 2012 as a result of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Since 2014, UNEA has held six sessions during which 105 resolutions have spurred action on critically important issues, including air pollution, biodiversity and health, financing for development, plastic pollution, marine litter, environmental education, water management, nature-based solutions, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, climate change, Science-Policy Panel for chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, the illegal wildlife trade and protecting the environment in areas affected by armed conflict and disasters, minerals and metals management, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, amongst many others.

UNEA-7 is being held under the theme 'Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet', sending a strong message to accelerate sustainable solutions and effective responses for a safer and more resilient planet.

This theme recognizes that striving for a world that is just, equitable, and inclusive hinges on advancing sustainable development, promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, and environmental protection to benefit all.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Excessive use of renewable water in Kerman 'worrisome'

Excessive withdrawal of renewable water, equaling 123 percent of the current volume, in the southeastern province of Kerman, has raised great concerns while posing a serious threat to the life of residents and region's biodiversity.

"Currently, there are 5.5 billion cubic meters of renewable water in Kerman province, but 6.8 billion cubic meters equivalent to 123 percent of renewable water resources is being used," IRNA quoted Reza Jazinizadeh, the head of Kerman province's department of environment, as saying on Thursday.

In the [13]40s (falling on 1960s), concurrent with the establishment of the Ministry of Energy, renewable water resources measured at 90 million cubic meters, and some 50 million cubic meters out of this amount was withdrawn, Jazinizadeh explained.

برداشت ۱۲۳ درصد آبهای تجدیدپذیر در کرمان نگران کننده است

مدیرکل حفاظت محیط زیست استان کرمان گفت: برداشت ۱۲۳ درصد از آبهای تجدیدپذیر در این استان که حیات انسانی و جانوری را با تهدید جدی مواجه کرده، نگران کننده است.

وی تصریح کرد: در حال حاضر در استان کرمان ۵.۵ میلیارد متر مکعب آب تجدیدپذیر داریم که ۶.۸ میلیارد مترمکعب معادل ۱۲۳ درصد آبهای تجدید پذیر برداشت و مورد استفاده قرار می گیرد.

رضا جزینی زاده روز پنجشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: در دهه ۱۳۴۰ با تشکیل وزارت نیرو در کشور میزان برداشت آب از سفره های زیرزمینی مورد بررسی قرار گرفت و مشخص شد که در کشور ۹۰ میلیون مترمکعب آب تجدید پذیر وجود دارد و از این میزان ۵۰ میلیون مترمکعب برداشت می شود.

Global investment essential for sustainable return of refugees: Iran's UN envoy

TEHRAN –Iran's UN envoy to Geneva, Ali Bahreini, has called for the international community's investment in infrastructure, employment, education, and other services to improve conditions in Afghanistan for the sustainable return of refugees to their home countries.

Addressing the 116th Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Wednesday, the official said, "Forced displacement has increased due to conflicts and increasing global instability."

However, "the severe pressure on host communities and the lack of international aid have made it impossible for this situation to continue indefinitely," Bahreini made the remarks in reference to Iran's generous hosting of millions of Afghan citizens for more than four decades, despite unlawful sanctions, IRNA reported.

"Forced displacement has increased due to conflicts and increasing global instability."

Highlighting that "Iran reserves its sovereign right to return unauthorized nationals," the representative also urged senior IOM officials to pay a visit to Iran's border areas to get first-hand information and find real common solutions.

The latest global migration developments, as well as policies and cooperation for effective management of international migration, were discussed in the IOM meeting.



IOM lauds Iran's services to Afghan refugees

In October, the Senior Advisor to the Director-General of the IOM, Kim Eling, appreciated the efforts of the country in hosting and providing services to Afghan refugees.

The IOM official met the Iranian Deputy Interior Minister, Mohammad Bathaei, on Monday on the sidelines of the 76th annual session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, held from October 6 to 10 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Commending the country's efforts in hosting Afghan nationals, Eling said that the reduction in the amount of aid from donor countries is the main challenge for the United Nations in advancing projects.

The Iranian official, for his part, underlined that "despite unilateral coercive sanctions, Iran has provided significant services to foreign nationals."

Iran hopes donor countries carry their share of responsibility by allocating appropriate aid to projects being implemented in the country, the official added.

When forests talk: Using AI to listen to nature and protect burning ecosystems

By Soroush Saki

TEHRAN – There is a quiet language in nature that humans rarely notice. Long before a wildfire becomes visible, the forest whispers warnings through rising temperatures, unusual animal movements, and subtle shifts in humidity. For centuries, these signals remained unheard, and by the time flames were seen from a distance, it was often too late. Today, a new kind of listener has entered the world's forests. Not human, not animal, but artificial intelligence trained to hear what we cannot, and to protect ecosystems that are struggling to survive in a rapidly warming world.

Wildfires have grown more frequent and more destructive, fueled by climate change and extreme weather patterns. Traditional methods of detection watchtowers, patrol vehicles, satellite scans often react after a fire has already gained strength. AI is changing this timeline. Instead of waiting for smoke to rise, intelligent systems analyze the minute-by-minute heartbeat of the forest. Networks of sensors measure temperature shifts, soil moisture, and carbon levels in the air, creating a continuous flow of data that helps detect the earliest signs of danger.

One of the most fascinating developments is the use of acoustic monitoring. Forests have their own soundscape, from insect vibrations to the distant steps of wildlife. AI-powered microphones listen for patterns that indicate trouble. The crackle of a tiny ember, the changed rhythm of wind passing through drying leaves, or the sudden quietness that suggests animals are fleeing, these sounds can point to a potential fire long before it becomes visible. Machine learning models compare real-time audio to thousands of recorded environmental patterns, identifying abnormalities within seconds. In this sense, AI is not simply a tool; it becomes a translator of nature's warnings.

Visual data is equally powerful. High-resolution cameras mounted on towers or drones scan vast landscapes, and AI interprets these images with remarkable precision. It can distinguish early smoke from morning fog, or a heat spike from sunlight reflecting off a rock.

Satellite imagery, enhanced with AI-driven analysis, allows scientists to predict which regions are at the highest risk based on vegetation dryness, wind direction, and historical patterns. What once required teams of experts and hours of processing is now accomplished in real time, offering a chance to act before a spark becomes a catastrophe.

But AI does more than detect fires, it helps understand the health of the ecosystem itself. Over months and years, data reveals how forests breathe. It shows how drought stresses trees, how animal populations shift, how invasive species spread, and how climate change gradually alters the landscape. These insights guide conservation efforts, informing where to restore vegetation, where to build firebreaks, and how to support the regeneration of burned areas. For communities living near forests, this knowledge can mean the difference between safety and loss.

There is a deeper message in this technological shift. In many ways, AI is teaching us to reconnect with the natural world, reminding us that forests communicate constantly, even if we rarely listen. Technology is not replacing human stewardship; it is extending our senses. Rangers, firefighters, and environmental scientists use AI as an ally, gaining the ability to respond faster and plan more wisely. When a forest sends out its signals, there is now someone or something ready to hear.

The challenge ahead is to use this technology responsibly and ensure that vulnerable regions have access to it. Many of the world's most threatened forests are in places where resources are limited, and ecosystems are already under immense pressure. Expanding AI-based monitoring to these areas could prevent devastation and preserve biodiversity that cannot be replaced.

Nature speaks in patterns, rhythms, and quiet warnings. By giving AI the ability to listen, humanity gains a chance to protect what remains of our fragile ecosystems. Forests may not speak in words, but with the right tools, their message becomes clear: they are asking for help, and this time, we are finally able to hear them.



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DECEMBER 13, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

To render relief to the distressed and to help the oppressed
make amends for great sins.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:11:59 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:36 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:06 (tomorrow)

What's in Tehran art galleries

Painting



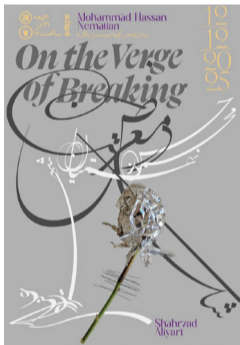
* An exhibition of paintings by Mino Mafi is underway at E1 Gallery. The exhibit named "The House That Turns Away" will run until December 26 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebbeh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.

* Artibition Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Arman Yaqoubpour. Entitled "In the Shade of the Sky", the exhibit runs until December 26 at the gallery located at No. 2798, Vali-e Asr Ave, after Parkvay, next to Bank of Industry and Mine.



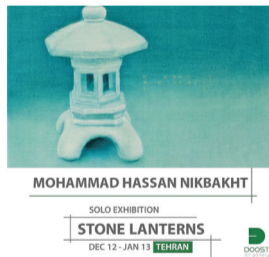
* Paintings by Mahvash Dolatabadi are on show at Haft Samar Gallery. The exhibition will be running until December 19 at the gallery that can be found at No. 8, Fifth Alley, Kuh-e Nur St., Motahari Ave.

* Paintings by Shahrzad Aliyari and Mohammad Hassan Nematian are on view in an exhibition at Adapa Gallery. Entitled "On the Verge of Breaking", the exhibition will run until December 24 at the gallery located at No. 5, Sumesara Alley, Sazesh St., Vali-e Asr Square.



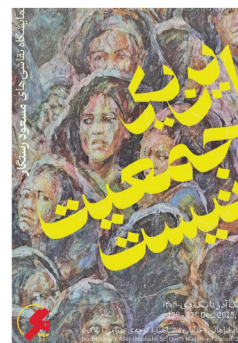
* A collection of paintings by Elham Qorbani is currently on display in an exhibit at Binesh Gallery. Named "Damavand", the exhibition runs until December 20 at the gallery located at 22 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave.

* Paintings by Mohammad Hassan Nikbakht are on display in an exhibition at Doost Gallery. Entitled "Stone Lanterns", the exhibit will be running until January 13, 2026 at the gallery, which can be found at No. 4, 4th St. off Eshqyar St., Khorramshahr Ave.



* An exhibition of paintings by Azam Mohtashami is underway at Ebteda Gallery. The exhibition titled "The House that Remembers" will run until December 17 at the gallery located at 35 Farrokhi Alley, near Vali-e Asr Square.

* An exhibition of paintings by Sara Saleh is currently underway at Ehsan Gallery. The exhibit will run until December 17 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.



* Paintings by Masoud Rastegar are on display in an exhibition at Negar Gallery. The exhibit named "This Is Not a Crowd" will be running until December 22 at the gallery, which can be found at No. 5, Bahrami alley, Mashahir Street, Qaem Maqam Farahani Avenue.

* Paintings by Azin Nouban are currently on view in an exhibition at Vaali Gallery. The exhibit named "Between Then and Now" will continue until December 30 at the gallery located at 72 Khoddami St., Vanak Sq.



Hamedan children's theater festival announces winners

TEHRAN- The 30th edition of Iran's International Theater Festival for Children and Young Adults, a prestigious event in the world of children's theater, came to a close on Thursday with a grand closing ceremony held in the city of Hamedan.

The ceremony marked the culmination of a week-long celebration of art, culture, and entertainment for children and youth, Mehr reported.

The event, which was attended by a large number of theater enthusiasts, artists, and officials, saw the introduction of the winners in different sections of the festival, the report added.

The international section of the festival saw the presentation of awards to four outstanding plays. The jury, comprising renowned theater experts, was impressed by the quality and creativity of the plays, and chose to award prizes to four productions.

"Devil's Trap" directed by Mohammad Jahanpa from Mashhad, "Triangle" by Qeis Yassaqi from Tehran, "The Mice' Meeting" by Sona Martirosyan from Armenia and "The Stubborn Adventurer" by Fábio Superbi from Brazil were honored in this section.

In the national section of the festival, in the Young Children category, "From Seed to Bread" by Hamed Torabi from Hamedan was crowned Best Play.

"Cute Faces" by Hadith Saberi from Qom received an honorable mention in this section.



Iranian stage director Davoud Zare is holding his award at the closing ceremony of the 30th edition of Iran's International Theater Festival for Children and Young Adults in Hamedan on December 11, 2025.

In the Children section, "Pinocchio," directed by Davoud Zare, was named Best Play. The play also brought Zare the Best Director award.

In the Young Adults section, the play "Enemy of God," directed by Emadeddin Rajablo and Majid Araqi won the Best Play award.

The 30th Iran's International Theater Festival for Children and Young Adults was organized by the Dramatic Arts Center of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, supported by Hamedan Municipality and in partnership with the Hamedan province's Cultural and Islamic Guidance Office, as well as the Iranian Dramatic Arts Association.

The event aimed at enhancing unity and companionship, growth, awareness, and the confidence of Iranian children through the medium of theater as well as achieving social participation of children and adolescents, promoting public culture, strengthening the foundations of family and intergenerational communication, and educating citizens and increasing responsibility through the active participation of Iranian children and adolescents in the production of theatrical works.

With the motto "Today's Child, New Narratives, Tomorrow's Stage", the 30th edition of Iran's International Theater Festival for Children and Young Adults was held from December 5 to 11.

Da Theater Hall hosting

Christopher Durang's "Nina in the Morning"

TEHRAN - Da Theater Hall in Tehran is hosting the one-act parody "Nina in the Morning" written by Christopher Durang.

The 45-minute play is directed by Marcell Davood and has Hedie Azade, Hasan Fazli, Eila Tehrani, Sohrab Keivanmarz, and Hedieh Toroghi in the cast.

"Nina in the Morning" is a mysterious, funny play about an extremely wealthy, narcissistic woman named Nina. Her facelift has fallen this morning, and her plastic surgeon is unreachable, on vacation in Aruba. She has three children, two of whom keep trying to kill her; the third one is the mentally challenged girl LaLa, whom Nina keeps accusing of being "willfully retarded."

While her servant Foote follows her bidding (including giving one of her sons a knockout shot; Foote used to be a dentist), an elegant Narrator describes past events in Nina's life which she recalls and sometimes relives (many seductions, especially of chauffeurs and house painters). Finally, one of her children shoots her in the shoulder, and Nina becomes discouraged and considers



NINA IN THE MORNING نینا در صبحگاه

suicide. On the other hand, it's near lunch time. She's left debating to herself: "Death... or lunch. Death.... or lunch."

Christopher Durang (1949 -2024) was an

American playwright known for works of outrageous and often absurd comedy. His work was especially popular in the 1980s, though his career seemed to get a second wind in the late 1990s.

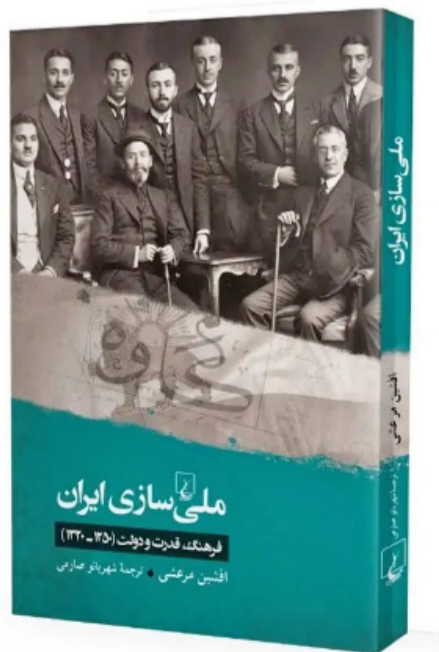
His work often deals critically with issues of child abuse, Roman Catholic dogma, and culture. Much of Durang's style can be attributed to the aesthetic of black comedy, a humor style that offers a fatalistic view of life.

Durang suggested that his form of humor requires a double-consciousness, an ability to register scenes of cruelty or pain, while simultaneously comprehending the humor.

Humor is one way of resolving conflict and anxiety, and black comedy goes a step further to relieve tension regarding subjects that are typically difficult to think about, such as death, family dysfunction, or torture.

"Nina in the Morning" will remain on stage till the end of December at the Da Theater Hall, located at No. 5, the first dead-end, Khark Street, Enqelab Street.

"Nationalizing Iran" available in bookstores



TEHRAN - The Persian translation of the book "Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940" written by Afshin Marashi has been released in the bookstores across the country.

The book has been translated by Shahrba-

noo Saremi and published by Qoqnoos Publishing House, ILNA reported.

When Naser al-Din Shah, who ruled Iran from 1848 to 1896, claimed the title Shadow of God on Earth, his authority rested on premodern conceptions of sacred kingship. By 1941, when Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi came to power, his claim to authority as the Shah of Iran was infused with the language of modern nationalism. In short, between roughly 1870 and 1940, Iran's traditional monarchy was forged into a modern nation-state.

Originally published in 2008, the book explores the changes that made possible this transformation of Iran into a social abstraction in which notions of state, society, and culture converged. The author follows Naser al-Din Shah on a tour of Europe in 1873 that led to his importing a new public image of monarchy, an image based on the European late imperial model, relying heavily on the use of public ceremonies, rituals, and festivals to promote loyalty to the monarch.

Meanwhile, Iranian intellectuals were reimagining ethnic history to reconcile "authentic" Iranian culture with the demands of modernity. From the reform of public ed-

ucation to the symbolism surrounding grand public ceremonies in honor of long-dead poets, Marashi shows how the state invented and promoted key features of the common culture binding state and society. The ideological thrust of that century would become the source of dramatic contestation in the late 20th century.

Marashi's study of the formative era of Iranian nationalism will be valuable to scholars and students of history, sociology, political science, and anthropology, as well as journalists, policy makers, and other close observers of contemporary Iran.

Afshin Marashi is an American historian, with a focus on modern Iran. He is a professor of history at the University of Oklahoma. He is the current holder of the Farzaneh Family Chair in Modern Iranian History.

He received his bachelor's degree in political science in 1992 from University of California, Berkeley, and his Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2003. He has worked at the University of Kansas and California State University, Sacramento in the past. In addition to English, he has a reading/speaking command of Persian, and a reading command of Turkish, French and Spanish.