

# Failure in June, Rhetoric in December

Senior Iranian officials respond to Monday’s remarks by Trump and Netanyahu with warnings of consequences beyond expectation



Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump at the Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, U.S., December 29, 2025.

## Presidents of Iran and Russia discuss advancing bilateral relations

TEHRAN – The presidents of Iran and Russia held a phone conversation on Tuesday to discuss the current state of bilateral relations and the progress of their joint agreements.

During the call, both leaders emphasized the strategic significance of the Tehran-Moscow partnership. They reviewed the accomplishments of their ongoing cooperation and stressed the importance of maintaining regular consultations.

The presidents also highlighted the need to strengthen coordination in order to further advance and broaden comprehensive relations between the two countries.

## Our restraint should not be misread as weakness, Iran FM writes in The Guardian

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister has warned that the country’s restraint during recent war with Israel should not be interpreted as weakness or assumed to be unlimited, highlighting the high cost of Israeli provocations for the United States and the region.

In an article published by The Guardian on Tuesday, Abbas Araghchi said that Israel’s push to involve the U.S. in a confrontation with Iran earlier this year came at “a steep and unprecedented cost” for Tel Aviv. According to Araghchi, the situation has prompted some Americans to question Israel’s role in regional policy, with U.S. allies in the Arab world also recognizing Israel’s actions as destabilizing. ▶ Page 3

## Manufacturing chaos: How Western and Israeli actors seek to hijack Iran’s peaceful protests

*Israel has openly admitted deploying agents on the ground to push protests towards violence; meanwhile, fabricated videos try to portray the protests as going awry*

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – Protests are a natural and fundamental part of any society whose citizens care about their future and believe they can influence it. They are not a sign of systemic failure, but an indicator of civic health and the practice of free speech, assembly, and association. For Western states, their media, and their politicians, all of this holds true—except when the protests occur in Iran.

The unprecedented volatility in the currency market and the rapid devaluation of the Iranian Rial in recent weeks compelled business owners (known as bazaaris) to shutter their shops, go on strike, and gather in several of Tehran’s central squares on Monday to voice their discontent. Reports from Tehran Times journalists on the scene, along with footage shared by participants, indicate the protests—which began Sunday, peaked Monday, and continued minimally into Tuesday—remained largely peaceful.

Demonstrators largely refrained from vandalizing public property, kept pathways open for vehicles, and directed their

slogans toward improved economic management. Anti-riot forces monitored the gatherings and seldom intervened. None of what has emerged from Iran over these past few days would be unfamiliar in the regular weekly protests seen across European capitals or American cities.

Yet this manner of protest does not sit well with the West or with the region’s rabid dog, Israel. At least two circulated videos show unidentified individuals urging bazaaris to vandalize

property and block streets. In one, a young woman addresses a crowd of men—Iran’s bazaaris are predominantly male—then flees after the business owners refuse to escalate into violence. She retreats after one protester challenges her: “Who even are you?”

Another incident in Tehran’s Hassan Abad Square showed a man dragging a large municipal trash bin—one of thousands placed throughout the city—and attempting to set it ablaze. Bystanders urged him to stop before security forces arrested him. A Tehran Times journalist present noted that none of the bazaaris recognized the man after inquiries were made following his detention.

Simultaneously, an online influence campaign has emerged, editing videos and dubbing them with fabricated audio to falsely suggest protesters are demanding the return of the deposed Shah’s son. One widely circulated image, purported to symbolize the protests—depicting a solitary man seated on asphalt facing rows of security forces on motorcycles—was later exposed as AI-generated. ▶ Page 2

## Saudi ‘red line’ and UAE’s adventurism in Yemen

By staff writer

TEHRAN – Saudi Arabia has framed its national security as a “red line,” warning it will act decisively against any foreign military support for separatist groups in Yemen. The declaration on Tuesday came hours after Saudi-led coalition airstrikes targeted vehicles and cargo at Mukalla port, which Riyadh said had been supplied by the United Arab Emirates to the Southern Transitional Council (STC). Though the strike was limited and caused no casualties, its political significance was profound: Saudi Arabia is signaling that Abu Dhabi’s maneuvers have crossed into confrontation.

Rashad al Alimi, the Saudi-backed head of Yemen’s Presidential Leadership Council, reinforced this position in a televised address. He ordered all Emirati forces to leave Yemen within 24 hours, cancelled the defense pact with Abu Dhabi, declared a 90-day state of emergency, and imposed a 72-hour blockade on ports and border crossings. His response underscored Riyadh’s determination to reassert control over the coalition’s agenda and to confront what it views as destabilizing Emirati ambitions. ▶ Page 5

## Detention of Jordanian journalist Mohammad Faraj and erosion of free expression

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT—As 2025 draws to a close, the continued detention of Jordanian journalist and political writer Mohammad Faraj remains unresolved and deeply troubling.

Held for roughly three weeks without formal charges, a public indictment, or judicial transparency, Faraj’s case raises urgent questions about due process, freedom of expression, and the narrowing space for independent political thought in the Arab world.

Faraj’s disappearance from public life did not follow an act of provocation or a declared offense. ▶ Page 5

## 10th National Toy Festival to open in Tehran

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- The 10th edition of the National Toy Festival is set to open on Wednesday evening, dedicating space for Iranian-made toys and the promotion of a culture of play, with free access for the public, Hamed Alamedi, director of the Iran’s Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) has announced.

Speaking at a press conference in Tehran on Tuesday, Alamedi pointed out that the festival has already been hosted in West Azarbaijan and Markazi provinces, with other regions soon to follow.

He stressed the importance of re-examining concepts like ‘exhibition’ and ‘festival’ to better understand their roles—not merely as venues for displaying products, but as platforms for generating meaning, fostering cultural exchange, and addressing social issues through play. ▶ Page 8



## Tehran concert pays tribute to Martyr Soleimani

TEHRAN- The Tehran Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Nasir Heidarian, performed the concert “Iran-Mard” at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on Tuesday. The event was a special tribute to Martyr General Qassem Soleimani, a respected Iranian hero.

This concert was part of a larger effort to honor Soleimani’s memory. It aimed to celebrate his life and achievements, while also emphasizing important values like sacrifice, unity, and national pride.



## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## Enemy stages street protests to mask 12-day war defeat

The Javan newspaper analyzed enemy strategies in fomenting unrest in Iran. The paper noted that, at present, the enemy is once again pursuing a policy of soft overthrow, combined with terrorist and armed operations, in the form of the 12-day war, using the same structure but with different motives and methods against Iran. Disrupting national cohesion and inciting public opinion to push protests into the streets are among the enemy's tactics to weaken Iran's deterrence and compensate for its defeat in the 12-day conflict. This is because spontaneous national unity, as a powerful factor, contradicted the forecasts of the Zionist-American operations room, rendering ineffective the plan of "chaos from within, war from without," and ultimately leading to failure in the military confrontation with Iran. At present, the enemy's primary goal is the collapse of social order and national cohesion, which serve as deterrent factors and as groundwork for launching another military operation against Iran. They aim to entangle Iran's armed forces in internal strife and sedition, thereby reducing their focus and capacity to defend the country and confront external threats, while simultaneously pursuing the strategy of overthrow and regime change to destabilize the foundations of governance.

### Farhikhtegan: Netanyahu pushes Trump toward renewed Iranophobia

Farhikhtegan assessed the purpose of Netanyahu's trip to the United States. The paper pointed out that the core of Netanyahu's concerns lies in the shift in the Trump administration's view of Iran's nuclear file. Trump has repeatedly boasted in interviews that by bombing Iran's nuclear sites, he crippled Tehran's nuclear capability and removed the issue from the table. This claim has now become a major obstacle for Netanyahu, because if he were to state openly that Iran's nuclear program not only survived but is being restructured and strengthened, he would, in effect, be insulting Trump's intelligence and achievements. For this reason, Netanyahu, on this trip, was expected to make a cunning tactical pivot, shifting his focus from nuclear to missile issues. He attempted to securitize Iran's ballistic capabilities and construct a new narrative in which Iran is not a nuclear threat but rather an aggressive missile power intent on taking harsh revenge on Israel for the 12-day war. Netanyahu went to the United States to create artificial security for himself, while Iran, relying on its endogenous strength, has proven that in the new international order, only genuine powers will endure.

## Tehran reiterates respect for Lebanon's independence, says ambassador

TEHRAN – Iran's Ambassador to Beirut Mojtaba Amani has reviewed developments in Lebanon and the region in separate meetings with the Lebanese defense minister and the commander of the Lebanese Army.

In a meeting with Lebanese Defense Minister Michel Mansi, the top Iranian diplomat congratulated him on the anniversary of birthday of Jesus Christ and the Christian New Year.

During the talks, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and a host of issues of common concern, especially the general situation in Lebanon and the region, while emphasizing the importance of stability and strengthening diplomatic communication channels.

Amani and his accompanying delegation also sat down with General Rudolf Heikal, the commander of the Lebanese Army, and discussed the general situation in Lebanon and the region with him.

Recently, the Lebanese government has made some baseless claim of Iran's interference in Beirut's affairs.

In a meeting with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri in mid-December, Iranian Ambassador to Beirut Mojtaba Amani discussed with him the latest political developments in Lebanon and in the region, bilateral ties and re-

### Sobh-e-No: A message of power

Sobh-e-No devoted an article to the message from the Leader of Revolution addressed to the annual meeting of the Union of Islamic Student Associations in Europe. The paper wrote: This message, in addition to referencing the defeat of the enemies of the Islamic Republic in the 12-day-imposed war, contained important and prominent points that clarify the path envisioned by the Leader of the Revolution in formulating the strategic objectives of the Islamic system. In this message, the Leader emphasized the crucial role of students abroad in fulfilling this great duty and mission. Universities in Europe and America have become driving forces in confronting American-Zionist arrogance, and without doubt, Iranian students and Muslim students from other Islamic countries can also play an influential role in this historic movement. Despite economic hardships and challenges, Iran has reached an unprecedented position, serving as a model of resistance and courageous steadfastness against domineering powers. Public opinion in Western countries is undoubtedly being shaped by the activism of the younger generation, especially students, who are experiencing such an unprecedented transformation. The continuation of this enlightenment can influence the future face of governments in many Western countries.

### Kayhan: Wide coverage of the launch of three Iranian satellites in global media

Kayhan analyzed the extensive global coverage of the successful launch of three Iranian satellites into space. The paper stated: Iran sent three domestically built satellites into Earth's orbit from a Russian spaceport, an event that drew broad international attention and highlighted Iran's advances in space technology. The simultaneous launch of three Iranian satellites from Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome was not merely a technical event in space technology; it quickly became a headline receiving wide coverage across foreign news agencies, television networks, and other media outlets. Leading international outlets approached the launch from different angles: some focused on its technical aspects and Iran-Russia space cooperation, while others analyzed it within the framework of geopolitical developments. Reviewing these reactions provides a clear picture of how foreign media perceive Iran's space program and its possible consequences. The launch of three Iranian satellites, beyond being a scientific and technological achievement, stands as an example of Iran's progress in its space program and of international cooperation in space technology.



*Iran's Ambassador to Beirut Mojtaba Amani (C), meets with General Rudolf Heikal, the commander of the Lebanese Army on December 29, 2025.*

peated violations by the Israeli regime.

The Iranian ambassador highlighted that Tehran pays due regard to the independence of Lebanon as well as the maintenance of the country's territorial integrity and unity.

"In this meeting, the prospects for Iran's contribution to the trend of Lebanon's reconstruction and support for Lebanese people were discussed," the ambassador explained.

Iran maintains it has no desire to interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs and would respect any decision made collectively by the Lebanese people.

# Manufacturing chaos: How Western and Israeli actors seek to hijack Iran's peaceful protests

From page 1 ► Israel, in fact, has openly admitted to deploying agents on the ground in an attempt to steer these peaceful demonstrations toward chaos. Mossad's Persian-language social media account posted on Monday: "Let's hit the streets together. The time is now. We stand with you. Not just in spirit or in words. We'll be there on the ground with you."

Blunter still were remarks from a reporter with Israel's Channel 13, revealing the regime's intent to capitalize on the unrest: "Israel should organize and steer the protests in Iran; we must support and back the protesters, and then wage the full-scale war we were hoping for and waiting for!"

An anchor at Iran International—which shamelessly endorsed Israel's 12-day military aggression against Iran in June—suggested that broadening the protests could facilitate another Israeli attack. The outlet, headquartered in London and Washington and funded by Israel, openly encourages Iranians to regard Israel as their ultimate savior: "Expanding street protests will pave the way for military action and solidify a wartime stance against Iran; we must make these protests spread; Israel is prepared to support the protests."

Among political figures, Israel's former Prime Minister Naftali



*Bazaaris peacefully protesting the fall of Iranian currency rial keep pathways open for vehicles in downtown Tehran*

Bennett recorded a "special message to the people of Iran," declaring his regime's readiness to help Iranians achieve "freedom."

U.S. President Donald Trump also weighed in while hosting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, warning that Iran must acquiesce to his demands to avoid further "turmoil." Neither Trump, nor any of the politicians or media outlets professing "support" for Iranians, acknowledged that the core cause of Iran's economic distress is the "maximum pressure" sanctions Trump imposed in 2018—sanctions that have only tightened since.

Iranian authorities have acknowledged the protests and stated they are taking new measures to stabilize the Rial, whose repeated decline fuels inflation. President Masoud Pezeshkian addressed demonstrators in a post on X and again during a Tuesday cabinet meeting. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf likewise described the protests as legitimate during a parliamentary session, but cautioned participants to remain vigilant against enemy attempts to exploit them.

Ultimately, these events reveal a clear double standard: peaceful assembly is praised as democratic expression in one context

yet is relentlessly scrutinized and exploited when it occurs within a nation opposed by Western and Israeli interests. While internal grievances are addressed through official channels and public discourse in Iran, external actors actively work to distort, escalate, and weaponize civil discontent—not in solidarity with the Iranian people, but in pursuit of their own geopolitical objectives. The true measure of these protests, therefore, lies not in the sensationalized narratives promoted from abroad, but in the legitimate, orderly, and reform-oriented spirit with which they were conducted by the Iranian people themselves.

## Iran blacklists Royal Canadian Navy as 'terror organization'

TEHRAN – Iran has officially designated the Royal Canadian Navy as a terrorist organization, responding to Canada's "illegal decision" last year to target part of the Iranian Armed Forces.

In a statement released Tuesday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said the designation was made under the framework of the law titled Reciprocal Action Against the US Designation of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a Terrorist Organization, extending its provisions to include Canada.

The ministry accused Ottawa of violating fundamental principles of international law by labeling the IRGC—a recognized branch of Iran's official armed forces—as a terrorist entity. Citing the principle of reciprocity and Article 7 of the 2019 law, Iran said any country that follows

or supports the United States' decision to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization is subject to reciprocal action. On that basis, the Royal Canadian Navy has been officially identified as a terrorist organization.

The statement framed the move as a direct response to Canada's 2024 decision to place the IRGC on its terrorist list, which Iranian authorities condemned at the time as part of a continued hostile approach toward Tehran.

Iran recalled that Canada severed diplomatic relations and closed its embassy in Tehran in 2012, citing Iran's support for Syria, its nuclear program, and alleged threats to Israel. At the same time, Ottawa removed the Mujaheddin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO), an anti-Iranian group responsible for attacks on Iranian offi-

cials and civilians, from its list of terrorist organizations after a decade-long campaign and lobbying by the group.

In addition, the Iranian Foreign Ministry noted that Canada has long served as a haven for Iranian fugitives accused of embezzlement and financial crimes, including former banker Mahmoud Reza Khavari, who fled to Canada after a \$2.6-billion fraud was uncovered in 2011.

Iran has consistently rejected foreign designations of the IRGC, calling them legally unfounded and contrary to international norms. In 2022, Tehran imposed sanctions on eight Canadian officials and one institution over their support for anti-Iranian terrorist activities, including backing for the MKO.

## 'Illegal and coercive', FM Araghchi condemns US actions against Venezuela

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has reiterated Tehran's firm opposition to any action that threatens Venezuela's sovereignty or territorial integrity, saying he is confident the country will safeguard its independence in the face of external pressure.

Araghchi made the remarks during a video conference with Iran's ambassador to Caracas, Ali Chegini, and staff at Iran's diplomatic mission in Venezuela. During the meeting, he praised the efforts of Iranian diplomats and received an update on the latest developments in bilateral relations between Tehran and Caracas.

The Iranian foreign minister stressed Iran's clear rejection of the unlawful and coercive measures targeting Venezuela, arguing that national unity and social cohesion will enable the Venezuelan people to protect their independence and national interests. He singled out the United States as the source of illegal actions against the South American country.

Ambassador Chegini, for his part, briefed Araghchi on steps already taken and ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation between Iran and Venezuela.

Separately, Iran's Foreign Ministry on Monday dismissed reports claiming that Iranian diplomats or companies were withdrawing from Venezuela. Speaking at his weekly press conference in Tehran, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei described the reports as "completely false," saying Iran's ambassador and embassy staff remain fully engaged in their duties and that the diplomatic mission continues to operate actively.

Baqaei also rejected claims that an Iranian company had pulled out of Venezuela, explaining that the report originated about a year ago and had since been misinterpreted. He said recent developments in Venezuela have raised international concern, noting them as a challenge to the global rules-based order.

He accused the United States of violating international norms through its actions in the Caribbean, noting that US officials have openly acknowledged intentions to seize Venezuela's oil resources.

The comments come amid heightened tensions following claims by US President Donald Trump that a dock in Venezuela used to load "boats with drugs" had been attacked. The



*Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C) speaks during a video conference with Iran's Ambassador to Caracas Ali Chegini, along with diplomats stationed at the Iranian diplomatic mission in Venezuela (not shown in the picture), on December 30, 2025.*

announcement followed a US military statement saying it had carried out another strike on a suspected drug-trafficking vessel in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing at least two people.

Venezuela has not commented on the attack, and there has been no independent confirmation of a US strike inside the country.

The claims come as the Trump administration intensifies pressure on Caracas as part of what it describes as

a broader campaign against drug smuggling bound for the United States. Venezuelan authorities strongly deny any involvement in drug trafficking, insisting that Washington's real objective is to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro and gain control of the country's vast oil reserves, the largest proven reserves in the world.

According to the US administration, at least 107 people have been killed in 30 attacks carried out since early September.



# Failure in June, rhetoric in December

## Senior Iranian officials respond to Monday’s remarks by Trump and Netanyahu with warnings of consequences beyond expectation

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – The constant glare of Western rhetoric does not leave Iran alone. For decades, the country has faced repeated threats of military strikes, claims about its nuclear ambitions, and warnings designed to keep the nation under pressure—both domestically and internationally.

Just on Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump, speaking alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, repeated claims about Iran “rebuilding” its nuclear or missile programs and insisted the U.S. would intervene if such developments occurred.

From Tehran’s perspective, these remarks are hostile rhetoric rather than reasoned warnings. Officials view them as part of a deliberate campaign to create fear, shape public opinion, and justify policies of coercion, rather than a credible assessment of Iran’s peaceful defense programs. Trump’s comments, including claims that the U.S. had been “extremely victorious” and that any nuclear program would be “eradicated,” are seen as exaggerations aimed at undermining Iran’s international standing.

Iranian leaders quickly responded, warning that renewed aggression will be met with consequences far beyond the calculations of its architects.

President Masoud Pezeshkian insisted on social media: “The response of the Islamic Republic of Iran to any oppressive actions will be severe and regret-inducing.”

Tehran stresses that its defensive



U.S. President Donald Trump (R) welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to his home in Florida for talks.

capabilities, including its missile program, are sovereign and strictly deterrent, designed to protect the nation and its people in a volatile region.

Senior security figures reinforced the message with explicit warnings. Ali Shamkhani, adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on national security, bluntly declared Iran’s missile and defensive capabilities “not containable or permission-based,” and warned that any “miscalculation” by aggressors would trigger an immediate and disproportionate reply.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf echoed this stance in a public session on Tuesday, stating that Iran does not seek “permission” from any power to defend itself. He warned that Iran’s responses to adventurism and wrongdoing would be “extensive,” “uncompromising,” and “potentially unexpected,” adding that future actions would not necessarily resemble those of the past.

Tehran points to the June conflict

as proof that escalation does not guarantee victory for Israel or its backers. In mid-June, an Israeli offensive and subsequent US strikes on Iranian nuclear sites produced a twelve-day confrontation that demonstrated both the cost of military escalation and the effectiveness of Iranian deterrence. Iranian analysts argue that despite claims of “victory” by US and Israeli officials, the June war demonstrated the opposite: that military escalation carries costs Washington and Tel Aviv cannot easily manage. Secretary-General of the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening Ali Akbar Velayati said the enemy committed an “egregious error” in assessing Iran’s military power, noting that precision missile strikes exposed vulnerabilities and compelled the adversary to seek an end to hostilities.

Tehran also rejects Western demands to limit missile ranges or dismantle nuclear infrastructure, calling such demands violations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and at-

tempts to strip Iran of its sovereign right to self-defense. Instead, Iranian officials have urged Washington to abandon its policy of maximum pressure and end its support for Israeli actions in the region.

Calls from other states, including Russia, for restraint and dialogue further reinforce Iran’s position. The Kremlin on Tuesday said it was “necessary to develop a dialogue with Iran and urged all parties to refrain from escalation after Trump said Washington would support another massive strike on Iran.

Iranian officials have been stressing that while Tehran does not seek war, it will not hesitate to respond decisively to any threat against its national security. In a statement published on Monday, The Armed Forces General Staff assured the Iranian people that the country’s devoted military personnel, fully prepared and resolute, will not allow any harm to befall the nation or its citizens’ security.

The General Staff emphasized that should the enemies make another misstep—at any place or time—they will face consequences far stronger, more decisive, and more damaging than those of the previous period.

From Tehran’s vantage point, Trump and Netanyahu’s rhetoric is less about deterrence and more about sustaining tension—keeping the possibility of war alive to pressure Iran politically and psychologically. Iranian leaders insist, however, that the experience of June has already demonstrated a fundamental reality: intimidation has limits, and Iran’s capacity to defend itself is no longer theoretical but proven in practice.



Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the scene where an Iranian missile hit and caused damage at the Mossad-linked Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, June 20, 2025.

ed with air operations, intelligence training, and command-and-control capabilities.

Iranian officials say Israel has since imposed sweeping censorship measures, restricting foreign media access, limiting satellite imagery, and pressuring social media platforms to suppress content showing damage and losses inside the occupied territories.

Tehran has repeatedly warned that it will deliver a decisive response to any future military aggression or actions that threaten Iran’s national security.

willingness among mutual friends of Iran and the U.S. to facilitate dialogue and underwrite the full and verifiable implementation of any negotiated outcome.” He stressed that Iran remains open to negotiations grounded in mutual respect and interest, but warned that any diplomatic engagement must not be framed as a demand for Iranian capitulation.

“Iran has never desired a war with the U.S.,” Araghchi said, citing Iranian military restraint during the June conflict as evidence that U.S. installations in the region remain intact. “That restraint should not be mistaken for weakness or assumed to be endless.”

The article concluded with a call for diplomacy, asserting that Iran is prepared for “serious negotiations” to reach a fair and verifiable deal that respects its rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, including access to peaceful nuclear technology. Araghchi described recent regional shifts as a “brief window of opportunity” to break longstanding cycles of tension.



# IRAN IN FOCUS

DECEMBER 31, 2025

Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## SPORTS

### Amiri hungry for more success in wheelchair basketball

TEHRAN – Roghaye Amiri, Iran’s national women’s wheelchair basketball team forward, expressed hope that she can continue to achieve honors with the national team in upcoming events.

Amiri has a gold medal from the Asian Championships and also won a bronze medal on the path to securing qualification for the World Championships.

She was selected for the tournament’s All-Star Team at the 2017 Asian Championships, and once again earned a place in the All-Star Team during the World Championship qualification tournament held in 2022.

“I have been a member of the national wheelchair basketball team for eight years. I have achieved many titles in this sport, but I must say that I am still hungry for success and I will not stop striving,” Amiri said in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

The 24-year-old athlete, who was the oldest member of Iran’s delegation at the Asian Youth Para Games, spoke about that competition and said: “The latest achievement I earned with the women’s wheelchair basketball team was at the Asian Para Games in Dubai, where we finished as runners-up in the 3x3 wheelchair basketball event. This was the first time this discipline was included in the Asian Para Games, and I believe we delivered a good performance.”

Amiri, who has also experienced being the top scorer and MVP in national championships and plays in the guard and center positions, described wheelchair basketball as a major influence in her life.

“Sport, in general, changed the course of my life. My plan for the coming years is to have a stronger presence in competitions. I hope that in the future we can use sport as a tool to improve the physical fitness of athletes with disabilities,” Amiri added.

Speaking about the 2025 IWBFA Asia Oceania, where she and her team secured qualification for the 2026 Asian Para Games, Amiri commented on the competition level: “The level of the competition in Thailand was very high. We participated with young players who had no international experience. Asian teams have made significant progress, and our main rival, Thailand, have improved greatly. We must do our utmost to reduce the gap with them.”

When asked whether she will compete at the 2026 Asian Para Games, Amiri said:

“I am currently in the training camp, and if the coaches decide, I will proudly take part in these Games so that we can deliver a better performance than in the previous edition.”

Amiri and Iran’s national women’s wheelchair basketball team finished fourth at the 2022 Asian Para Games.

### Tractor, Malavan share the spoils in 2025/26 PGPL

TEHRAN – Tractor and Malavan shared the spoils in a goalless draw in Matchweek 15 of the 2025/26 Iran Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Tuesday.

Tractor created several scoring opportunities, but their players failed to convert their chances in Tabriz’s Yadegar-e Emam Stadium.

The hosts had two goals ruled out following VAR reviews.

Tractor sit fourth with 23 points, seven points adrift of league leaders Sepahan, while Malavan are in seventh place with 22 points.

### Iran U23 football team to hold camp in Dubai

TEHRAN – Iran’s U23 football team arrived in Dubai on Sunday afternoon to begin a one-week training camp as part of preparation for

the 2026 AFC U23 Asian Cup.

Under the guidance of head coach Omid Ravankhah, the team will use the camp to fine-tune tactics and match fitness ahead of the continental tournament.

Iran are scheduled to play a friendly match against China on Jan. 1 at the Iranian Club in Dubai.

The Iranian U23 side has been drawn into Group C alongside South Korea, Lebanon, and Uzbekistan.

They will open their campaign on Jan. 7 with a high-profile match against South Korea.

The 2026 AFC U23 Asian Cup will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from Jan. 6 to 24.

### Persepolis eye Khojiakbar Alijonov: report

TEHRAN – Pakhtakor Tashkent defender Khojiakbar Alijonov has reportedly been linked with a move to Iran’s Persepolis.

According to Sportilinet, the Iranian club are prepared to pay around \$1 million to secure the defender’s transfer, which would make him one of the most expensive players in the Uzbekistan Super League.

Alijonov is currently under contract with Pakhtakor until the end of 2026.

Earlier reports suggested that several foreign clubs, including Persepolis, were interested in signing the defender, but there has been no official confirmation of a deal so far.

### Morteza Alghosi to join Azerbaijan wrestling team

TEHRAN – Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Morteza Alghosi is set to join Azerbaijan’s national wrestling team.

Alghosi competes in the heavyweight division and is regarded as one of Iran’s notable Greco-Roman wrestlers.

Earlier, Iranian coach Mohammad Bana was appointed as head coach of Azerbaijan’s Greco-Roman wrestling team. He will be assisted by fellow Iranians Rasoul Jazini and Behrouz Hazratipour.

In addition, Iranian freestyle wrestler Amir Reza Masoumi has recently joined Azerbaijan’s wrestling setup, highlighting the growing Iranian presence within the country’s wrestling program.

### Esteghlal, Sepahan learn fate at 2025/26 ACL Two knockout stage

TEHRAN – Iranian football clubs Esteghlal and Sepahan discovered their challengers following the conclusion of the AFC Champions League Two 2025/26 Knockout Stage Draw on Tuesday.

All eight Round of 16 ties promise to be thrillers with all the hopefuls aiming to lift the coveted trophy for the first time.

Qatar’s Al Ahli FC, the Group B winners, will have to fend off the challenge of Group C runners-up Sepahan FC.

Al Ahli topped their group with 10 points – registering two wins and four draws – while Sepahan had two wins, a draw and a defeat.

Group C winners Al Hussein of Jordan were drawn to face Esteghlal of Iran.

Al Hussein registered three wins against one defeat in the group stage while Esteghlal only won twice.

The Round of 16 is scheduled to be played in February 2026 (West: 10-11, 17-18; East: 11-12, 18-19), followed by the Quarter-finals in March (West: 3-4, 10-11; East: 4-5, 11-12) and Semi-finals in April (West: 7 and 14; East: 8 and 15).

The tournament will culminate in a single-leg West-meets-East Final on May 16, 2026.

## Our restraint should not be misread as weakness, Iran FM writes in The Guardian

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister has warned that the country’s restraint during recent war with Israel should not be interpreted as weakness or assumed to be unlimited, highlighting the high cost of Israeli provocations for the United States and the region.

In an article published by The Guardian on Tuesday, Abbas Araghchi said that Israel’s push to involve the U.S. in a confrontation with Iran earlier this year came at “a steep and unprecedented cost” for Tel Aviv. According to Araghchi, the situation has prompted some Americans to question Israel’s role in regional policy, with U.S. allies in the Arab world also recognizing Israel’s actions as destabilizing.

“The war in June was momentous,” Araghchi wrote, referring to the 12-day confrontation between Israel and Iran. He argued that, despite Israeli claims of victory, Iran’s vast strategic depth and population meant that most of the country remained untouched, while Israel experienced the strength of Iran’s military. “The narrative of invul-

nerability—central to Israel’s myth-making—has been shattered,” he said.

Araghchi criticized Western skepticism over Iran’s nuclear program as “manufactured,” emphasizing that Iran does not seek nuclear weapons for strategic, ethical, or religious reasons. He said that during the Trump administration, U.S. policymakers were misled into believing that Iran was near collapse, prompting Washington to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal in favor of “maximum pressure,” which Iran says only strengthened its resistance.

Araghchi also noted Israel as a regional threat. He cited Israeli attacks on Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Yemen, and Qatar over the past two years and described the actions as aggression. He suggested that recent events have created opportunities for new regional cooperation aimed at countering Israel’s influence, which opened the door to “novel cooperation.”

Araghchi also highlighted the potential for renewed U.S.-Iran dialogue, noting “unprecedented



## South Pars refineries produce over 174m barrels of condensate in 9 months

TEHRAN – Gas processing plants at South Pars produced more than 174 million barrels of gas condensate in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), reinforcing feedstock supplies for downstream facilities and supporting energy security, the head of the South Pars Gas Complex (SPGC) said.

Gholamabbas Hosseini said the output played a strategic role in supplying feedstock to the Persian Gulf Star refinery, describing condensate as a high value-added product with importance beyond direct exports.

He said rising condensate production in recent years had directly boosted revenues from the sale of by-products, while also strengthening supplies to downstream industries and refineries producing higher-value fuels.

Hosseini described the South Pars Gas Complex as the country's largest natural gas processing hub, noting that it processes sour gas from the shared South Pars field through multiple refineries. He said the complex has a decisive role in supplying feedstock to petrochemical plants in the region and to the Per-



sian Gulf Star refinery, which is regarded as the world's largest gas condensate refinery.

The chief executive said the complex has relied on domestic expertise, development projects and modern technologies to increase production capacity and improve the stability of feedstock supplies.

"These measures have not only raised output but have also contributed to stronger energy security, economic growth and higher national value creation," he said.

## Irrigation equipment exports reach \$100m in 8 months

TEHRAN – Iran exported about \$100 million worth of irrigation equipment in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), the deputy head of the Agriculture Ministry's water and soil department said.

Safdar Niazi Shahraki said the equipment was exported to 18 countries, mainly in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russia, as well as Turkey, Iraq and Persian Gulf states.

Speaking at a press conference on the 10th Iran International Agriculture Exhibition, he said declining water resources in the agricultural sector made the use of science, technol-

ogy and higher productivity essential to sustain production, safeguard food security and reduce reliance on imports.

Niazi Shahraki said the exhibition would be held over three days from Friday and would bring together farmers, experts, extension workers, managers and other agricultural sector stakeholders.

He stressed that science and technology were the backbone of agricultural development, adding that sustainable production and food supply required investment and the adoption of modern technologies, particularly in water efficiency and irrigation performance.

## TEDPIX loses 102,000 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 102,178 points to 4.021 million on Tuesday, which is the fourth day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

On December 20, Hojatollah Seyedi, head of the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), said investor confidence has returned to the stock market and plans are in place to list up to 20 companies through initial public offerings by the end of the current Iranian year (late March 2026).

He said restoring confidence had been a prerequisite for deepening the market and expanding the role of the bourse in financing economic growth under the country's fourteenth government.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the start of trading at Tehran Securities Exchange (TSE), attended by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and Economy Minister Ali Madani-Zadeh, Seyedi said boosting capital formation had been a core objective since September last year, describing it as essential for sustainable economic growth.

He said government policies and support from the president had helped both deepen the market and expand it through new listings, adding that confidence peaked earlier this year.

Seyedi said the market had recovered swiftly from a brief downturn during a 12-day war, noting that losses were smaller than in comparable markets such as Ukraine and Moscow, and that coordinated action by the government, the central bank and market participants helped restore stability.

The bourse has now entered a stabilization phase and should move toward renewed growth, he said.



Seyedi described six-month corporate earnings reports as encouraging and said nine-month results, due shortly, were expected to confirm improving company performance.

He said structural reforms were also under way to ensure fairer and more transparent trading conditions, allowing investors to operate with greater confidence.

Looking ahead, Seyedi said the winter months were critical for the market as the government unveils its budget bill and companies close their annual accounts. He said the minimum trading volume requirement would be scrapped from late December, with exchanges to provide further guidance on closing and opening auctions and price calculations.

Seyedi said the regulator was preparing for the IPOs of at least 15 to 20 companies by year-end, depending on market conditions, and that several new financial instruments would also be introduced.

He criticized price controls as a key concern for listed companies, saying they squeeze profit margins through higher input and feedstock costs. Better planning to preserve corporate profitability would ultimately allow firms to contribute more tax revenue to the state, he added.

The official said recent signals from senior officials had raised optimism among market participants, expressing hope that continued government backing would support the capital market's role as a driver of economic growth.

# Over 2,000 industrial units go online, creating more than 27,000 direct jobs

TEHRAN – Iran put more than 2,100 industrial units into operation in the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 21- December 21), creating over 27,000 direct jobs and more than 50,000 indirect positions nationwide, a senior industry official said.

Reza Ansari, deputy industry minister and head of the Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), said 2,103 production units became operational during the period across industrial parks and zones. Of these, 1,307 units were launched in state-run industrial parks and zones, while 796 units started operations in privately managed parks.

He said the newly launched



units in state-run industrial parks created 18,948 direct jobs, while those in private industrial parks generated employment for 8,479 people.

Ansari said investment in units

brought online in state-run industrial parks reached about 490 trillion rials (about \$980 million) in the first nine months of 1404, up from around 410 trillion rials (about \$820 million) in the same

period last year, marking growth of roughly 20 percent.

According to the organization, the new units span a range of sectors including food and beverages, textiles, cellulose-based industries, chemicals, metallic and non-metallic minerals, services, and electricity and electronics.

Ansari said expert assessments show that each direct job created in industrial parks and zones typically leads to the creation of two indirect jobs across supply chains, transportation and related services.

"As a result, industrial parks across the country have supported the creation of around 80,000 direct and indirect job opportunities during the first nine months of this year," he said.

## Iranian exports to Oman hit \$500m over 10 months

TEHRAN – Trade between Iran and Oman reached \$1.35 billion in the first 10 months of 2025, up 24 percent from a year earlier, with Iranian exports accounting for \$500 million of the total, Oman's National Centre for Statistics and Information said.

The data showed that bilateral trade rose from \$1.09 billion in the January-October period of 2024, reflecting stronger commercial ties between the two neighbors.

According to the report, Iran ranked as the second-largest destination for Omani re-exports during the 10-month period, after the United Arab Emirates.

Re-exports from Oman to Iran totaled \$843 million, marking a five percent increase year on year and accounting for 21 percent of Oman's total re-exports.

Britain ranked third among destinations for Omani re-exports over the same period, the data showed.

Re-exports from Oman to Iran surged sharply in October, rising more than fourfold from \$60 million in September to \$260 million, highlighting volatility in monthly trade flows. By contrast, Oman's direct exports to Iran during the 10 months were limited, totaling just \$7.0 million.

The statistics also showed that Iran ranked 14th among Oman's suppliers in the January-October period, exporting \$500 million worth of goods to the sultanate. Iranian exports to Oman exceeded shipments from several major economies, including Germany, Italy, South Korea, Egypt, Russia, France, Sweden and Australia.

The figures underscore the growing role of re-export activity in bilateral trade, as well as Iran's position as a significant supplier to the Omani market despite ongoing regional and global trade constraints.

Iran and Oman have agreed to accelerate the implementation of their preferential trade agreement and expand industrial cooperation through a newly formed bilateral industrial committee, according to Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) reported on November 4.

During a visit to Muscat, Mohammad-Ali Dehnavi, head of the TPO and deputy minister of industry, mining and trade, met with Qais bin Mohammed al-Yousef, Oman's minister of commerce, industry and investment promotion, the report said.

The two sides underlined the need to speed up the trade pact's execution, organize a joint economic commission, and hold a business forum in Tehran to introduce investment opportunities in Oman.

According to Abdolamir Rabihiavi, TPO's director-general for West Asia, both countries also discussed drafting and finalizing the industrial committee memorandum of understanding (MOU), which was signed by deputy ministers from Iran and Oman.

Dehnavi also held talks with Saleh bin Saeed Masan, Oman's deputy minister of commerce and co-chair of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee, as well as with the chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The meetings focused on boosting bilateral trade, facilitating the upcoming joint committee meeting in Tehran later this year, and strengthening private-sector cooperation.

The visit also included tours of Oman's Sohar Free Zone, Khazaen Industrial City, Madayn industrial estates, and the Oman Investment Authority, aimed at exploring new areas of collaboration in industry, customs, and free trade zones.

The National Center for Statistics and Information of Oman has announced that the value of the country's trade with Iran in the first seven months of the current year was \$865 million dollars, of which over \$390 million consisted of Iranian exports to Oman.

Statistics from this center indicate that Iran holds a significant share of Oman's foreign trade and, by leveraging the advantages of its neighborly relations with this country, has managed to secure a good position among its foreign partners.

According to this report, Iran was recognized as the second destination for re-exports from Oman in the first seven months of 2025. The value of Oman's re-exports to Iran during this period reached \$465 million. Oman's re-exports to Iran from January to July of this year accounted for 18 percent of the country's total re-exports.

Iran also ranked 11th among the countries supplying goods needed by Oman, exporting \$394 million worth of goods to this country in the first seven months of 2025. 45percent of the total trade between the two countries was related to Iran's exports to this southern coast Persian Gulf country.

Iran's exports to Oman were greater than those from countries like Turkey, Egypt, and the United States. The United States exported \$218 million worth of goods to Oman during this period. Apart from re-exports, the figure for Oman's direct exports to Iran in the first seven months of 2025 was reported to be negligible, at around \$6 million.

Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has proposed the creation of a joint investment fund between Iran and Oman to support industrial projects, as part of broader efforts to deepen bilateral trade and private-sector collaboration.

During a meeting in Muscat, in late May, with Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh welcomed the growth in bilateral trade, which has surpassed \$2.0 billion. He emphasized that the trade volume could potentially reach between \$20 billion and \$30 billion, given the countries' untapped economic potential.

Hassanzadeh stressed the need for a clear financial framework to facilitate transactions between private enterprises in both countries. He proposed the establishment of licensed exchange houses under central bank supervision and the implementation of a barter mechanism to ease payment challenges.

The Iran Chamber head also advocated for re-exporting Iranian goods to African and East Asian markets through Oman; cooperation in supplying key industrial inputs to Iran; joint ventures in petrochemicals, hospitality, power generation, fisheries, and agriculture.

He further called for the formation of an industrial and investment committee involving the industry ministries and chambers of commerce from both countries. The aim would be to evaluate and coordinate development projects, particularly those utilizing Iran's tech-savvy startups and industrial base.

Hassanzadeh also proposed joint investment in the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) to enhance rail and road connectivity with Central Asia and Europe, as well as the Makran coast, specifically Jask and Chabahar ports, as strategic logistics hubs providing access to the Caucasus and Eurasian markets.

The visit was part of an Iranian business delegation mission to Oman, seeking to capitalize on growing economic ties and the imminent activation of the first interbank transfer mechanism between the two countries.

Also, during an Iran-Oman Business Forum in Muscat on Wednesday (May 28), Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that the value of trade between Iran and Oman can reach \$20 billion-\$30 billion.

Emphasizing the position of Iran and Oman in connecting regional markets, the president said: "We can jointly establish strategic ties with im-

portant markets in the region and the world by using our geopolitical capacity."

Referring to his talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq the previous day and the agreements reached in these talks, the president stated: "What is most important today is to create infrastructure to strengthen the connection of land, sea and air routes between the two countries, because only in such a context can commercial, scientific, industrial and economic cooperation be deepened."

Iran and Oman discussed ways to boost banking ties during a meeting between the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion.

According to Oman's state news agency, Qais bin Mohammed al-Yousef held talks on May 27 with Mohammadreza Farzin in Muscat. The meeting took place as part of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's official visit to Oman aimed at strengthening bilateral economic and financial relations.

The two sides reviewed measures to enhance cooperation in trade and investment, ease financial transactions, and streamline trade procedures between the two countries. Discussions also focused on initiatives to support joint economic projects, stimulate bilateral trade, and facilitate private sector exchanges.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to continued coordination and cooperation in areas of mutual interest, with a shared goal of strengthening bilateral relations and promoting sustainable economic growth.

The official visit to Oman marks a significant step in the Iranian government's ongoing efforts to strengthen regional ties and deepen bilateral relations with Muscat.

Meanwhile, the ICCIMA head, who had traveled to Muscat at the head of a trade delegation at that time, attended a conference to review trade opportunities between Iran and Oman and presented seven proposals to deepen Iran-Oman relations in the economic field. He believed that moving towards defining joint investment projects is a suitable solution in this direction.

Addressing the conference, Samad Hasanadeh said that the presence of entrepreneurs from Iran and Oman in this valuable conference indicates the serious interest of the private sectors of the two countries in comprehensively deepening relations and promoting bilateral economic cooperation.

Hassanzadeh stated that expanding economic relations with neighboring countries is Iran's strategic priority, adding: "Iran's private sector is very keen to cooperate with Omani companies. Given the wide variety of cooperation capacities between the two countries, it is necessary to focus on the future of relations so that, by optimally utilizing new opportunities, a suitable roadmap for joint relations and cooperation that includes the interests of both parties can be defined and drawn."

He considered the cultural and historical commonalities, good neighborliness, and excellent political relations in the region as important capacities for deepening economic relations, adding: "In recent years, the value of trade between the two countries has exceeded \$2 billion, and there is a clear prospect of increasing this figure to a much higher level."

Iran and Oman signed 18 memoranda of understanding in various fields during the official two-day visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Muscat.

The agreements, signed on the sidelines of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee meeting on May 27, aim to deepen ties in multiple sectors, including legal, economic, political, cultural, educational, health, defense, media, technology, energy, and mining.



# Somalia unites against Israel’s Somaliland recognition amid global backlash

TEHRAN – Israel’s unilateral recognition of Somaliland as an independent state has ignited outrage across Somalia and beyond, with furious protests denouncing the move as a dangerous violation of international law and a direct assault on Somali sovereignty. The announcement, made on December 26, marked the first time any country has formally recognized Somaliland, a breakaway region that declared independence in 1991 but has remained internationally unacknowledged.

In Mogadishu, thousands of demonstrators poured into the streets on Tuesday, waving Somali flags and chanting slogans demanding unity. Crowds gathered at the national stadium and near the airport, while similar protests erupted in Baidoa, Dhusamareb, Las Anod, Hobyo, and northeastern regions. Even in Borama, a city in western Somaliland where public opinion on secession is divided, residents staged smaller rallies against Israel’s recognition. The scale of the demonstrations reflected rare political unity across Somalia, with leaders and citizens



alike condemning the decision.

Somali officials have described Israel’s move as illegitimate, destabilizing, and a deliberate attempt to fracture the Horn of Africa. They insist Somaliland remains an inseparable part of Somalia and warn that foreign powers exploiting its strategic Red Sea access threaten regional stability. Yemen’s Ansarullah movement has already vowed to treat any Israeli presence in Somaliland as a military target, underscoring the potential for escalating tensions.

Somalia’s National Consultative

Council, which includes the president, prime minister, federal state leaders, and governors, branded Israel’s recognition as an “illegal act” undermining peace from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Four federal states issued coordinated denunciations, while Puntland and Jubbaland remained silent amid their disputes with Mogadishu. The widespread condemnation highlights the depth of Somali opposition and the perception that Israel’s decision is a reckless provocation.

At the United Nations Security Council, most members slammed

Israel’s recognition, warning of grave consequences for Somalia and Palestinians in Gaza. Somalia’s UN ambassador accused Israel of deliberately promoting fragmentation and raised fears that the move could facilitate the forced relocation of Palestinians to northwestern Somalia. “This contempt for law and morality must be stopped,” he declared.

Worldwide opposition has mounted against Israel’s decision. The African Union (AU) reaffirmed its commitment to Somalia’s unity and rejected any recognition of Somaliland. The Arab League denounced the move as a violation of international law and solidarity with Somalia. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also condemned Israel’s action, warning that it sets a dangerous precedent. Countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Pakistan, and China joined in rejecting the recognition, stressing support for Somalia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The European Union likewise reiterated its respect for Somalia’s territorial integrity.

## Detention of Jordanian journalist Mohammad Faraj and erosion of free expression

From page 1 ► Just weeks before his detention, he had written an analytical article exploring the possibility of China assuming a greater role in Latin America.

Shortly thereafter, he left Beirut to Jordan for what was meant to be a brief family visit. Upon arrival at Queen Alia International Airport, he and his Lebanese wife, journalist Rana Abi Jumaa, were subjected to unusually prolonged questioning before being transferred to Jordanian intelligence for interrogation.

From that moment on, Mohammad Faraj effectively vanished from public view.

For days, his family received no explanation. Requests for visitation were neither approved nor formally denied. No information was provided regarding his health, conditions of detention, or the legal basis for his arrest.

Initially, Abi Jumaa refrained from publicizing the case, prioritizing her husband’s safety over media attention.

Al Mayadeen, in coordination with the family, also exercised restraint. But as silence stretched into weeks—without charges, statements, or legal clarity—the absence of accountability itself became untenable. The detention was finally made public.

To describe Faraj merely as a journalist is to understate his intellectual trajectory. A political writer and researcher by vocation, he approaches journalism as a long-term project of critical inquiry rather than episodic commentary.

Originally trained as a computer engineer, holding a master’s degree in information technology management, Faraj entered journalism in his late thirties, driven by the conviction that intellectual life need not be confined to a single discipline.

His analytical depth—shaped by years of political activism since his university days—became a defining hallmark of his work.

In Jordan, Faraj headed the Al-

ternative Culture Association, participated actively in the Jordanian Writers Association, and engaged with the Arab National Congress.

In 2020, he relocated to Lebanon to dedicate himself fully to media work. At Al Mayadeen, he served as producer, editor, and presenter, authoring hundreds of in-depth articles and producing documentary series such as “Al-Aqsa Flood,” which situated current events within broader historical and structural contexts.

Faraj’s writings consistently challenged Western hegemony, critiqued global capitalism, and examined what he identified as the gradual decline of U.S. dominance alongside a global shift toward the East.

He was unwavering in his support for Palestine, his condemnation of the genocide in Gaza, and his intellectual confrontation with the Israeli enemy—always through analysis rather than incitement, and through reason rather than spectacle.

Faraj’s detention without charge cannot be dismissed as a routine security measure.

It reflects a deeper unease with the kind of journalism Faraj embodies: principled, historically grounded, and openly aligned with the causes of Arab liberation.

When a voice of this kind is silenced, the issue ceases to be about any alleged act and becomes a deeper question: why has this kind of voice itself become unacceptable?

Faraj’s family has the right to know his fate. His colleagues have the right to know the accusation—if one exists. And society has the right to demand accountability when protected expression becomes grounds for detention.

Until answers are provided, the imprisonment of Mohammad Faraj will stand not only as a personal injustice, but as a stark symbol of the fragility of free expression in an increasingly polarized political moment.

## Saudi ‘red line’ and UAE’s adventurism in Yemen



Smoke billows following a Saudi-led coalition airstrike in Yemen’s southern port city of Mukalla, December 30, 2025. Reuters

From page 1 ► This escalation highlights the diverging strategies of the two Persian Gulf Arab countries. Saudi Arabia has consistently sought to preserve Yemen’s territorial cohesion, viewing unity as essential to regional stability and to any eventual negotiated settlement. The UAE, by contrast, has increasingly backed separatist forces in the south, using the STC as a vehicle for influence and expanding into provinces such as Hadramout and al Mahra. For Riyadh, these moves undermine coalition authority and threaten its strategic depth.

The UAE’s involvement in Yemen is part of a broader expansionist project. By entrenching itself in ports such as Aden, Mukalla, and Socotra, Abu Dhabi aims to control maritime chokepoints and project power across the Red Sea and Horn of Africa. Its silence on Israel’s recognition of Somaliland further illustrates how its ambitions align with Tel Aviv, deepening cooperation since the Abraham Accords. From Saudi Arabia’s perspective, this is not a benign strategy but encirclement, a tightening ring of influence that jeopardizes its security.

Similar patterns can be seen elsewhere. In Sudan, the UAE has been accused of backing the Rapid Support Forces, empowering armed factions to secure leverage even at the cost of prolonged instability. This reliance on proxies, combined with port control and external alignments, reveals a doctrine of opportunistic expansionism that destabilizes fragile states.

Saudi Arabia’s latest warning is therefore more than a reaction to Mukalla. It signals that Abu Dhabi’s maneuvers have crossed a threshold. The confrontation is not simply about Yemen’s battlefield but about who will shape the balance of power in the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East. By arming separatists and pursuing control of strategic ports, the UAE has shifted from partnership to destabilization. Riyadh’s firm stance marks a decisive moment in curbing Abu Dhabi’s ambitions and defining the boundaries of acceptable power in the region — an action likely to influence the political trajectory of the Persian Gulf Arab bloc for years to come.

## UN team depicts el-Fasher as a largely deserted crime scene

A United Nations team has described Sudan’s el-Fasher as a “crime scene” after gaining access for the first time since its October takeover by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Al Jazeera reported Tuesday.

Aid staff visited on Friday after weeks of negotiations, finding a city nearly emptied of its once-dense population, with only a few survivors sheltering in ruins.

Amid accusations of ethnic-targeted slayings and detentions, upwards of 100,000 residents fled after the RSF, allegedly financed and armed by the UAE, assumed control.

UNICEF warns of unprecedented child mal-

nutrition in North Darfur, while investigations show the RSF erasing evidence of massacres through burial and burning.

Recent offensives near the Chad border killed hundreds and threatened escape routes, echoing earlier atrocities such as the April assault on Zamzam camp that left over 1,000 dead and widespread sexual violence.

El-Fasher’s fall, the Sudanese army’s last Darfur stronghold, consolidated RSF control and expanded fighting into Kordofan.

Since April 2023, the war has killed more than 100,000 and displaced 14 million, including 4.3 million abroad.

## Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh’s first female prime minister, dies at 80

TEHRAN — Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh’s first female prime minister and a central figure in the nation’s politics for more than three decades, passed away on Tuesday at a hospital in Dhaka. She was believed to be 80. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which she led, confirmed her death without disclosing a cause.

Ms. Zia served three terms as prime minister between 1991 and 2006, becoming one of the most influential leaders in Bangladesh’s democratic journey. She was the widow of former president Ziaur Rahman, who was assassinated in 1981. Her long-standing political rivalry with Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Bangladesh’s founding leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, shaped the country’s political landscape for years.

In her later years, Ms. Zia faced serious health challenges and legal proceedings that led to periods of imprisonment and house arrest. Following political changes last year, several cases against her were dropped, though she remained critically ill until her passing. She is survived by her son, Tarique Rahman, who currently leads the BNP.

### Iran’s embassy statement

The embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Dhaka issued a condolence message, extend-



ing sympathy to the government and people of Bangladesh, as well as to the leadership and members of the BNP.

“Begum Khaleda Zia was a prominent national leader who played a significant role in the political history of Bangladesh and made notable contributions to democratic governance and public life throughout her career. During her tenure as Prime Minister, Bangladesh maintained constructive and friendly relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on mutual respect and cooperation. The Embassy conveys its deepest sympathy to her family, including her son Mr. Tarique Rahman, as well as to her colleagues and supporters, and wishes peace to her departed soul.”

## Venezuela, Russia, and the return of nuclear signaling

### How a distant crisis exposes the fractures of the global order

By Ranjan Solomon

GOA – At a time when global discourse is saturated with managed outrage and selective morality, certain crises are rendered invisible not because they lack consequence, but because they expose uncomfortable truths about power. Venezuela is one such crisis. Rarely discussed beyond caricatures of authoritarianism or economic failure, it has now re-entered the global stage in a far more unsettling form — as a strategic fault line in an intensifying confrontation between imperial persistence and geopolitical resistance. What is unfolding is not merely a regional dispute, but a symptom of a global order in decay, where sanctions replace dialogue, military signaling substitutes diplomacy, and nuclear shadows once again loom over international politics.

From the standpoint of critical political economy and realist international relations theory, the Venezuela crisis reveals how deeply unequal and coercive the so-called “rules-based order” has always been. It also exposes the fragility of Western alliances, particularly NATO, when confronted with the limits of American power and the return of multipolar assertion. This essay seeks to situate Venezuela not as an exception, but as a warning — one that speaks to the dangers of hegemonic arrogance, the weaponization of suffering, and the catastrophic risks of governing a transitioning world through force rather than justice.

The unfolding crisis around Venezuela has quietly moved beyond the familiar language of sanctions, oil politics, and regime change. What is now emerging is a more unsettling reality: Venezuela has become a strategic pressure point in a larger confrontation between declining unipolar power and an assertive multipolar world. Recent discussions by realist scholars

such as John Mearsheimer draw attention to a phenomenon many policymakers prefer to deny — the return of nuclear signaling as an instrument of geopolitical bargaining, and the growing inability of Western alliances, particularly NATO, to manage the consequences of their own overreach

To understand why Venezuela matters, one must abandon the comforting illusion that international politics is governed by rules, norms, or moral consistency. The global order has always been structured by power. What changes over time is not the logic of dominance, but who exercises it and how openly. The United States, for much of the post-Cold War era, enjoyed an unparalleled capacity to shape outcomes across continents. That era is now ending, and Venezuela stands at the intersection of this historical transition.

For Washington, Latin America has never been merely a region among others. It has been treated as an extension of domestic security, governed by the assumptions of the Monroe Doctrine even when the doctrine itself is no longer explicitly invoked. From Guatemala to Chile, from Cuba to Nicaragua, the record is unambiguous: political autonomy in the hemisphere has been tolerated only when it aligns with American strategic and economic interests. Venezuela’s insistence on sovereign control over its resources, combined with its refusal to submit to US-backed regime change, therefore represents not an anomaly but a provocation — one that demands punishment within the logic of empire.

Sanctions have been the chosen weapon. Framed as peaceful alternatives to military intervention, they function instead as instruments of structural violence. Over years, Venezuela’s economy has been suffocated, its access to financial systems curtailed, and its ability to

import essential goods severely constrained. The humanitarian crisis that followed is then cynically deployed as evidence of governance failure, completing a circular logic in which suffering caused by external pressure is blamed on internal incompetence. This pattern is not unique to Venezuela; it is a recurring feature of imperial management in the neoliberal era.

What changes the equation is Russia’s response. Moscow’s engagement with Venezuela must be read not through the lens of ideological solidarity, but through the hard realism of strategic retaliation. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has witnessed a relentless expansion of NATO toward its borders, the dismantling of arms control agreements, and the transformation of neighboring states into forward operating bases for Western power. Diplomatic protests were ignored; security assurances were broken. In such a context, Russia’s decision to project power into the Western Hemisphere is neither irrational nor unprecedented. It mirrors, almost exactly, the behavior the United States has long normalized elsewhere.

This is where nuclear signaling re-enters global politics. Venezuela does not possess nuclear weapons, nor is it on the path to acquiring them. Yet Russia does, and the strategic assets it deploys — whether naval formations, long-range aviation, or missile-capable platforms — carry an implicit message. The message is not one of imminent war, but of deterrence: an assertion that escalation will not remain cost-free or geographically contained. As Mearsheimer and other realists have argued, nuclear weapons fundamentally alter the calculus of power. They do not eliminate conflict, but they raise its stakes to a level where miscalculation becomes catastrophic.

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



## Iran overcomes tourism recession faster than many countries

TEHRAN— Iran has been able to overcome the tourism recession faster than many countries in a few months after the 12-day Israeli war against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This is while, the number of incoming tourists from many countries decreases by up to 50 percent following a natural or security disaster.

Moslem Shojaei, the Tourism Ministry's director-general for marketing and foreign tourism development, stated that phenomena such as the 12-day war in the region or even small terrorist incidents can cause a recession of up to two years for many countries, but Iran was able to get close to normal in a short time due to its cultural diversity, four seasons, and unique historical and social attractions, IRNA reported.

Stating that 7.4 million foreign tourists entered Iran last year, he added: "In October and November of this year, the number of foreign tourists increased by 10.9 and 12.7 percent respectively. We witnessed a seven-percent increase in foreign tourists compared to the same period last year. But since May, with the beginning of the regional developments, the number of tourists has decreased by 20 percent in June, by 52.6 percent in July, by 22.7 percent in August, and by about 18 percent in September."

Shojaei continued that the number of tourists entering the country increased by 48.5 percent during March-April 2025 compared to the same period of the year before, which was the result of the positive trend before the crisis. "But with the outbreak of the 12-day war, the growth stopped, and in total, in the first eight months of this year, the number of foreign tourists decreased by about eight percent compared to the same period last year." He emphasized that the macro policy of the country and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage,



Tourism and Handicrafts is maximum interaction with the other countries to boost tourism. For example, the international Nowruz summit will be held again this year after a break of several years. We are also looking to host various international events."

He said: "Participating in international events, trying to register cultural works in the UNESCO World Heritage List, producing digital Iranian tourism content titled 'Majestic Iran' (Visit Iran) in 17 languages, and collaborating with global influencers are some of the measures we have taken to further introduce Iran in the international arena. Also, hosting the global Nowruz event and international tourism event in Isfahan are among our recent achievements."

Shojaei described the tourism industry's most important challenge as the spread of Iranophobia in Western media and the instillation of a sense of insecurity when traveling to Iran. The budget is very limited in face of toxic propaganda from Western media, which has up to 800 million visitors daily, he said, adding: "We are trying to present a realistic image of Iran with a creative policy and multimedia content."

## Iranian artisans to showcase handicrafts at Muscat Nights

TEHRAN – A group of Iranian artisans will present a wide range of traditional handicrafts and visual arts at Muscat Nights 2026, a month-long cultural festival to be held in the Omani capital from Jan. 1 to Jan. 31, organizers said.

According to Iran's Students News Agency (ISNA), 35 Iranian artists will travel to Muscat to participate in the event, which is being organized with the support of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and the Iranian Cultural Counsellor's Office in Oman. In addition, 50 Iranian artists residing in Oman will showcase their works at exhibition booths during the festival.

The participating artists will present works in various fields, including embroidery, calligraphy on ceramics, enamelwork, needlework, metal engraving, pottery, woodcarving, jewelry making, traditional clothing, miniature painting, local handicrafts, leather products, woodwork and fused glass.

Organizers said the event aims to introduce Iranian art and culture to international audiences

and strengthen cultural exchanges between Iran, Oman and other participating countries.

Muscat Nights 2026 will run across multiple locations in Muscat Governorate, including Al Qurum Natural Park, Al Amerat Public Park, the Oman Automobile Association, the Royal Opera House Muscat, A'Seeb Beach, the Wilayat of Quriyat and Wadi Al Khoud.

According to organizers, the festival is set to embrace cultural, artistic, entertainment and economic activities, offering a wide range of programs for different segments of society. It will include family-oriented attractions, amusement rides, daily parades, and performances by local and international artists, alongside cultural and musical evenings.

The event will also introduce "Siraj," a symbolic character representing an Omani child of light, who serves as the visual and narrative identity of Muscat Nights 2026 and a central attraction for visitors from Oman and abroad.

## Restoration and protection of historical sites planned on Qeshm Island

TEHRAN--Following field and expert visits after the monsoon rains with the aim of diagnosing the damages of the historical sites and monuments on Qeshm Island, Hormozgan province, a series of serious hazards and damages were identified and restoration measures were planned.

According to IRIB, Azadeh Abedinzadeh, director of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts at the Qeshm Free Zone Organization, said that based on the results of the surveys, restoring the collapse of unstable rocks and the possibility of another collapse in the towers and the entrance footsteps of the Portuguese castles of Qeshm and the Naderi Laft castle are on the priorities of this management.

It is necessary to carry out the operations of debris collection, emergency restoration and structural stabilization of these parts with an expert approach and with the presence of skilled restorers at a favorable opportunity in order to prevent human accidents and further destruction, she added.

She continued that also, in the historical port of Laft, the necessity of designing and implementing appropriate fences and protective equipment around the historical wells of Tala has been notified to the management of the Laft historical base.

This is an action that can play an effective role in preventing human dangers and unwanted damage to this valuable heritage, she added.

Abedinzadeh said that the historic Guran Dam, as the largest water structure on Qeshm Island, which underwent unprincipled restoration two decades ago, has become a crisis today, and with the intensification of the erosion process and the structural damage, it requires immediate restoration.

The continuation of the current situation could expose this important historical and functional structure to more serious dangers, she warned.

In this regard, with the aim of reducing the risk, repairing and reconstructing the mud dam of the historic Pey Posht Dam is also necessary to control and direct floods and prevent a decrease in the volume of water entering the dam, she pointed out.

She added that the historical sites and monuments of Qeshm Island require urgent, targeted, and prioritized conservation and restoration measures that can ensure the safety of visitors and the sustainability of these valuable works for future generations. "Our main mission is to protect heritage values and pass them on to future generations in a proper manner."

## Experimental archaeology at Masuleh: Medieval Iron smelting technology reconstructed

TEHRAN – An interdisciplinary research team has successfully reconstructed a medieval iron smelting and casting complex at the Old Masuleh historical site in northern Iran, revealing advanced metallurgical expertise in the region.

Led by Farzad Asadi, a faculty member of Azad University, the project involved the experimental reconstruction of a four-stage furnace system documented through two decades of archaeological work. "This was not merely an architectural model," Asadi emphasized. "Through experimental archaeology, we evaluated the operational dynamics, including airflow, thermal efficiency, and the complete process from sponge iron to cast iron."

The findings demonstrate a highly developed technical system, featuring preheated air channels, permanent stone structures, and a dedicated casting setup. This distinguishes the Masuleh complex from simpler, temporary bloomery furnaces. Laboratory analysis of slag and iron produced in the experiment confirmed high material purity and control, supporting the theory that Old Masuleh was a per-



manent Iron production center.

Mustafa Pourali, director of the Masuleh World Heritage nomination dossier, stated this second, more detailed reconstruction phase revealed clear technological links to broader "Iranian-type" furnaces. The results, to be published internationally, underscore Old Masuleh's role as a hub of technological exchange along historic trade routes like the Silk Road,

connecting Iran with the Caucasus and Central Asia.

This research adds a profound industrial dimension to the rich tapestry of Masouleh's cultural landscape. Masouleh is not only celebrated for its unique terraced architecture and harmonious adaptation to the forested mountains of Gilan, but also as a living repository of centuries of indigenous knowledge. The reconstruction of this advanced

ironworking technology vividly illustrates that the historical significance of Masouleh extends beyond its visual charm; it was a center of innovation and skilled craftsmanship. Preserving and understanding this integrated landscape—where natural beauty, architectural genius, and industrial heritage converge—is essential for fully appreciating Iran's civilizational legacy and strengthening the case for its global recognition.

## Farming in Persepolis buffer zone limited to protect ancient site, official says



TEHRAN – Iran has imposed strict limits on agricultural activity within the primary buffer zone of Persepolis, the head of the UNESCO-listed site said, as authorities seek to protect the ancient complex from potential damage.

Mohammad-Javad Jafari, director of the Persepolis World Heritage site, said farming in the site's first-degree buffer zone is allowed only under tightly controlled conditions and that changes to irrigation systems

are prohibited, even in areas where no visible archaeological remains have been identified.

"Some agricultural activity has existed in parts of the first-degree buffer zone, and where cultivation has already taken place at depths of 30 to 40 centimeters, it is allowed to continue," Jafari said in remarks to ISNA. "However, no change in irrigation systems is permitted, and in many areas farming is not allowed at all."

He said the first-degree buffer zone covers about 17,000 hectares and includes both archaeological areas and agricultural land, making careful management essential to prevent damage to the ancient site.

"In areas such as Takht-e Gohar, water reservoirs, hills and other sensitive zones within the buffer area, no agricultural activity is permitted under any circumstances," Jafari said.

Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, is one of the world's most significant archaeological sites and a symbol of Iran's ancient Achaemenid civilization. Preserving the site, he said, remains a priority for cultural heritage authorities.

Jafari added that while acquiring large portions of land within the buffer zone would help protect the site, insufficient funding has made such measures impossible so far.

Earlier in September, he said

a comprehensive management and conservation plan for Persepolis was being developed in response to growing concerns over erosion and long-term preservation. The plan is intended to regulate development, protect the site's surroundings and ensure sustainable management.

According to Jafari, about 57 hectares of land around Persepolis have already been acquired to support tourism infrastructure, improve access management and prevent unregulated development.

Founded by Darius the Great around 518 BC, Persepolis served as the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. The site, located about 60 km northeast of Shiraz, was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 330 BC. Its monumental remains, including the Apadana Palace and the Hall of a Hundred Columns, are regarded as among the most important archaeological treasures in the world.

## Prehistoric sites identified in Esfarayen

TEHRAN--Targeted paleolithic studies, supported by North Khorasan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, began in the Esfarayen and Safiabad plains, during which valuable evidence of the presence of hunter-gatherer societies in this region was identified for the first time.

According to IRIB, Head of North Khorasan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department Ahmad Dinari said that North Khorasan has always been considered one of the key areas in the prehistoric studies of the Iranian Plateau due to its specific geographical location.

The location of this province on the border of the Iranian Plateau and the plains of Central Asia has made it an important passageway for early human groups, he added.

Dinari also said that despite the valuable evidence of sites such as Qaleh Khan Hill and Pahlavan Hill, the question has always been raised as how long human presence in North Khorasan dates back; a question that has remained unanswered until now due to the lack of targeted Paleolithic studies.

Referring to the start of these studies last summer, he stated that during these studies, the Esfarayen and Safiabad plains were selected as the first target areas, and the results of the surveys identified 24 Paleolithic sites, which indicate the extensive activity of hunter-gatherer groups in this area.

Dinari stated that based on initial assessments, evidence of the Old Paleolithic and the Middle Pleistocene eras' axe-tool industry has been identified in five sites, which are comparable in terms of technical characteristics to the Kashafrud collections.

He continued that in the Middle Paleolithic period, the number of sites increases to 13.

According to him, one site has been identified in the Neo-Paleolithic period and five sites in the Epipaleolithic period, which confirms the continuity of human settlement in Esfarayen and Safiabad plains from the Middle Pleistocene to the beginning of the Holocene.

Emphasizing the importance of the results of these studies, Dinari noted that these findings showed that the lack of previous evidence of hunter-gatherer societies in North Khorasan was not due to the lack of human presence, but rather due to the lack of specialized research in

this area.

He expressed hope: "By continuing these studies and expanding paleolithic research, we can present a clear and scientific picture of the position of North Khorasan in the prehistoric studies of the Iranian plateau."

## AUCTION SJSCO. B140405

Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 10,000 tons STEEL BILLET (Size 150 x 150 mm) on basis of FAS at the Buyer's warehouse in Bandar Abbas, IRAN according to INCOTERMS 2020. Interested applicants are hereby invited to obtain the tender documents by visiting the official website of Sirjan Jahan Steel Company at [sjSCO.ir](http://sjSCO.ir), through the Sales and customer portal, Tender and Foreign Tender section.

All documentation will be provided electronically.

All bids on conformity to tender instruction should be submitted no later than **Monday, January 12, 2026**.

For more information, please contact us at:

Tel: **+2186084642**





# Razi festival honors top researchers in medical sciences

TEHRAN – The 31st Razi research festival on medical sciences honored top researchers and technology experts in the health sector, with ministers of science and health in attendance.

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences, Fasa University of Medical Sciences, and Sirjan University of Medical Sciences ranked first to fourth, respectively, ISNA reported.

Exemplary research centers were also announced. Endocrinology and Metabolism Research Institute, the Applied Pharmaceutical Sciences Research Center, the Environmental Research Center, the Nursing and Midwifery Care Research Center, the Pharmaceutical Analysis Research Center, the Non-Communicable Diseases Research Center, and the Stem Cell Technology Research Center were among the best research centers.

The student research and technology committees of Shahid Beheshti, Ardabil, Bushehr, and Sirjan universities of Medical Sciences were announced as the top committees.

Among the Iranian journals of medical sciences, the Journal of Dental Materials and Technique and the Journal of Research in Medical Sciences Education were the two selected journals.



Moreover, the Health Technology Incubator Center of Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences, the Health Technology Incubator Center of Urmia University of Medical Sciences, and the Health Technology Incubator Center of Yazd University of Medical Sciences ranked first to third, respectively.

## Minister urges WHO to protect health against sanctions

In October, the Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi referred to sanctions as silent wars against public health, urging the World Health Organization (WHO) and member states to safeguard health systems from political pressures and sanctions.

Zafarqandi also called on them to strengthen regional solidarity to tackle crises and climate change, IRNA reported.

The official made the remarks while addressing the seventy-second session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (RC72) being held in Cairo, Egypt, from October 15 to 17.

Over the past year, Iran's health system has undergone big challenges, including unfair sanctions and the 12-day Israeli-imposed war. The latter targeted non-military and health infrastructures, killing innocent children, women, and health staff, IRNA quoted Zafarqandi as saying.

As documented in The Lancet, sanctions, as silent wars against public health, have systematically blocked access to essential medications and caused widespread suffering and death among the most vulnerable patients, especially children, he added

These articles emphasized that sanctions can cause as many or even more casualties than wars, Zafarqandi noted.

Despite immense economic pressures and sanctions, Iran remains committed to strengthening its primary healthcare network to achieve universal health coverage, empowering communities to combat non-communicable diseases, addressing ageism and its health consequences, and tackling social determinants of health, such as poverty and environmental factors, the health minister stressed.

Iran remains resolute in health diplomacy and believes that health is the strongest bridge to peace and sustainable development, he added.

According to WHO director for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) Iran is a leading country in expanding its healthcare system and providing access to universal health coverage.

Lauding the country's achievements in recent years, Hanan Balkhi said expanding primary health care services, increasing access to health coverage in rural areas, maintaining high vaccination rates, and reducing maternal and newborn mortality, Iran has managed to become a successful role model in the region, the health ministry's website reported in May.

## IRCS, UNICEF boost ties to provide psychosocial support for children

TEHRAN – The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have enhanced cooperation to provide psychosocial support for children during emergencies.

They aim to provide immediate, safe, and protective environments for children affected by crises, the UNICEF website announced in a press release on December 30.

The collaboration focuses on rapidly deploying high-quality tents and essential equipment to establish Child-Friendly Spaces (CFSs) as a crucial Rapid Response mechanism.

### A haven for healing and hope

These specifically designed tents provide children with safe, supportive environments during emergencies. Through the CFS, children can access:

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS): Professional support to help children process trauma, fear, and stress.

Structured activities: Opportunities to play, learn, and express themselves through creative and recreational activities.

A break from stress: A safe place to rest and regain a sense of normalcy away from the overwhelming atmosphere surrounding them. This initiative is key to helping children regain a sense of stability and hope, ensuring they continue to access vital care and support when they need it most.

### Designed for every child

The partnership emphasizes inclusion, ensuring that all children benefit equally from Child-Friendly Spaces. He programme also

ensures that the safety, comfort, and specific needs of both boys and girls are considered in the structure and activities of the CFSs. These features ensure that every child—regardless of ability or gender—can participate safely and meaningfully.

### Strengthening future preparedness

UNICEF and the IRCS remain committed to expanding psychosocial support for children and enhancing preparedness and response mechanisms for future emergencies.

This partnership reinforces one simple message: no child should ever face an emergency alone.

### Workshop on early childhood education in emergencies

Recognizing the vital role of early learning, especially in times of crisis, the IRCS and the UNICEF held a national training workshop to ensure children are not left behind, even in emergencies.

In disaster-prone regions like Iran, access to quality early childhood education (ECE) is not just a developmental need—it's a lifeline.

Iran ranks as the fourth most disaster-prone country in Asia, following China, India, and Bangladesh. From floods and earthquakes to droughts, the frequency of natural disasters has made it critical to prioritize preparedness and resilience from an early age. Yet, early education services are often the first to be disrupted when emergencies strike, the UNICEF website announced in a press release on May 5.

The training workshop was held in Bandar-e Anzali from December 14 to 16, 2024. It brought together 270 IRCS volunteers, including ECE

teachers, school principals, and SAHAR team members – IRCS's psychosocial support workforce – from across the country.

The training focused on Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Emergencies' Preparedness and Response, equipping participants with essential knowledge and practical tools on disability inclusion, child protection, communication with children, and psychosocial support.

"Quality early childhood education is the cornerstone of a child's development," said a UNICEF Iran spokesperson. "In emergencies, these services are even more essential to provide stability, learning, and safety for young children. This initiative is about ensuring every child, including those with disabilities, has access to nurturing, inclusive learning environments—even in the most challenging times."

This program, first designed in 2024, aims to build a national cadre of trained educators ready to support children before, during, and after emergencies. With a strong emphasis on inclusion, it ensures that children with disabilities and other vulnerabilities receive the attention and care they deserve.

Looking ahead, UNICEF and IRCS plan to redesign the training program based on participant feedback and identified needs. A new phase will focus on community-based informal ECE services to reach the most vulnerable children in underserved neighborhoods and remote villages.

This joint initiative reaffirms UNICEF's commitment to delivering education for all, everywhere — even when disaster strikes. Because every child deserves a safe start and a chance to learn, no matter the circumstances.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Bikes to hold 3.5% share in Tehran transportation

Bikes will carry out 3.5 percent of the capital's total transportation, as the national document on bike transport development has proposed, deputy mayor for traffic and transport affairs at Tehran Municipality has stated.

A five-year plan to develop biking in the capital has been proposed aiming to promote biking, develop bike lanes and curb air pollution.

Currently, the document is under review by the traffic council to be approved, ISNA quoted Mohsen Pourseyeed Aqaei as saying on Saturday.

As per the document, some 120 kilometers of the roads will be accessible for the bicycle riders each year, he added.

The reason behind the failure of bicycle schemes in past recent years was that the technology was overlooked in the schemes.

## انجام ۳.۵ درصد از سفرهای تهران با دوچرخه

معاون حمل و نقل ترافیک شهرداری تهران از تدوین سند دوچرخه پایتخت خبر داد، براساس این سند، می بایست ۳.۵ درصد از سفرهای تهران با دوچرخه انجام شود.

محسن پورسیدآقایی در گفت وگو با ایسنا، با بیان اینکه سند توسعه دوچرخه در دستور کار قرار دارد گفت: در حال حاضر این سند سند ۵ساله در شورای ترافیک پایتخت در حال بررسی است که در صورت تصویب دوچرخه سواری ترویج و توسعه می یابد.

وی با بیان اینکه سالانه ۱۲۰کیلومتر به مسیر دوچرخه اضافه می شود، در پاسخ به سوالی در مورد سرنوشت دوچرخه های قبلی شهرداری گفت:دلیل شکست طرح های دوچرخه در گذشته این بود که به تکنولوژی های روز دنیا توجه نشده بود.

# SOCIETY

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Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## Iran University of Medical Sciences holds welcome party for foreign students

### Foreign students attend welcome party

TEHRAN – Iran University of Medical Sciences held a welcome party for the new international students on Tuesday at Razi Conference Center.

Addressing the event, Nader Tavakoli, the chancellor of Iran University of Medical Sciences, said the presence of students from different countries in Iran sends a clear message to the world that 'all human beings are equal', Mehr news agency reported.

Iran as one of the leading regional countries in medical sciences is honored to host you, he added.

Referring to the high position of Iran University of Medical Sciences in global rankings, Tavakoli said both Iranian and international students can benefit from educational and welfare services available at the University.

The official went on to say that foreign students have to learn Persian language to have a better understanding of the country's culture and educational environments.

Foreign students coming from different coun-



tries create a great opportunities for the promotion of scientific and cultural interactions, Tavakoli further noted.

Currently, out of 10,000 students majoring in Iran University of Medical Sciences, over 1,500 are foreign students from 15 different countries. This year alone (the current academic year started on September 23), the university attracted 354 students from Iraq, Ghana, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Afghanistan.

## Ignoring elite women is a waste of national capital: expert

TEHRAN - The head of the National Elites Association has criticized the exclusion of women from decision-making levels, saying that the issue is not the ability of women, but rather their lack of opportunities and real participation in the country's management.

Addressing the National Congress on Women, which was held on Monday, Abuzar Shahpari, the head of the National Elites Association, emphasized the strategic role of elite women in the country's development.

"Today, the country is not facing a shortage of talent, but rather a waste of human capital, especially in the field of elite women."

According to the latest official statistics, women constitute more than half of the country's population. However, their share of management, policy, and decision-making positions is in no way proportionate to this demographic reality, he stressed.

"Employing elite women is neither a privilege nor a symbolic gesture, but rather a necessity for the sustainable development of the country. A country that ignores half of its human capital cannot claim to be progressive."

Referring to numerous examples of prominent Iranian women in the fields of science, technology, medicine, engineering, and international management, the head of the National Elites



Association said: "Iranian women are a source of pride on the global stage, but unfortunately, these honors are less recognized in the country's domestic decision-making structures."

During the third National Congress on Women, 60 of the most successful women entrepreneurs, who have played a key role in the country's social and economic development, were honored.

The congress aimed to empower women, improve their skills, and introduce the most successful women in social, cultural, and economic fields.

The current administration focuses on empowering women in social and economic areas, as well as improving their access to social services and facilities through implementing certain national programs.

## Iran second most active country in '100 Hours of Astronomy'

TEHRAN – Recording more than 30 astronomy events, Iran is the second most active participant in the 100 Hours of Astronomy, an event run annually by the International Astronomical Union to encourage people from all over the world to unite under one sky.

In 2025, more than 60 countries from across the world attended the event, and 327 events were recorded. Romania is placed first, and Iran is placed ahead of the United States, Mexico, and Italy.

This year, the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (OAO) and the International Planetarium Society (IPS), two of the world's leading organizations dedicated to public engagement with astronomy, teamed up to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first planetarium from October 2 to 5.

It hosted two main events: Big Astronomy and Big Aspirations, as well as the 24 Hours of Planetariums.

To mark the occasion, the organisations delivered a 100-hour marathon of astronomy events and activities taking place across the world; the theme for 100 Hours of Astronomy 2025 was '100 Years of the Planetarium'.

One of the notable aspects of Iran's presence in the 100-hour marathon was the wide geographical distribution of participants from many

different cities, including Tehran, Mashhad, Shiraz, Isfahan, Eqld, Sari, Arak, Gorgan, Neishabour, Ahvaz, Bam, and Yazd.

The country also had an active participation in the 24 Hours of Planetariums, with part of the event dedicated to the Mina Dome planetarium, one of the most important events in West Asia.

Located at the Abbasabad neighborhood, northern Tehran, the planetarium offers visitors 3D views of stars, planets, and other celestial bodies, as well as views of the sky projected on the ceiling. There is a projector at the center of the planetarium, and separate projectors for the sun, the moon, and other planets and stars.

Planetariums – large, small, mobile, stationary, and handmade – are important cultural and educational centres for their communities. The OAO and IPS wanted to show the world the unique view from inside your planetarium and give you and your team global recognition.

### IAU mission

The IAU is the international astronomical organisation that brings together about 13,000 distinguished astronomers from around the world. Its mission is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects, including research, communication, education, and development, through international cooperation.

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





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## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*The mind of a wise man is the safest custody of secrets; cheerfulness is the key to friendship; patience and forbearance will conceal many defects.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times » Noon:12:07 Evening: 17:21 Dawn: 5:44 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:14 (tomorrow)

## 10th National Toy Festival to open in Tehran

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- The 10th edition of the National Toy Festival is set to open on Wednesday evening, dedicating space for Iranian-made toys and the promotion of a culture of play, with free access for the public, Hamed Alamati, director of the Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) has announced.

Speaking at a press conference in Tehran on Tuesday, Alamati pointed out that the festival has already been hosted in West Azarbaijan and Markazi provinces, with other regions soon to follow.

He stressed the importance of re-examining concepts like 'exhibition' and 'festival' to better understand their roles—not merely as venues for displaying products, but as platforms for generating meaning, fostering cultural exchange, and addressing social issues through play.

Alamati described the exhibition as a “living, multi-faceted media space” aimed at showcasing Iran's internal capacities.

Over 200 local manufacturers will participate at the event, demonstrating the country's industrial and cultural capabilities through the display of more than 3,000 Iran-made products. This marks an increase from approximately 2,200 products last year, aligning with the year's slogan “Investment in Production” and the government's developmental policies.

Alamati also detailed competitive sections where top producers are evaluated based on quality, educational value, health standards, and other criteria. A special segment is dedicated to showcasing traditional and local dolls. Additionally, a call for multimedia content and promotional videos is announced, emphasizing the importance of creative media production. A toy donation initiative for underprivileged areas will also be part of the festival, encouraging family participation.

Addressing government policies, Alamati highlighted the administration's focus on



achieving cultural and educational justice. He noted that festivals and exhibitions serve as symbolic steps toward this goal.

For his part, Ehsan Maneshi, President of the Toy Manufacturers Association, underscored the cultural significance of the toy industry, describing it as Iran's most identity-driven cultural sector. He highlighted that during the festival, experts will advise families and children on selecting age-appropriate and needs-based toys.

The 10th National Toy Festival, organized by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in collaboration with various organizations including the Toy Manufacturers Association, the Cognitive Sciences and Technologies Development Council, Tehran Municipality, and Soore University, aims to support domestic products, foster industry connections, and promote innovation in toy design and manufacturing.

Since its inaugural event in 2015, the festival has grown significantly, with more than 200 Iranian toy producers participating this year, reflecting the sector's positive trajectory over the past decade.

The festival is expected to be a vibrant hub for cultural exchange, innovation, and the promotion of Iran's rich toy-making heritage.

The festival, themed “Play, the Joy of Life,” runs from December 31 to January 18, 2026 at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Tehran.

## Cartoon of Day



Winter in Gaza

Cartoonist: Hamzeh Hajjaj from Jordan

## Barbican Cinema in London to show masterpieces of Iranian New Wave

TEHRAN – Barbican Cinema in London will host the program “Masterpieces of Iranian New Wave” from February 4 to 26, 2026.

Exploring identity and oppression with a truthfulness unmatched in any era of Iranian cinema, this program reveals a rich array of gems, many never seen in the UK, ISNA reported.

With UK premieres of newly restored films, plus a world premiere, the second exploration of Iranian New Wave film at the Barbican (following last year's sold-out program) has an extraordinary range of styles and tones, from politically weighty dramas, to satirical comedies, poetic documentaries, and crime thrillers.

The program not only interrogates the boundaries between truth and fiction, but also reaches into the very heart of cinema itself. Through some of the most profound examples of self-reflexive filmmaking, it celebrates the brilliance of one of the least-known yet most remarkable cinematic new waves of the 1960s-1970s.

The program, presented in partnership with the Iran Heritage Foundation, features works by masters Ebrahim Golestan, Abbas Kiarostami, Bahram Beyzaie, Dariush Mehrjui, and Masoud Kimiai.

The final cinematic work of director Ebrahim Golestan, “Secrets of the Jinn Valley Treasure”, is a political satire that places the ills of a society under a comic magnifying glass.

A Monty Python-esque allegory about the corrosive impact of oil exports on Iranian life, following a villager who discovers a hidden fortune, becomes rich overnight, and swiftly transforms into a tyrant.

The film's troubled history began even before its release. Golestan felt compelled to conceal the story during production, aware of how his intentions may be skewed. When it finally reached cinemas, the film was banned after two weeks. The questions remained – were they misinterpretations, or simply interpretations?

Golestan re-edited the film but the director's version was never publicly screened... until now. This screening marks the world premiere of the brand-new restoration of the film's director's cut.

Three classics from the golden age of the Iranian documentary movement are also included in the program.

Films by Ebrahim Golestan ex-



From left: Masoud Kimiai, Ebrahim Golestan, Bahram Beyzaie, Abbas Kiarostami, and Dariush Mehrjui

plore the relationship between earth, people, and the cycle of life in a uniquely poetic manner.

“A Fire,” part of his industrial documentaries (made early in his career whilst working for oil companies) was Golestan's first major international breakthrough. It depicts the extraordinary effort to extinguish a major oilfield fire, combining dramatic immediacy with a poetic sensibility.

Golestan's “The Hills of Marlik” appears to be about the excavation of an archaeological site, but the unearthed objects become a lens through which 3,000 years of Iranian history are seen.

“The Night It Rained” by Kamran Shirdel follows a newspaper report of a village boy who supposedly saves passengers on a train, an account that is quickly doubted and challenged. In just thirty minutes, Shirdel offers a masterful, incisive portrait of 1960s Iran.

Dariush Mehrjui's “The Postman” presents a sharp critique of Iran's rapid Westernization, and the tragic consequences of rash modernity clashing with unravelling tradition.

In the story, inspired by Georg Büchner's play “Woyzeck,” Taghi (Ali Nassirian), a timid, subservient postman lives with his wife Monir in a remote corner of northern Iran. He serves as part-time manservant to the local landowner, Niattolah. When Niattolah's Western-educated nephew returns to remodel the dairy farm into a more profitable pig enterprise, he seduces Monir, a betrayal that hastens Taghi's harrowing descent into madness.

Allegories are woven into sat-

ire, and while “The Postman” may be read as a testimony to class repression, it also expresses a deeper fear of all things human. The film possesses an uncanny ability to shift almost imperceptibly from symbolic satire to a metaphysical realm.

Loneliness and the experience of being orphaned, yet yearning for care and connection, lie at the heart of “Journey” and “A Wedding Suit,” two powerful films from Bahram Beyzaie and Abbas Kiarostami, respectively.

In “Journey,” two teenagers from the shantytowns of southern Tehran travel to the newly built suburbs, searching for one of the boy's parents. The journey itself transcends the boy's personal aims. “Journey” masterfully weaves in a reflection on the history of cinema through allusions and visual citations.

“A Wedding Suit” also presents a disillusionment with the world, through the eyes of young boys. The suit becomes a lens that shows the loneliness and anxieties of youth, in a society indifferent to them, where their vocational and social aspirations are stifled.

These films offer lessons in cinematic modernity from two leading figures of the Iranian New Wave, Beyzaie and Kiarostami.

A seamless fusion of myth, symbolism, folklore and classical Persian literature, Bahram Beyzaie's drama “The Ballad of Tara” unfolds like a feminist re-telling of Akira Kurosawa's samurai epics.

Tara, a strong-willed widow, encounters an ancient warrior spirit in the forest near her village. The ghostly figure pursues

her relentlessly, trying to steal a sword she inherited from her father. Finding himself in love with Tara, the warrior becomes barred from returning to the realm of the dead.

Masoud Kimiai's cult classic “The Deer” embodies everything remarkable about Iranian cinema of the 1970s: political, provocative, sincere, furious, and tragic.

A former champion turned heroin addict reunites with a leftist classmate and finds a final, fiery form of redemption through revolutionary rage.

Premiering at the Tehran International Film Festival in November 1974, “The Deer” was banned for two years and allowed back into theaters only after Kimiai shot a new ending. Both endings will be screened at this event.

Iranian New Wave refers to a movement in Iranian cinema. It started in 1964 with Hajir Dariush's second film “Serpent's Skin,” which was based on D.H. Lawrence's “Lady Chatterley's Lover”.

Mehrjui's two important early social documentaries “But Problems Arose” in 1965, dealing with the cultural alienation of the Iranian youth, and “Face 75,” a critical look at the westernization of the rural culture, which was a prizewinner at the 1965 Berlin Film Festival, also contributed significantly to the establishment of the New Wave.

Later, through the works of Dariush Mehrjui, Masoud Kimiai, Nasser Taqvai, and Bahram Beyzaie, the New Wave became well established as a prominent cultural, dynamic and intellectual trend.

## Tehran cultural center to review “Train Dreams”

TEHRAN- “Train Dreams”, a 2025 drama movie by American filmmaker Clint Bentley, will be reviewed at the Arasbaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Wednesday evening.

Film critic Amir Qaderi is set to attend a screening of the film followed by a review session.

“Train Dreams” narrates the remarkable 80-year journey of Robert Grainier, set against the rugged landscapes of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. His story begins when he arrives in the area as a young orphan, having traveled alone on the Great Northern Railway. Without parents or guidance, Robert drops out of school and drifts aimlessly through life, haunted by a sense of loss and uncertainty. His life takes a turn when he meets Gladys Olding, and the two marry. Together, they build a humble log cabin along the Moyie River and are blessed with a daughter, Kate, anchoring Robert's existence with love and family.

Initially, Robert finds work in railroad construction for the Spokane International Railway. His days are marked by hard labor and the harsh realities of frontier life. During this period, he witnesses a tragic and confusing act of violence when a Chinese worker is

thrown off a bridge by a group of white workers. The incident leaves a lasting impression on Robert, who is haunted by visions of the man and dreams of him being struck by a train. The trauma of this event, along with the brutality he witnesses, begins to seep into his consciousness.

Later, Robert turns to seasonal logging, a job that takes him away from his family for long stretches. Throughout his logging years, he encounters many men whose lives and deaths leave indelible marks on him. His closest companion in the woods, Arn Peeples, dies after being struck by a falling branch, deepening Robert's sense of mortality and loss.

As the post-World War I economy falters, Robert struggles to find work closer to home. He and Gladys decide to pursue farming and establish a lumber mill, hoping to escape the dangers of logging. Yet, tragedy strikes when Robert returns from his final logging season to find their cabin destroyed by wildfire, and Gladys and Kate gone without a trace. Devastated, Robert is comforted by his friend Ignatius Jack, and he rebuilds his life by constructing a new cabin. Despite his efforts, he feels increasingly displaced by advancing technology and the rougher, younger men he

now encounters in the woods, leading him to abandon logging altogether.

He then takes a job as a carriage driver, a role that introduces him to Claire Thompson of the U.S. Forest Service. Claire encourages him to reconnect with the forest and his surroundings. Robert often walks through the woods, believing he can feel the spirits of Gladys and Kate nearby, and he fears driving them away. One night, he dreams he sees an injured Kate return to the cabin, tending her wounds, but upon waking, finds no evidence of her presence. Resolving to stay in the cabin in case she ever returns, Robert continues his solitary life.

As years pass, the world around him transforms. The story culminates on a spring day when Robert, now old and weathered, decides to fly in a biplane. As the plane loops through the sky, memories of his life flash before him—people, places, and moments that have shaped his existence. The narrator reveals that Robert died peacefully in his sleep in his cabin in November 1968, leaving no heirs. Yet, on that spring day in the sky, he finally feels connected to the world and to all that he has experienced, as if finally understanding his place in the vast continuum of life.