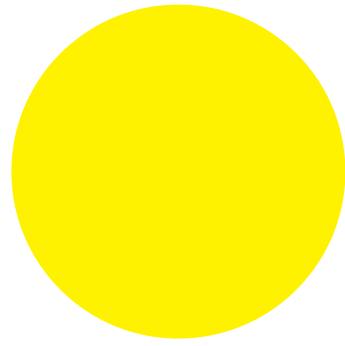




Minister vows to promote cultural heritage, tourism as key to peace and security

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# Iran Daily

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> [irandaily.ir](http://irandaily.ir)

[newspaper.irandaily.ir](http://newspaper.irandaily.ir)

& IranDailyWeb

## Lebanon's deadly blasts 'disgrace' for West: *Pezeshkian*

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## New Chapter Opens in Iran-IAEA Cooperation

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Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi (C) visits Iran's achievements in the nuclear industry, which have been put on display on the sidelines of the 68th General Conference of the IAEA in Vienna, Austria, on September 18, 2024.

IRIB

### Iran Navy has steely resolve to safeguard territorial integrity

By Shahram Irani  
Commander of the Iranian Navy

**PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE**

From a political perspective, war is defined as the continuation of international or domestic conflict through the use of armed violence, with the aim of imposing one actor's will on another. From the perspective of some prominent military theorists, war can be defined as "a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means." In this view, war is not seen as a random or individual event, but rather as a strategic tool for achieving specific interests. In this context, the eight-year imposed war of the Ba'athist regime of Iraq against our country not only extended this theory to serve the interests of that country, but also, by examining the documents and evidence of support from the Eastern and Western blocs, it can be considered the largest proxy war of the current era through the use of violence, conspiracy, and minor and major plots by regional and trans-regional enemies, led by the Ba'athist regime of Iraq, against the newly-established Islamic Republic of Iran. The mighty armed forces of the Islamic Republic

From a political perspective, war is defined as the continuation of international or domestic conflict through the use of armed violence, with the aim of imposing one actor's will on another. From the perspective of some prominent military theorists, war can be defined as "a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means." In this view, war is not seen as a random or individual event, but rather as a strategic tool for achieving specific interests. In this context, the eight-year imposed war of the Ba'athist regime of Iraq against our country not only extended this theory to serve the interests of that country, but also, by examining the documents and evidence of support from the Eastern and Western blocs, it can be considered the largest proxy war of the current era through the use of violence, conspiracy, and minor and major plots by regional and trans-regional enemies, led by the Ba'athist regime of Iraq, against the newly-established Islamic Republic of Iran. The mighty armed forces of the Islamic Republic



of Iran played a key and vital role in defending our beloved country against the invasion of the Iraqi Ba'athist army, the result of which was the sacrifice of the most modest sons of this land in defense of our territorial and maritime integrity. One of the main challenges for our country during the eight-year imposed war was the protection of islands, oil platforms, maritime communication lines, and the security of oil and basic goods-carrying ships to maintain the country's economic structure and prevent its collapse. The Persian Gulf, as one of the most important oil transportation routes in the world, played a vital role in supporting the war-torn Iranian economy.

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### Iran increasing its influence in Central Asia with expanded trade across Turkmenistan

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SPECIAL ISSUE



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**EXCLUSIVE**

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## Iran eyes 10m tons of crop output in greenhouse farming



Iran's Agriculture Ministry plans a major increase in the production of crops from greenhouses.

The ministry's contractor for greenhouse farming said that Iran's crop production from greenhouse farming will reach 10 million metric tons (mt) per year in the year to March 2028, Press TV wrote Mehdi Lotfizadeh added that the Iranian government plans to expand greenhouse farming by more than 30,000 hectares in the next four years. Lotfizadeh said the investment needed to complete the project will amount to 7,300 trillion rials (\$12.3 billion).

He noted Iran has the expertise and technology needed to expand greenhouses, adding that the country will also use foreign machinery and equipment to modernize the sector. The official added that the government will support the expansion of greenhouse farming in Iran mainly by offering cheap loans to farmers. Iranian government figures show the country has 27,000 hectares of greenhouses which produce around 4 million mt of various crops per year.

Iran exports a bulk of its greenhouse products to neighboring countries although the crops are also becoming increasingly popular in the domestic market.

Iran's total agricultural output rose by just over 19% in the calendar year to March 20 to reach 131 million mt.

Facing US sanctions that restrict its access to foreign trade, Iran has introduced policies to encourage increased activity in its manufacturing and agriculture sectors in recent years.

Increased support for the agriculture projects has enabled the Iranian government to ensure food security in the country.

# Ensuring Iran's food security hinges on tech-based methods: **MP**

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou  
Staff writers

The Iranian government's main approach to ensure the country's food security relies on technology-based methods for agriculture and food production, said a member of the Parliament's Agriculture Commission. Talking to Iran Daily, Naderqoli Ebrahimi pointed to food security as one of the main fundamentals for national security and stated that a country enjoying food security has definitely guaranteed its national security. The lawmaker added that countries which have dependence on other countries for food security will definitely face problems in terms of national security.

"Considering the importance of providing food security, our priority is to meet our needs by domestic production. The production surplus should be transferred to storages to be used as reserves for market regulation in times of need, or should be exported," he noted.

Ebrahimi went on to say that this should be done through proper and integrated management because we have the potential to export surplus production, but the key point is that we should tune ourselves on sustainable export policies so that we can keep our export markets. If the export of our products is carried out intermittently, the importing country notices that it cannot count on the continu-



al import of the chosen product and therefore it shifts to buying products from other countries. Referring to the emphasis of Iran's Constitution on the necessity of gaining self-sufficiency, Ebrahimi said in the food security document of Iran that was approved three months ago, the three ministries of health, agriculture, and energy, along with

other bodies will cooperate as the document refers to the provision of suitable and high-quality food as the right of every Iranian which should be provided. "Gholamreza Nouri, the minister of agriculture, in his plans, has drawn attention to the seventh plan of the National Food Security Document and has put ensuring self-reliance in fundamental

products and ensuring food security as well as improving productivity on the agenda," the MP said noting that the minister has announced short-, medium- and long-term plans for solving the problems of the agricultural sector, production and providing the country's food security. With the suitable process that has been provided for the tech-

nology-based centers to join the agricultural sector, part of the country's problems has been resolved in the field of mass production that require modern technology to improve productivity, he said adding that, "We must increase our efforts as we have a long way to go to fully meet the food needs of our individuals."

## Gas deals with Turkmenistan, Russia demand scheduling: **NIGC**

The implementation of the Iran-Turkmenistan gas contract needs to be scheduled as measures have been taken, said Saeid Tavakoli, the head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), expressing his hope to implement the contract signed with Russia.

Iraq is one of the good customers of Iranian gas which pays their money on time and in cash as the country has no debt re-

garding the import of gas from Iran, the official stated, Shana reported.

In cold days of winter, the consumption of the household, commercial, industrial and transportation sectors naturally increases, he said noting that this upcoming winter, with the completion of repairs along with optimal storage of liquefied gas and also with the cooperation of the Ministry of Energy, gas shortage will not occur.



## Iran Navy has ...

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Navy, through the adoption of various and diverse tactics, guaranteed the security of Iranian and other friendly and allied countries' ships in escort operations.

The role of the Iranian Navy during the eight-year Sacred Defense was not limited to defensive operations at sea, but rather it was a symbol of national identity, loyalty to the homeland, and a great test that, by the grace of God, the Iranian Army emerged victorious and proud in the face of the Iranian Islamic nation.

Another important aspect of the Iranian Navy's role was deterrence against other regional and trans-regional powers. After the failure and complete destruc-

tion of the Iraqi Ba'athist Navy in direct naval warfare, Iraq and its regional supporters tried to pressure the Islamic Republic of Iran through increased tensions in the Persian Gulf. Especially in the final years of the war, with the increased presence of the US Navy and other Western countries in the region, the Iranian Navy's role in countering these threats and protecting national sovereignty became more important.

During this period, the Iranian Navy, in interaction and cooperation with its brothers in the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy, was able to prove its effective presence and maritime dominance in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, and respond to threats from the

presence of unauthorized foreign forces. This not only helped maintain our country's sovereignty but also created deterrence that caused Western powers to refrain from taking any direct military action against Iran.

Therefore, the eight-year imposed war provided an opportunity for the Iranian armed forces, especially the Iranian Navy, to prove their loyalty and commitment to defending the homeland in the most difficult conditions, and with the unparalleled bravery and sacrifices of its devoted personnel, create a lasting and historical identity for the Iranian nation.

This great test showed that the Iranian Navy, relying on faith, experience, expertise, discipline, and training, uniquely and with

all its might, stood against the fully armed enemy and that no threat could undermine the iron will and commitment of this force in defending the people and national interests of our country in the seas and throughout the region's strategic geography.

The imposed war was an opportunity for the glorious army of the Islamic Republic of Iran not only to defend the land of Iran but also to secure an everlasting place in the hearts and minds of our people as the vigilant and true guardians of the nation. The Iranian Navy, by supporting the war-torn Iranian economy and defending the country's vital resources, not only consolidated its position as a strategic and strong force but also created a new identity for Iran after the Islamic Revolution with every victory and sacrifice. Every suc-

cess of this force was a manifestation of the spirit of resistance and selflessness of the people of this land.

The Iranian Navy, by maintaining the security of the Persian Gulf and controlling the Strait of Hormuz against any external threat, defended Iran's territorial integrity and showed the world that Iran, as an independent nation, would never allow foreign powers to encroach on its soil and water. This demonstration of power was a military achievement and it was rooted in the depth of Iranian identity as a people who have always stood against foreign aggression.

Each time the Iranian Navy defended the Strait of Hormuz, it conveyed a message to the world that the country possesses military strength and is a nation of dignity and authority that will never yield to force and aggres-

sion. After the end of the imposed war, the Navy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued its identity-creating role under the leadership of the Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces. The force, by strengthening its will and self-confidence, as well as relying on its indigenous capabilities and equipment, demonstrated its powerful presence in the oceanic arenas through the successful mission of the 86th Naval Group, showcasing its power to the powerful nations, and as one of the pillars of power and territory-building of the country in the defensive and military arenas, relying on the valuable and unique lessons of the Sacred Defense era, continues to assure the noble and great Iranian nation that it will defend the borders of this land against any threat, with its life on the line.



# Enchanting Sheikh Alikhan Waterfall in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province

## Iranica Desk

Located 12 kilometers from the city of Chelgard and 100 kilometers from Shahrekord, the capital of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, Sheikh Alikhan Waterfall cascades through steep canyons at the entrance of the village of the same name, situated on the lush slopes of Kouhrang. The village sits at an altitude of 2,200 meters above sea level, enjoying a mild climate in spring and summer, while experiencing cold winters.

Sheikh Alikhan is renowned for its local products, including honey and dairy items, and has preserved many of its traditional customs. Among these are melodies associated with joy and the distinctive tunes of the chap instrument, which reflect the rich Bakhtiari culture and serve as unique attractions for visitors to the province.

Water is one of nature's invaluable blessings, but when it cascades from high mountains to form a waterfall, it becomes an even more enchanting spectacle. At the entrance of Sheikh Alikhan village, the waterfall flows through a steep gorge, creating a refreshing breeze for visitors. Sheikh Alikhan Waterfall is one of the scenic highlights of Kouhrang, located 40 kilometers from Sar Aqa Seyed village, near Chelgard town.

The waterfall's water springs from the surrounding heights, and its distance from Shahrekord is approximately 90 kilometers. The most stunning views and highest water flow occur in spring, when the area is adorned with blooming tulips known as Shahdari, further enhancing the landscape's beauty.

In spring, the gushing rivers and flowing springs of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province create a spectacular natural display. In winter, however, the cold weather transforms the waterfall into a breathtaking collection of icicles, with some reaching heights of over half a meter, adding a unique charm to the site. Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province is rich



● hamshahronline.ir

in natural wonders, but Sheikh Alikhan Waterfall stands out as one of its most unique landscapes. The valley, where the white waters flow, is enriched by colorful flowers and the scent of medicinal and edible plants, offering visitors a glimpse of Iran's enchanting nature. In spring, the edges of the waterfall are adorned with fragrant plants that enhance the cool air with their delightful aromas, notably the scent of wild mint.

Sheikh Alikhan Waterfall is a completely natural attraction, untouched by human alteration, making it a pristine destination for visitors from both within and outside the province, particularly those from warmer regions. Ten meters from the waterfall,

bubbles and mist hang in the air, delighting nature enthusiasts who venture close to witness this natural wonder.

To enhance the experience, cultural heritage initiatives could invest in this site by establishing recreational facilities, providing comfort and relaxation for visitors while attracting even more tourists. The lush greenery along the valley, the stunning waterfall, and the nearby spring creates a breathtaking scene that captivates all who visit. Despite its extraordinary beauty, Sheikh Alikhan Waterfall remains relatively unknown to first-time visitors exploring Kouhrang's attractions, making it a hidden gem waiting to be discovered.



● yjc.ir

## Darandash Valley, where adventure meets serene landscapes

### Iranica Desk

Darandash Valley in East Azarbaijan Province is an exhilarating destination for nature enthusiasts and adventure travelers alike. Visiting this breathtaking valley not only allows you to engage in recreational activities and appreciate the stunning natural beauty, but it also provides an adrenaline rush, offering experiences that are truly unique and unforgettable.

This remarkable location is shaped by the Agh Chay River, which, in its journey through hard rocks and stones, has carved out a magnificent valley

amidst the picturesque landscape of the city of Zonuz. As the river flows, it has created deep channels in the rock formations, contributing to the valley's fame and allure. These channels serve as a sanctuary for various bird species, including doves, adding to the valley's charm and biodiversity, IRNA wrote.

The distance between the walls of Darandash Valley ranges from two to ten meters, resembling a legendary maze that brings to mind scenes from adventurous movies. The valley stretches approximately 500 meters in length, and the presence of several stunning waterfalls further enhances its splendor, creating

a captivating environment for visitors.

Darandash Valley is known by several names, with 'dash' meaning 'stone' in Turkish, likely referencing the abundant rocks and stones that define the area. This valley stands out as one of the key attractions in Marand and is situated near the village of Haris. While there is a village named Darandash in the region, Haris is closer to the paths leading to the valley, making it a more convenient starting point for your adventure.

As one of the prime destinations for canyoning in Iran, Darandash invites you to pack your travel bag and embark on a

journey to the northwest of the country. There are two routes to reach this captivating valley, and regardless of which path you choose, you are sure to encounter a remarkable and extraordinary landscape along the way.

### Best time to travel

Without a doubt, spring is the optimal time to immerse yourself in the beauty of nature, particularly for canyoning and enjoying the mild weather conditions. Be sure to prepare your travel gear in advance so you can fully embrace the thrilling adventure that awaits you in Darandash Valley.

The valley's cool and pleasant

climate makes it an excellent getaway from the summer heat, providing an idyllic setting for an unforgettable swimming experience during the warmer months.

However, it is important to keep in mind that due to the cold climate of East Azarbaijan Province, it is advisable to avoid visiting the valley during the rainy seasons. If you do choose to visit during this time, ensure that you are equipped with the necessary gear to handle the conditions safely.

Exploring the pristine and scenic Darandash Valley marks the beginning of an adventurous yet risky journey. Therefore, it

is highly recommended to travel with professional nature tours and experienced guides familiar with the area. Alternatively, seek guidance from local residents who can provide valuable insights and assistance.

To navigate the challenges of Darandash, you must possess adequate skills and techniques for canyoning, as well as good physical fitness, since you will encounter both long hikes and the need to climb up and down rocky terrains. Be sure to bring essential descending equipment, such as ropes and helmets, to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience as you traverse this stunning valley.



● delgarm.com



# Iran increasing its influence in Central Asia

## With expanded trade across Turkmenistan

By Paul Goble  
Expert on Eurasian affairs

### OPINION

For most of its just over 30 years of independence, Turkmenistan has been left out of discussions on Central Asia as well as both north-south and east-west transportation routes linking the region to the rest of the world. Over the last two years, however, the situation has changed dramatically as Ashgabat has opened up and assumed a more active role internationally. Turkmenistan has assumed an ever-more important role as a conduit for north-south and east-west trade, linking China and Europe, Russia and Iran, and the landlocked countries of Central Asia with the outside world. The role of China and east-west trade via Turkmenistan has garnered much international attention. A key dynamic that has been missed, however, is Iran's ever-increasing importance in Central Asian trade patterns. Moscow, Ashgabat, and the other Central Asian capitals welcome this trend, but many in the West fear it. This is due to concerns that Tehran will likely utilize its newfound economic leverage in the area to promote the regime's Islamist message.



Iran has a larger economic agenda than just the expansion of transit corridors. Ashgabat and Tehran are discussing the creation of special joint zones of economic activity and other steps to increase economic interaction between them.

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (R) meets with National Leader of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow (C) and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian after the signing of four cooperation documents, in Tehran, Iran, on August 28, 2024.  
Khamenei.ir

Iran has been focused on developing trade routes to Central Asian countries and onward to Russia for several years. Given Iran's geographical location, this is entirely natural. The only other routes in and out of Central Asia are via Russia, China, Afghanistan, or across the Caspian Sea; each of these options poses its own political and logistical challenges. Iran's ambitions to become a dominant player in Central Asian trade assumed new and larger dimensions with the signing of agreements between Turkmenistan's former president and current national leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow and the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Seyyed Ali Khamenei in late August. Trade across these routes has increased by as much as 30 times since 2023, and the new accords are slated to increase it further over the next two or three years, Russian experts say. If those projections hold, railways and pipelines across Turkmenistan will become major transit routes not only for the countries of Central Asia but for Russia and Iran as well.

Iran has moved quickly in this direction for three major reasons. First, policymakers in Central Asian states desire multiple export and import routes so that no one country can dominate them. Second, Russia is developing a burgeoning security alliance with Iran and has an interest in projecting power southward toward the Indian Ocean. Third, Russia and Iran face numerous difficulties in conducting trade through either the Caucasus or the Caspian Sea. Since gaining independence in 1991, the Central Asian states have typically been viewed as objects to be manipulated by outside powers rather than agents to be understood in their own right. In response, these countries have sought to develop ties with multiple partners to prevent being dominated by any one of them. Many in the West initially viewed this as competition between Türkiye and Iran, whose contrasting ideological and political positions meant that the West supported the former and opposed the latter. Then, attention shifted to geopolitical competition among Russia, China, and the West

over existing routes rather than to the possibility that new ones could open up. Unsurprisingly, albeit for very different reasons, many in the capitals affected have welcomed the expansion of the Turkmenistan route, and Iran has worked hard to exploit that fact. The combination of the second and third factors has proved to be more important. Due to Western sanctions, Russia has formed a close security partnership with Iran and sought both to import Iranian weapons to be used in Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine and to end run Western sanctions by shifting trade to the south. Because of continuing uncertainties and turmoil in the South Caucasus, the difficulties Moscow and Iran face in opening train routes in northern Iran, and bottlenecks in any plans to use the Caspian as an alternate route, the Russian government has increasingly shifted its attention to developing trade with Iran via the countries of Central Asia. Moscow has backed the development of a corridor across Turkmenistan to Iran, even if it might be used against

Russia in the future. This support has made it easier for both Ashgabat and Tehran to reach their own agreements. Iran has a larger economic agenda than just the expansion of transit corridors. Ashgabat and Tehran are discussing the creation of special joint zones of economic activity and other steps to increase economic interaction between them. How far the two will go, however, depends not only on the success of the transit corridor but also on the international situation and whether Turkmenistan decides against further development of ties out of fear that it could lose control of the domestic situation. Turkmenistan is anything but stable, however calm Ashgabat's repression has made it appear. Poverty and even hunger remain serious problems, especially given increasingly severe water shortages. Conflicts within the elite appear to be on the rise, and ethnic tensions are certainly growing, with minorities leaving the country when they can. Islamist thought is becoming ever more of a problem, with Ashgabat now closing mosques, a step that

makes contact with Iran especially problematic. In the past, Ashgabat has warned of the danger of Iranian-style popular uprisings in Turkmenistan, a danger that has not disappeared and may be on the rise. Iran may find it increasingly difficult to expand its presence in Turkmenistan and use that as a springboard for achieving similar successes across Central Asia. For the moment at least, Iran is gaining new footholds in the region with the backing of Moscow, especially among opposition groups. This is something certain to sound alarm bells in Western capitals, which have good reason to fear that the expansion of Iran's economic influence will be followed by the growth in its ideological influence as well. This development would no doubt threaten Western interests in the region. What remains to be seen is whether Moscow and Beijing will realize that such Iranian gains would threaten them as well in the long run, however much they may currently be benefiting.

The article first appeared on The Jamestown Foundation.





◀ National Leader of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow (2nd-L) and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd-R) watch as CEO of the Turkmenistan Company Mohammad Khan (L) and Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh pose for photographs with a signed sisterhood agreement between Iran's Amirabad Port and Turkmenistan's Turkmenbashi Port in Tehran, Iran, on August 28, 2024.  
● IRNA

# Azerbaijan turning away from West toward Russia, Iran

By Paul Goble  
Expert on Eurasian affairs

## OPINION

As Armenia and Azerbaijan have engaged in talks about a peace treaty regarding their border dispute, Baku has been quietly but definitively turning away from the West. Azerbaijan has been closely linked with the West since the 1990s, due to its oil reserves and location as a bridge to Central Asia, as well as its role as a counterweight to Iran.

Now, Baku is developing closer relations with Russia and Iran, two countries with which it has often been in conflict. This shift was underscored last month when Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Baku and signed a wide range of economic and political accords that have led Azerbaijan to expand cooperation with the Russian government across the board. Some of the benefits for Baku were highlighted when Moscow sharply criticized Armenia for its unwillingness to re-open the Zangezur/Syunik corridor between Azerbaijan proper and the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhchivan. Meanwhile, Iran recently elected an ethnic Azerbaijani as president, and Tehran has continued to promote a passage through Iranian territory as an alternative to the Zangezur/Syunik corridor. Moscow commentators, in recent days, have celebrated these developments as a sign that "Baku is making a sharp turn toward Moscow and Tehran". They claim that as a result, the West will not be in a position to use the South Caucasus as "a second front" against Moscow.

Whether Azerbaijan will maintain this orientation for long, as both Moscow and Tehran hope, will depend on whether Baku decides to shift its foreign policy alignment again, something for which President Ilham Aliyev's commitment to a balance leaves plenty of room. Baku, Moscow, and Tehran all have compelling reasons for finding common ground. Azerbaijan has been furious at the West, in general, and France, in particular, for its support of Yerevan in its negotiations with Baku as well as for Western criticism of human rights violations in Azerbaijan. Baku sees the expansion of north-south trade between Russia and Iran as benefiting itself both economically and politically. That interest has only increased as Baku and Yerevan's talks may be nearing their end game in signing a peace treaty. Given that the two countries have decided not to resolve the issue of reopening trans-

sit routes in such an accord, Azerbaijan certainly has an interest in having Moscow and possibly even Tehran on its side to address the issue in the future, either by allowing Baku to take control of Zangezur or offering an alternative route between Azerbaijan proper and Nakhchivan via Iran. Moscow and Tehran have equally important interests for seeking to improve ties with Azerbaijan. Russia wants, first and foremost, to limit Western influence in the South Caucasus, which would give Moscow a freer hand not only in Azerbaijan but in Armenia and Georgia as well. For its part, Tehran wants to ensure that Baku will not increase its interest in the large ethnic Azerbaijani population of Iran, as Azerbaijani leaders, including Ilham Aliyev, have in the past. Iran also hopes to pull Baku away from its close ties with Israel, ties that Tehran fears might be used in the event of a Western attack on

the Islamic Republic, also to avoid instability on its own borders that either foreigners or Iranian citizens might exploit. Perhaps most importantly, at least for the immediate future, both Russia and Iran see improving ties with Azerbaijan as helping them cement their burgeoning economic and political cooperation, a development that helps both countries escape their current international isolation. Azerbaijan is critical to this effort because it offers a far shorter and better-developed trade route between Russia and Iran than do longer and less developed railways and highways through Central Asia or transit via the Caspian Sea, given limitations in shipping and especially intermodal port capacity in both countries. All three countries thus have an interest in the latest position Baku has adopted, in which the interests of Moscow and Tehran are

strategic and long-term, and those of Azerbaijan are almost certainly more tactical. Due to its location and since gaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has been committed to a balanced foreign policy rather than an approach that links the country permanently to any outside country or group of countries. In practice, this has meant that relations between Baku and other countries have been on a roller coaster. Over the past decade alone, for example, Azerbaijan's relations with Iran have been close to war, and then months later, have become far warmer. Baku's ties with both Moscow and the West have gone up and down more than once, despite much talk on both sides about agreements that will stand the test of time or conflicts that appeared beyond resolution. Something similar may very well happen again. While Baku has compelling interests in expanding

ties with both Russia and Iran and thus reducing links with the West, it also has many independent interests that point in the opposite direction. Consequently, Baku's current turn away from the West toward Russia and Iran may not last for long. In fact, it may end once a peace treaty is signed between Baku and Yerevan. Appearing to ignore that possibility, some in Moscow are celebrating what they hope is a shift in Azerbaijani foreign policy that will bring Baku back into the Kremlin's orbit indefinitely. Western governments, nevertheless, will have to remain focused on Baku's penchant for "rebalancing" its foreign policy and even work to promote another shift, especially given the long tradition of complicated and even contradictory moves on the South Caucasus chessboard.

The article first appeared on The Jamestown Foundation.



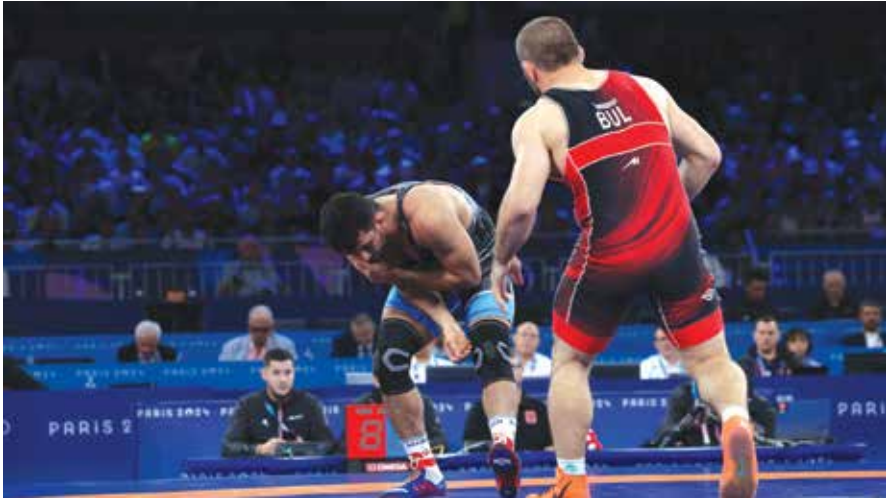
▶ Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ali Asadov (L) shakes hands with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to convey President Ilham Aliyev's greetings and congratulations to Pezeshkian on the occasion of assuming his presidential duties, in Tehran, Iran, on July 31, 2024.  
● president.ir



▶ Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (L), Russian President Vladimir Putin (C), and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attend trilateral talks in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Russia, on October 31, 2022.  
● KREMLIN



## Yazdani undergoes second surgery on injured shoulder



### Sports Desk

Iranian wrestling sensation Hassan Yazdani, a winner of national-high 10 world and Olympic medals, underwent a second surgery on his right shoulder in the French city of Nice on Tuesday. "Yazdani's surgical operation was a seven-hour procedure, with his shoulder requiring treatment in three different areas," wrote the official website of the Iranian Wrestling Federation. The exact timeline for Yazdani's full recovery is yet to be confirmed by the sport's national governing body, though Dr. Sohrab Kayhani, the head of the federation's medical team, said in late August that the 29-year-old wrestler would be expected to be out of action for "up to 18 months." Tuesday's operation was a second in the same area for Yazdani in less than 12 months.

Having been sidelined for 10 months, Yazdani made his long-awaited return in June's Ranking Series event in Budapest, where his dominant performance convinced the coaching staff of the national team to pick him for the freestyle 86kg contests in the Paris Olympics. Keen to win a second Olympic gold and overtake taekwondo legend Hadi Saei as the most-decorated Iranian in the history of the Games, Yazdani showed no signs of the shoulder problem on his way to the final in the French capital. The injury, however, flared up again in the showdown against Bulgarian Magomed Ramazanov, as the Iranian struggled from the get-go, calling for treatment on several occasions throughout the six minutes of action. He still managed to see out the contest but the 7-1 loss meant he had to settle for a second successive Olymp-



Iranian wrestler Hassan Yazdani (blue) struggles with a shoulder problem during the freestyle 86kg final against Magomed Ramazanov in the Paris Olympics on Aug. 9, 2024. [olympic.ir](#)

pic silver, following his gold-winning campaign in Rio 2016, which saw him emulate legendary Gholamreza Takhti as the most successful Iranian in Olympic wrestling. Asked if it was a wise decision to take him to the Games in the first place, Dr. Kayhani said: "His surgeon had given him to the go-ahead, while his situation had been fully assessed in Budapest to make sure he wouldn't have any problem in Paris." "I'm sure he will be fit and ready to compete again in the World Championships in two years," added Dr. Kayhani.

## Sepahan stunned by Al Wehdat in ACL Two opener

### Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan fell to a shock 2-1 defeat against Jordan's Al Wehdat in their opening AFC Champions League Two Group C tie at Amman International Stadium.

The leader in the Iranian top-flight table with a perfect run, the Isfahan-based club thought it was on its way to a comfortable victory on the road when Tajikistan international Vahdat Hanonov's long-range effort found the back of the net nine minutes into the game. The home side, however, had other ideas as Ousseynou Gueye drew Al Wehdat level with a cool touch in a one-on-one situation with Sepahan keeper Payam Niazmand midway through the first half. Sepahan's clumsy backline was punished again 10 minutes after the break, with Ibrahim Sabra slotting home for Al Wehdat's second of the night.

Desperate to salvage the game, Sepahan coach Jose Morais made four changes at one go, sending on Steven Nzonzi, Reza Asadi, Hossein Goodarzi and Aboubakar Kamara. However, it was the host which came close to doubling its lead in the closing stages as Sabra forced Niazmand into a good save before his follow-up effort came off the post 18 minutes left on the clock. Defending comfortably in numbers and with Sepahan's Hadi Mohammadi sent off in stoppage time,



Al Wehdat saw off the remainder of the game to claim the win. "Al Wehdat played teamwork football with high spirit, and therefore deserved to achieve the victory," Morais said after the game. "The match was difficult for both sides, and our success in scoring the first goal put additional pressure on us. Al Wehdat players' reaction was very distinctive, and I believe that they presented a performance that reflects their club and fans," added

the Portuguese. Al Wehdat head coach Rafat Ali couldn't hide his delight after his team produced a stirring comeback, saying: "It was a difficult match that presented its own challenges but we were able to control the opposing team in our own way." "We worked hard for eight consecutive days to achieve this victory, and I believe that Al Wehdat players are showing that they can live up to their responsibilities," Ali added.



Sepahan fullback Aria Yousefi is tackled by Al Wehdat's Alain Akono during an AFC Champions League Two match in Amman, Jordan, on September 17, 2024. [AFC](#)

"The upcoming matches will be difficult, but we will fight to achieve our target in the competition." Sepahan will face FC Istiklol of Tajikistan next at home on October 2 while Al Wehdat will visit UAE's Sharjah FC, which walked away with a 1-0 win at Istiklol.

## Italy's World Cup icon Schillaci dies aged 59

BBC - Italian icon Salvatore Schillaci, the top scorer at the 1990 World Cup, has died aged 59. Schillaci, better known as 'Toto', scored six goals to win the Golden Boot at the 1990 World Cup on home soil. Italy lost in the semi-finals, but Schillaci was also awarded the Golden Ball as the best player and gained hero status. Schillaci was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2022. Capped 16 times for his country, scoring seven goals, he represented Italian giants Juventus and Inter Milan after

beginning his club career at Messina. Juventus, whom Schillaci joined in 1989, said: "We immediately fell in love with Toto. His desire, his story, his being so wonderfully passionate, and it showed in every game he played. "We at Juve were lucky enough to get excited about him before - in that incredible summer of 1990 - the whole of Italy did, captivated by those wonderfully energetic celebrations of his." Schillaci scored his first goal of the 1990 World Cup as a sub-

stitute against Austria, and after another substitute appearance against the United States earned his first start against the Czech Republic. Partnering Baggio up front, Schillaci scored again as Italy's campaign built momentum, and his hero status was confirmed with further goals in the subsequent knockout round matches against Uruguay and the Republic of Ireland in the quarter-finals. Despite opening the scoring in the semi-final against Argentina, Italy lost out on penalties in Naples - but Schillaci sealed

the Golden Boot with his sixth goal of the tournament in the third-place play-off against England. Serie A described Schillaci, runner up to Germany's Lothar Matthaus for the 1990 Ballon d'Or, as "a champion who lit up the magical nights of the 1990 World Cup in Italy". The league added: "His desire to emerge and reach the highest levels of football has been and will continue to be a source of inspiration for the many young people who chase the dream of playing in Serie A."



PA IMAGES



## Players close to strike action over congested schedule, says Rodri

REUTERS - Players could be close to strike action over the amount of games they are required to play, Manchester City midfielder Rodri warned on Tuesday on the eve of their Champions League opener against Inter Milan. Expanded Champions League and FIFA Club World Cup formats, alongside enlarged national team competitions, has made for a greater number of games for top teams and players, and Rodri is the latest to say the workload is too great. "I think we're close to that (striking),"

Rodri told reporters. "It's the general opinion of the players, and if it keeps this way, we'll have no other option. I really think it's something that worries us. We are the guys who suffer." The optimal number of games "in which a player can perform at the highest level," the Spaniard said, is between 40 and 50. "After that, you drop because it's impossible to sustain the physical level," he added. "This year, we're going to go until 70, maybe 80 (games), depends on how far you go

into competitions. "I think it's too much. We have to take care of ourselves, because we are the main characters of this sport or business. Not everything is money or marketing, it is also the quality of the show. When I rest, when I'm not tired, I perform better. And if people want to see better football, we need to rest." Last season, the 28-year-old's campaign extended through to Spain's European Championship victory on July 14, along with City teammates Kyle Walker and Phil

Foden, who finished runners-up with England at the tournament in Germany. City defender Manuel Akanji half-joked recently that he may have to retire at 30 because of the gruelling schedule. "It's so tough," the Swiss player said. "You don't just think about this season -- but also next season. Let's say we win the league or cup, then go to the final of the Club World Cup; the Community Shield is three weeks after. So when do we have holidays?"



# Lebanon's deadly blasts 'disgrace' for West: *Pezeshkian*



and its supporters against the oppressed people of Palestine and the Muslim world.

Israel has claimed the lives of more than 41,000 Palestinians in Gaza since October 7, 2023 when Hamas-led Palestinian resistance groups launched an operation on Israel's positions inside the occupied territories.

Since then, Hezbollah has exchanged fire with the Israeli military on a daily basis to support the Palestinian fighters in Gaza. More than 600 people in Lebanon have been killed since the start of the clashes last October.

The explosions on Tuesday also drew reactions from many other countries and international bodies.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday warned against the risk of escalation in the Middle East after the detonation of pagers.

Blinken said the United States was still gathering facts but it was in no one's interest for the conflict to spread.

### 'Hybrid war against Lebanon'

Russia's Foreign Ministry said the attack was an act of hybrid war against Lebanon in which it said thousands of innocent people had been hurt.

"It appears that the organizers of this high-tech attack deliberately sought to foment a large-scale armed confrontation in order to provoke a major war in the Middle East," Maria Zakharova, a spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, said in a statement.

The European Union's foreign policy chief on Wednesday condemned the explosions of pagers, saying, "Even if the attacks seem to have been targeted, they had heavy, indiscriminate collateral damages among civilians, including children among the victims."

"I consider this situation extremely worrying. I can only condemn these attacks that endanger the security and stability of Lebanon, and increase the risk of escalation in the region," Josep Borrell said.

Borrell added that the "European Union calls on all stakeholders to avert an all-out war, which would have heavy consequences for the entire region and beyond."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk in a statement described the blasts as "shocking," and said their impact on civilians was "unacceptable."

Those responsible for the deadly explosions "must be held to account," the UN rights chief said.

## US views diplomacy as best way to resolve issues on Iran nuclear program



### International Desk

The White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the United States views diplomacy as the best way to achieve an effective long-term solution to Iran's nuclear program and that Washington has been "pretty consistent" about the matter in the past three and a half years.

Jean-Pierre made the comments after Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday Iran could hold direct talks with the United States if Washington demonstrates "in practice" that it is not hostile to the Islamic Republic.

Pezeshkian was responding to a question at a news conference in Tehran on whether Tehran would be open to direct talks with the US to revive a 2015 nuclear deal.

"We are not hostile towards the US, they should end their hostility towards us by showing their goodwill in practice," said Pezeshkian, adding: "We are brothers with the Americans as well."

The US under former president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions against Iran.

After taking office in January 2021, US President Joe Biden tried to negotiate a revival of the nuclear pact under which Iran had restricted its nuclear program in return for relief from US, European Union and UN sanctions.

However, efforts to revive the deal have not yielded so far.

### International Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian reacted to the Lebanon's deadly blasts blamed on Israel, calling it a disgrace for the Western countries who spare no effort to achieve their "inhumane goals."

Nine people were killed and over 300 wounded Wednesday when walkie-talkies exploded across Lebanon, the government said, a day after pagers used by Hezbollah resistance group blew up, killing 12 and wounding up to 2,800.

"The new wave of walkie-talkie explosions... killed

nine people and wounded more than 300," the health ministry said in a statement.

Simultaneous explosions of wireless telecommunication devices on Tuesday have killed a dozen people, including two children, and wounded some 3,000 others across Lebanon. Iran's ambassador to Lebanon was also among the wounded. Several people were also wounded in neighboring Syria.

Hezbollah and the Lebanese government have accused Israel of responsibility for explosions. Israel has so far declined to comment on

the gory incident. Hezbollah has vowed to punish Israel. "The incident once again showed that although the Western countries and the Americans claim that they are looking for a cease-fire (in Gaza), in practice they fully support the crimes, killings and blind assassinations of the Zionist regime," Pezeshkian said during a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

### Collapse of humanity

"Using devices, made for welfare of human beings, as a tool for assassination and annihilation" of those who do not hold the same



A partly damaged car is seen after what is believed to be the result of a walkie-talkie exploding inside it, in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon, on September 18, 2024.

● MOHAMMED ZAATARI/AP

views of the US, Israel and the West is "an indication of the collapse of humanity as well as domination of savagery and barbarism," the website of the president quoted him as saying.

He called unity among Islamic countries as the best way to stop the crimes committed by the Israeli regime

## *Pashinyan*: Armenia ready to give passage to Azerbaijan under same conditions as Iran

### International Desk

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said his country is ready to provide Azerbaijan with a land corridor under the same conditions as Iran gives to Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan has been calling for its longstanding request for a transport corridor to be included in a Russian-mediated peace treaty signed between the two countries

after months of deadly conflict in November 2020.

The so-called Zangezur corridor aims to connect the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan, bordering Turkey, to mainland Azerbaijan through the southern Armenian province of Syunik.

Baku has been asking for an unimpeded passage, without checkpoints, and when Yerevan refused to do so, Azerbaijan said it will instead discuss the issue with



Nikol Pashinyan

its southern neighbor Iran.

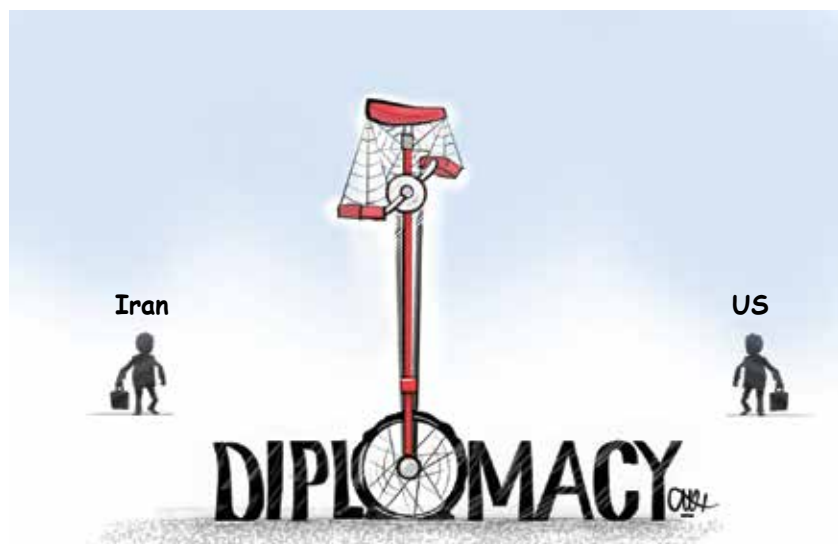
"We are ready to provide our roads through Syunik, Tavush, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor, all possible places. By what principles? The roads must function without bypassing, undermining or subordinating the sovereignty, territorial integrity and jurisdiction of the Republic of Armenia, just like in all countries of the world," the Armenian prime minister said.

Iran has also repeatedly announced its opposition to the Zangezur project that would cut off the transport routes connecting its territory to Armenia. Tehran says that it is against any geopolitical changes in the region.

Since Armenia and Azerbaijan maintain a mutual traffic blockade due to long-running tensions, Baku's connection with Nakhchivan for decades has been Iran, and the connection with Turkey has been Georgia.

Iran has also repeatedly announced its opposition to the Zangezur project that would cut off the transport routes connecting its territory to Armenia. Tehran says that it is against any geopolitical changes in the region.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Pezeshkian names first Sunni governor-general in 45 years

Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, on Wednesday nominated a member of the Sunni Muslim minority as the governor-general of Kurdistan Province.

Arash Zerehtan was appointed head of the western province, IRNA news agency said, citing government spokesman Fatemeh Mohajerani.

He is the first Sunni to be appointed as a governor-general in the country since the earliest days of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Zerehtan, 48, has served as a member of parliament for the city of Paveh since 2020.

Sunnis account for about 10 percent of Iran's population, where the vast majority are Shias.

Pezeshkian, 69, took office in July after an early election following the death of president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash.

During his election campaign, Pezeshkian criticized the lack of representation for ethnic and religious minorities, in particular Sunni Kurds, in important positions.

In August, he made another member of the Sunni community, Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, one of his vice presidents.



Arash Zerehtan



# Minister vows to promote cultural heritage, tourism as key to peace and security



Iran's new Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, was inaugurated on Wednesday, vowing to promote the country's rich cultural heritage and tourism industry as a key to peace and security. Salehi Amiri became the Minister

of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts on August 21, 2024, with 168 votes in favor out of 288 votes. He began his work on August 24. In his inaugural speech, Salehi Amiri said that the world should view Iran through the lens of its

heritage and arts, rather than its defense and nuclear capabilities, IRNA wrote. "The world should study Iran from the perspective of its heritage and art, not its defense and nuclear capabilities," he said. Salehi Amiri emphasized that

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (C) flanked by new Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri (L) and Tourism Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami (R) attend the inauguration ceremony for the new minister in Tehran, on September 18, 2024. ● ISNA

tourism is a guarantee of peace and security, and that the country needs to remove obstacles and work towards development and progress. "We must stop the migration of our young people and make them proud of their past and hopeful for their future," he said. Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said that the country's rich cultural heritage is a symbol of its civilization and a source of national pride, and that the tourism industry has the potential to create 100,000 sustainable jobs annually. Aref praised the efforts of the former minister, Ezzatollah Zarghami, and welcomed the new minister, saying he is one of the country's prominent cultural figures. Aref emphasized that cultural heritage is a national treasure that must be preserved and passed on to future generations. He noted that Iran's cultural heritage is a source of national pride and a key indicator of the country's rich cultural identity, both domestically and internationally. The vice president also highlighted the importance of handicrafts as a tool for regional diplomacy,

saying that it is an area where Iran can build bridges with other countries. The new minister also highlighted the importance of cultural heritage in elevating Iran's status in the region and the world. "Cultural heritage is a source of pride and a means of elevating Iran's status in the region and the world," he said. Salehi Amiri's predecessor, Ezzatollah Zarghami, praised the new minister as a "dedicated, creative, and interactive" individual who is well-suited to lead the ministry. "He has a number of positive qualities, including being a good manager, creative, and interactive," Zarghami said. "These are valuable qualities, especially in the tourism sector, which is a cross-sectional field." He also highlighted the progress made in the tourism sector, including the lifting of visa requirements for citizens of 30 countries. "We have made significant progress in the tourism sector, including the lifting of visa requirements for citizens of 30 countries, which is a major opportunity for the country," he said.

## Iraqis show strong interest in learning Persian: Iranian official

Iran's trade representative in Baghdad says Persian is the most popular language among Iraqis, and hopes to see it taught in the city. Maryam Aboud, Iran's trade representative in Baghdad, made the comments during a visit to the Iranian pavilion at the Baghdad International Book Fair, which opened on September 12 and runs until September 22, ISNA wrote. The fair, which features 600 publishers from 21 countries, including 23 from Iran, showcases books on various topics, including religion, children's literature, Islamic resistance, and language



learning. Aboud, who has also attended the Tehran International Book Fair, praised the event, saying it was a "good and attractive experience" with a large number of book enthusiasts. She also expressed her admiration for Persian literature, particularly the works of Omar Khayyam, and said she enjoys watching Iranian films to improve her language skills. The Baghdad International Book Fair, which is in its 25th year, is being held under the slogan "Iraq reads." It aims to promote reading and literacy in the country.

## Iran, Turkmenistan to hold joint tourism festival

Iran and Turkmenistan are teaming up to co-host a joint festival showcasing their tourist attractions, handicrafts, and music in State Academy of Arts in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, from October 22 to 24. "The goal of this festival is to foster stronger connections between tourism agencies in both countries, promoting the development of tourism and showcasing the attractions of Iran," according to Navid Rasouli, Iran's cultural attaché to Turkmenistan stated, Mehr News Agency reported. International diplomats, senior officials from Turkmenistan's Ministry of Culture, and Tehran's ambassador to Ashgabat are among the invitees to the festival, which is now in its second edition. The festival will feature travel showcases, handicraft exhibitions, and live music performances, Rasouli said. It is part of ongoing efforts to boost cultural and tourism ties between the two nations, which share a 1,000-kilometer border. Iran and Turkmenistan have enjoyed good relations since the latter's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, cooperating in areas such as economy, transportation, infrastructure, and energy.



## Iran to ramp up Umrah flights to Saudi Arabia amid renewed diplomatic ties

Iran's national carrier will increase the number of daily flights to Saudi Arabia for the Umrah pilgrimage to four from next month, up from the current two, a company spokesperson said Wednesday. Hessam Qorban-Ali, spokesperson for Iran Air, told that the first Umrah flight of the current pilgrimage season took off from Imam Khomeini International Airport on Wednesday morning, carrying 257 pilgrims to Medina. Qorban-Ali said that from September 18, two daily flights will be operated using a wide-body aircraft, increasing to four flights from October 8, with two aircraft serving the route. Each flight can carry around 255 passengers, meaning around 500 pilgrims will be transported daily. The Umrah pilgrimage, a series of rituals performed by Muslims at the Kaaba in

Mecca, became possible for Iranians again in April after a nine-year hiatus, following the resumption of diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The pilgrimage season is expected to run until December 20, with a second phase scheduled from December 21 to the end of the Umrah season.



## Iranian film '21 Weeks Later' heads to Turkey

Iranian filmmaker Nasrin Mohammadpour's award-winning short film '21 Weeks Later' was selected to compete at the 31st Adana International Film Festival in Turkey. The 14-minute film, which has already picked up the Best Asian Short Film Award at the 28th Busan International Film Festival in South Korea and screened at the 32nd Raindance Film Festival in the UK, will now vie for top honors in the short film category at Adana, Mehr News Agency reported. The Adana festival, one of Turkey's largest, will run from Sept. 23 to 29 and feature a jury of prominent Turkish directors, including Nuri Bilge Ceylan. '21 Weeks Later' has been making waves on the international circuit, with a cast that includes Banafsheh Riazi, Leila Hassanzadeh, Soudabeh Bahraminejad, and Parisa Asgari. Cinerama, led by Neshat Bagheri, is handling international distribution and sales.