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Chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami the takes a tour of 12th Iran Lab Expo in Tehran on December 14, 2024. **FARS**

Respect for Iran's rights key to talks with US

By Majid Nasirpour
Iranian Lawmaker

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

With Donald Trump's victory in the recent US elections, he has secured a second term as President of the United States and will officially take office in a few weeks (20 January). The holding of elections and the inauguration of a new government invariably present opportunities for the people, domestic institutions, international entities, and other nations. In any case, with the new president taking office in the US, we will undoubtedly witness changes in domestic and international issues and the policies of this country. The change in the US presidency sees a Democrat leave the White House and a Republican taking over the high office. Naturally, Mr. Trump's approach to various matters will differ from that of his predecessor Joe Biden. However, the outcomes of the US-Iran relationship will largely depend on how willing both sides are to find solutions through dialogue. **Page 7 >**



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Iran FM: Syria facing difficult test by terrorists, aggressors

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Syria was facing a tough test, highlighting threats posed by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Daesh as well as the Israeli-US aggression.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Aluminum ingot output tops 400k tons in eight months: IMIDRO

The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) reported that Iran's aluminum ingot production exceeded 400,000 tons from March 20 to November 20, 2024.

The state metals company IMIDRO announced on Saturday that Iran's four aluminum smelters produced 400,425 tons of aluminum ingots during the first eight months of the Iranian calendar year, which began on March 20, 2024, IRNA reported. In comparison, the country's aluminum ingot production for the same eight-month period last year was 419,573 tons. Among the four major producers in the country, the South Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) performed the best, producing 162,459 tons of aluminum ingots as it was followed by the Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO), which produced 115,624 tons, the Almahdi Aluminum Company with 99,954 tons, and the Iran Alumina Company, which produced 22,388 tons of ingots.

In addition, the Iran Alumina Company reported production figures for the March to November period, which included 159,416 tons of alumina powder, 269,145 tons of alumina hydrate, and 514,420 tons of bauxite.

Number of Iran's merchant ships in Caspian Sea rises to 87

The chairman of the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced that the number of commercial ships at the Caspian Sea that the country possesses has increased to 87.

Speaking at a seminar on maritime transportation held at the Expediency Council's compound on Saturday, the PMO CEO Ali Akbar Safaei said that there is ample investment in developing maritime transportation by the Iranian government, according to Mehr News Agency. He added that, "In the Caspian Sea, with the construction and purchase of new vessels, the country's commercial fleet volume has increased to 87 ships, which is very close to the volume of the Russian fleet."

Also speaking in the same seminar, Jalil Eslami, the deputy of the PMO's CEO said that there has been 15% growth in the performance of the commercial ports of the country.

Gov't entities should slash energy consumption by half: VP

The Iranian vice president underlined the government's commitment to addressing shortages, saying the energy consumption by government entities must be reduced by 50%.

Mohammadreza Aref, speaking on Saturday during a meeting with members of the Reformist Front in southwestern Tehran Province, said, "We face numerous challenges today, but there is no doubt that the government's strategies have been effective. We are committed to curbing inflation while promoting production and addressing shortages," Shana reported.

Referring to these imbalances, Aref noted, "Continuing on the current path would be far less costly for the current administration, but we have a responsibility to consider future generations. We cannot deplete all the oil revenues and leave nothing for those who come after us."

He continued, "We will no longer allow electricity and gas to be cut off for industries during peak working hours. Instead, we have started addressing this issue with government and administrative agencies, and we are resolute in this effort. All government officials with excessive energy consumption will be

reprimanded."

Meanwhile, on Saturday, Iranian minister of oil urged citizens to lower their home and business heating temperatures by two degrees, stating that this could save 50 to 60 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas, helping prevent pressure drops in the far reaches of the gas network.

During a visit to the National Iranian Gas Company's Dispatching Center, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad told reporters that oil industry workers are currently working around the clock to ensure adequate gas supplies across the country. He confirmed that all gas refineries are operating at full capacity to process raw gas from upstream production, and all main pipelines and pressure booster stations are functioning as needed.

Paknejad emphasized that colder weather typically leads to higher home heating demand, which may force the country to limit gas supply to other sectors in order to meet residential needs.

The minister urged citizens to help ensure a stable gas supply by reducing the temperature of their heating systems by at least 2 degrees.

This collective action would



contribute significantly to maintaining gas flow in the northern and northeastern parts of the country, where pressure drops are a concern. The minister also referenced a meeting held the previous morning at the Ministry of Interior, where officials discussed measures to optimize fuel distribution during winter.

Top Iranian officials in unison have placed a premium on the importance of public participation in optimizing energy consumption and called for nationwide involvement in the "2 Degrees Less" campaign.

Following the invitation by President Massoud Pezeshkian and Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, various officials issued

statements urging citizens to join the initiative aimed at reducing energy consumption and ensuring adequate winter fuel supplies, Shana reported.

The Iranian president on Thursday evening called on the public to conserve gas, emphasizing that collective efforts are needed to ensure the uninterrupted supply of fuel across the country.

Iran, Pakistan agree on facilitating transit



Iran and Pakistan agreed to enhance transit, transportation, and bilateral trade.

Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri-Moqadam and Pakistani Minister of Communications Abdul Aleem Khan stressed the importance of strengthening relations in the field of transportation and road and rail communications to increase transit trade on Friday, IRNA reported. They also called for greater coordination between

the relevant authorities of the two countries to remove obstacles in this field.

Referring to the geopolitical and strategic position of Pakistan, Amiri Moghadam said that Pakistan can become one of the key transit routes at the international level.

Iran can play an important role in facilitating transit by using its special position and high capacities in the transportation sector and geographical location.

Meanwhile, Aleem Khan underlined traditional and brotherly relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the high geopolitical capacities of the two countries.

He called for the expansion of all-out cooperation, especially in the field of transportation and transit. Solving the problems of Iranian trucks on Pakistani soil and the issue of parking for trucks of Pakistan's National Logistics Corporation in this country were among the most important issues discussed in this meeting.

The officials of the two countries agreed to solve these problems as soon as possible by holding a joint committee meeting to follow up on the issues related to transportation and transit.

Iranian firm to supply home-made wagons to Tehran Metro

The managing director of the Tehran Wagon Manufacturing Company says it plans to supply two sets of domestically-produced wagons to the subway system in the Iranian capital by March 20, 2025.

Alireza Sheikh-Taheri made the remarks at the ceremony marking the start of mass production of national metro wagons in the Iranian capital on Saturday, wrote IRNA.

A project to manufacture national wagons and commence their mass production was presented four years ago to meet the metro's needs, the official said. Four years ago, Iran could only manufacture less than 30% of wagons domestically. However, a year ago, a permit was granted to



the national company to manufacture metro wagons, which is now used for the Parand subway in southwest Tehran, covering a distance of 60km, Sheikh-Taheri noted.

He went on to say that the problems of the previously made wagons have been resolved. With the help of native engineers and experts, Iran is now producing 80% of its national wagon needs domestically.

Also, the country is working on a project to manufacture 15 metro trains with seven wagons and one train with eight wagons, he said. He added that two of these metro trains will be unveiled in March 2025.

Through the operation of national metro wagon manufacturing projects, €700,000 were saved per wagon and 12,000 job opportunities were created, according to the official.

Refining, distribution sector pioneers AI-based projects: NIORDC

The head of Information Technology at the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) highlighted the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the oil and gas industry, stating that it is poised to transform all facets of energy sector.

Abbas Basafa made the remarks on Saturday, stressing the urgency of implementing AI projects in energy management and distribution to align with

global advancements in industrial infrastructure, wrote Shana.

Basafa explained that NIORDC has established an AI Steering and Policy Committee after identifying and interviewing AI experts within the organization.

"This committee has developed and issued a strategic roadmap, in collaboration with the structural engineering management team, to guide AI project execution," he noted.

"The strategic roadmap aims to design programs, projects, and development initiatives in AI. By analyzing past data, we can optimize the present and forecast the industry's future, driving progress," Basafa said.

To equip employees with AI skills, a comprehensive training and development program has been prepared. The AI Learning Roadmap includes general, specialized, and managerial training modules.

Collaboration with HR management has ensured that the necessary arrangements for these sessions are underway. Basafa also highlighted the formation of AI committees in subsidiary companies, describing them as essential for operationalizing AI initiatives.

He went on to say that 10 such committees have been established in subsidiaries of NIORDC, tasked with reviewing and prioritizing AI projects relevant



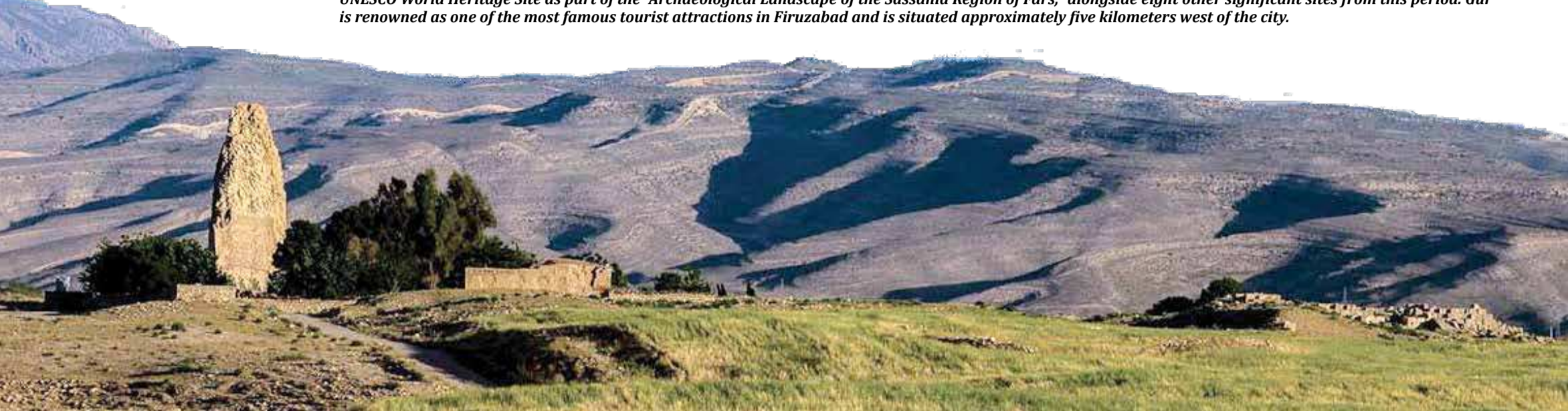
to their operations, adding that approved projects are submitted to the central AI

Steering and Policy Committee for final authorization and implementation.

Ancient city of Gur; a heritage of Sassanid Era

Iranica Desk

The ancient city of Gur, located in Firuzabad, is a remarkable archaeological site in Fars Province, dating back to the Sassanid era. In 2018, it was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the "Archaeological Landscape of the Sassanid Region of Fars," alongside eight other significant sites from this period. Gur is renowned as one of the most famous tourist attractions in Firuzabad and is situated approximately five kilometers west of the city.



Historical significance

The ancient city of Gur, along with its surviving structures, has provided invaluable insights into the culture and architecture of the Sassanid Empire in ancient Iran. It served as the first capital of the Sassanid dynasty and is recognized as the first circular city in Iran. Despite extensive archaeological excavations in various parts of the area, Gur still holds considerable potential for further exploration. This article aims to introduce the ancient city of Gur and share key information about its historical significance, IRNA wrote.

Historically, Gur was one of the most prosperous cities in Iran and the center of Ardashir Babakan's rule. The geometric layout of the city reflects its military design during ancient times. During the Achaemenid era, Gur thrived with robust fortifications that made it virtually impenetrable to enemies. Notably, even Alexander the Great, during his devastating invasion of Iran, found no way to breach this ancient city and ultimately redirected a river to flood it instead. Although Gur's prominence waned during the Parthian period, it experienced a revival following Ardashir Babakan's victory over Artabanus V, the last king of the Parthians. Under Ardashir's orders, the city was rebuilt in 224 CE, with new structures erected, restoring its significance.

Strategic role of Gur in trade

An important aspect of the ancient city of Gur is its strategic location along the trade route connecting China and India to Rome and the port of Siraf, which significantly contributed to its commercial prosperity. The city flourished until the final days of Sassanid rule, after which it faced devastation following the Arab invasion of Iran.

Under Arab rule, Gur was governed by officials appointed by the Arab leadership. With the rise of the Buyid dynasty, Fars once again became a royal seat. Under the direction of Adhud al-Dawlah Deylami, the city of Gur was rebuilt. However, information about the tumultuous history of Gur, or Firuzabad, during the 7th and 8th centuries AH is limited; by the end of this period, Gur began to decline. Subsequently, a village named Deh Koushk was established nearby, retaining this name even during the Qajar dynasty. This village is considered the first nucleus of present-day Firuzabad.

Archaeological discoveries

Although Gur was the residence of many kings throughout history, approximately 40% of the pottery discovered in the city dates back to the Sassanid era. The abundance of artifacts from this historical period underscores the glory and prosperity of Gur during



the Sassanid dynasty. After the Sassanid period, many buildings and infrastructures in Gur were destroyed by subsequent rulers due to cultural and religious differences. One of the most significant features of this ancient city was its innovative water supply system, developed by the Sassanids, which facilitated agricultural expansion and trade, contributing to Gur's economic prosperity for many years. The ancient city of Gur is recognized among Iran's national heritage sites. It, along with eight other Sassanid sites in the regions of Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan, was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site during the 42nd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. The archaeological sites included in this designation highlight the political and ritual significance of Gur in ancient Iran. Numerous pottery artifacts have

been uncovered during archaeological excavations, with nearly half attributed to the Sassanid period. Due to the destruction of many ancient structures in Firuzabad, a detailed examination of them is currently not feasible. Archaeologists, relying on existing evidence and comparisons with other nearby sites, have provided interpretive insights. Excavations in Gur have been conducted over time by both Iranian and German archaeologists. The most significant remains in the ancient city are found in its central circle, which was once the royal area.

Distinctive features

Gur was designed in two distinct sections and fea-

has largely been destroyed over time. Another notable building, referred to as the Takht Neshin, is thought to have been a fire temple. This building, much of which is also in ruins, is located 100 meters southeast of Milo Minaret, where archaeologists have discovered remnants of a stone gate and tiled flooring. In 2005, a significant discovery was made by Professor Dietrich Hoff, a German archaeologist, when he uncovered an observatory in Gur. This circular structure, built from mud bricks, is considered one of the oldest observatories in Iran, reflecting the advanced astronomical knowledge of the Sassanids. The observatory has a diameter of 6.5 meters, with twelve markings on its walls indicating instruments for observing celestial bodies and platforms for graphical displays. The gates of the ancient city of Gur exhibit strong similarities to the entrances of Persepolis, and their colorful decorations highlight the Sassanid preference for vibrant architectural styles. The gates, named Mehr, Bahram, Hormoz, and Ardashir, are located to the east, west, north, and south

of the city, respectively. Given the extensive area of Gur, this ancient site still holds immense potential for further archaeological exploration.

Visiting Gur

Fars Province is known for its hot climate, which can be challenging for tourists during the peak summer months. The ancient city of Gur is located in a plain that becomes particularly warm under direct sunlight on hot days. The ideal time to visit Gur and other attractions in Firuzabad is from late winter until late spring. In May, the surrounding pastures reach their peak beauty, making it an excellent time for outdoor activities. If you're planning to explore nearby attractions while in Firuzabad, May is the perfect choice.

Autumn also offers mild weather in Firuzabad, making it suitable for visiting the city's natural and historical sites. However, be aware that temperatures can drop closer to winter. When visiting the ancient city of Gur and other sites in the open plains and mountains, it's advisable to wear a sun hat and sunglasses for protection against the sun.



Syria's Assad has fallen

Just as Pentagon planned 23 years ago



THE NEW ARAB



By Jonathan Cook
Author,
award-winning
journalist

OPINION

Wesley Clark, a former US Army general, recalled a moment weeks after the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001 when he visited the Pentagon. He was shown a classified document that set out how the US was going to “take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and finishing off with Iran”. None of these states had any obvious connection to the events of 9/11. The one that did have such a connection — Saudi Arabia — was not on the list and has remained one of the United States’ most favoured client states. The order of targets prioritised by Washington had to be modified — and the timeline was way off — but the realisation of that 2001 blueprint is closer than ever.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the US and UK, on false pretences, led to the removal of dictator Saddam Hussein and the collapse of the Iraqi state. The country was plunged into a devastating sectarian war, from which it is still struggling to recover.

NATO meddling in Libya, again on false pretences, led to the removal of dictator Muammar Gaddafi and the collapse of the Libyan state in 2011. It has been a failed state run by warlords ever since.

Sudan and Somalia — the latter subject to a US-backed Ethiopian invasion in 2007 — are both basket cases, riven by all-consuming, horrifying civil wars that the US helped to stoke rather than resolve.

The destruction of these various states created the space for new ultra-violent, intolerant Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) group to flourish.

Turkey’s open backing of the rebels in Syria — plus more concealed support from the CIA and MI6 — led to the removal of Syrian leader Assad and the collapse of what was left of the Syrian state. It is hard to imagine a unified authority emerging there.

Meanwhile, the terms of sur-

render foisted on Beirut to end Israel’s savage bombing of Lebanon do not look designed to hold. The already fragile sectarian arrangements barely glueing the Lebanese state together are almost certain to come unstuck in the coming months.

Iran, the last target on the Pentagon’s list, is now fully in the cross-hairs. Deprived of allies in Syria, it is also now largely cut off from its Hezbollah allies in Lebanon.

Access to oil

The 2001 Pentagon memo shown to Clark was, in fact, a reworking of a military blueprint for the Middle East that had been circulating in Washington for even longer — and had nothing to do with responding to 9/11 or terrorism.

It was all about securing Israel’s place as a forward base for US interests in the oil-rich region.

The champions of this idea were an increasingly influential group called the neoconservatives — or neocons for short.

By 1996, they had formalized their plan for “remaking” the Middle East into a document called A Clean Break. It proposed that Israel should tear up the Oslo Accords and any moves towards peacemaking with the Palestinians — the title’s “clean

break” — and instead go on the offensive against its regional foes, with US backing.

What did that mean? Israel had to be helped to begin “weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria”, observed the authors, and then “removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq”. The next stage would be to “wean the south Lebanese Shia away from Hizballah, Iran, and Syria”.

Four years before A Clean Break, the neocons explained that the primary aim of US foreign policy in the Middle East was to “preserve US and Western access to the region’s oil”. A close second was easing Israel’s path to riding itself of the so-called “Palestinian problem”.

Later, in a document published in 2000, titled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses,” they clarified that the US must ensure it retained “forward-based forces” in the Middle East to maintain military dominance there “given the longstanding American interests in the region”. Those interests primarily being, of course, oil.

The ultimate concern, the paper explained, was stopping China from developing closer ties to key oil states such as Iran.

The authors of these documents would soon be holding key po-

sitions in the George W Bush administration that took office in January 2001.

Ensnconed in the Pentagon and State Department, they were only too ready to exploit 9/11 as the pretext to fast-track their pre-existing agenda, as Clark understood from the Pentagon memo.

Bloody nose

Syria was viewed by the neocons and Israel as the lynchpin, the supply line, between Iran and Hezbollah, Tehran’s critically important military ally in Lebanon. Severing that link was a priority. It was chiefly Hezbollah’s well-fortified and concealed positions in south Lebanon, as well as its large stockpile of rockets delivered by Iran, that kept Israel in check militarily.

Israel received an unexpected, bloody nose when it tried to reoccupy south Lebanon in 2006. It was forced to beat a hasty retreat within weeks. Israel also had to abandon plans to expand that same war into Syria — a failure that infuriated Washington’s neocons at the time.

Hezbollah’s rocket arsenal was also a brake on Israel’s ambitions to ethnically cleanse — or worse — the Palestinians from their lands in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, as

current events have demonstrated.

Ultimately, Israel realized there was no way to complete its genocide of Gaza without neutralizing Hezbollah and Syria and containing Iran.

So how involved in practice was Washington in Assad’s fall? There are plenty of clues marking the way.

After Israel’s 2006 failure, the US looked for a new route to reach the same destination. Operation Timber Sycamore was born in secret shortly after the Arab Spring erupted in 2011.

This covert military operation was designed to work in conjunction with an increasingly draconian sanctions regime to throttle the Syrian economy.

The CIA, supported by Britain’s MI6, began working in secret to topple Assad. Saudi Arabia was intimately involved too, presumably because of its deep ties to extreme jihadist groups across the region, including Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, that would soon become central to the regime-change operation.

Jake Sullivan, now Joe Biden’s national security adviser, was clear about who was going to help. In an email in late 2012, as Timber Sycamore was being put together, he wrote to then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

to avoid any confusion about Washington’s allies: “AQ [Al-Qaeda] are on our side in Syria.”

An email sent to Clinton earlier, in the spring of 2012, had laid out the emerging thinking in the State Department.

“US diplomats and Pentagon can start strengthening the opposition. It will take time,” the email asserted. “The payoff will be substantial.”

“Iran would be strategically isolated, unable to exert its influence in the Middle East... Hezbollah in Lebanon would be cut off from its Iranian sponsors since Syria would no longer be a transit point for Iranian training, assistance, and missiles.”

The chief beneficiary was clear too: “America can and should help them [Syrian rebels] — and by doing so, help Israel.”

Building the rebels

According to US officials, the CIA had trained and equipped nearly 10,000 fighters by the summer of 2015, at an annual cost of \$100,000 per rebel.

Riyadh supplied yet more money and weapons, drawing in Islamist fighters and mercenaries from the wider region. Jordan hosted the training bases. The CIA and the Saudis jointly supplied the rebels with the intelligence needed to guide their

A US military vehicle patrols the oil fields in the town of Qahtaniyah in Syria’s north-eastern Hasakah province, near the Turkish border, on May 8, 2020.

DELIL SOULEIMAN/AFP

operations in Syria. Israel, which had long been lobbying Washington for such a covert programme against the Syrian government, took a leading role, too. It supplied weapons and dropped thousands of bombs on Syrian infrastructure to keep Assad under pressure. It supplied its own intelligence to the rebels and offered medical facilities to treat wounded fighters. In 2012, Ehud Barak, then-Israeli defense minister, explained Israel's thinking to CNN: "The toppling down of Assad will be a major blow to the radical axis, major blow to Iran... and it will weaken dramatically both Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza." After the CIA operation finally came to light in 2016, Washington formally shut it down. But the effectiveness of Operation Timber Sycamore had already been severely hampered by the Russian military entering Syria in late 2015, at Assad's invitation. Eventually, the battle fronts hardened into a stalemate.

'We love Israel': HTS militant

Now, years later, the battle lines have suddenly come undone. As

Washington envisioned 23 years ago, Assad is the latest Middle Eastern leader not to Israel's liking to be overthrown. HTS is eager to reassure Washington that it poses no threat to Israel — or its continuing genocide in Gaza. Interviews on Israeli TV showed rebel commanders praising Israel's air strikes on Syria, citing them as among the factors in helping the rapid advances made by HTS. Channel 12 interviewed an unnamed commander who also noted Israel's cease-fire with Hezbollah had been critical to the timing of the HTS attack on Aleppo. "We looked at the [cease-fire] agreement with Hezbollah and understood that this is the time to liberate our lands," he said, adding: "We will not let Hezbollah fight in our areas and we will not let the Iranians take root there." In a separate interview with Israel's Kan TV, a fighter said: "We love Israel and we were never its enemies." Both the US and Britain, caught by surprise by the speed of the rebels' success, are scurrying to remove the \$10m CIA bounty off Jolani's head and take HTS off their terror lists. Israel lost no time overrunning

— and effectively annexing — swaths of Syrian territory to add to the areas of the Golan it seized in violation of international law in 1967. Contrast the West's muted response to this Israeli invasion of Syria with the West's outrage at Russia's assault on Ukraine in 2022. At the same time, Israel launched hundreds of air strikes across Syria, bombing the country's military infrastructure to ensure the next government — if such a government ever emerges — will have no means to defend itself. Israel wants Syria as impotent and vulnerable as Palestine, where it is committing genocide. According to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel is "changing the face of the Middle East".

Giant chessboard

Rather than viewing the world in simplistic terms as a battle between good and evil — one in which the evil ones suddenly become good guys, if the BBC says so — analysts of international affairs have traditionally used a different framework. They understand world affairs as taking place on a global, geo-strategic chessboard, in which the great powers of the day try

to checkmate their rivals or avoid being checkmated. Surprises happen, as they do in chess, when a player doesn't foresee, or can't evade, the next move of its opponent. Syria, very obviously, is not a great power. It is a pawn. But a critically useful one, nonetheless. As critically useful as Ukraine. The battlefields may look separate, but they are, of course, on the same chessboard. And the players — the US, Russia, China, and to a lesser extent Iran, Israel, and Turkey — must each use these pawns wisely to advance their strategic goals.

Ordinary people have agency. But the job of great powers is to limit, tame, and recruit that agency to advance their own interests and damage the interests of rivals. Syria emerges broken from its long years of war and Western sanctions. Either it will collapse into further sectarian discord, consuming all its energies — Israel can readily meddle to inflame such tensions — or its new government will seek rehabilitation from the West. A peace accord with Israel would doubtless be the entry requirement. With Syria removed from the

"Axis of Resistance", Hezbollah in Lebanon has been severed from Iran. And in the process, Israel has opened the way to completing its genocide of the Palestinian people undisturbed. Turkey's interests in Syria do not conflict with Israel's or Washington's. It wants to return to Syria the millions of refugees it currently hosts and to eliminate any base for Kurdish factions in Syria to ally with and assist its own Kurdish resistance groups.

The full article first appeared on the Middle East Eye.



A convoy of US military vehicles, arriving from northern Iraq, drives along a road in the countryside of Syria's north-eastern city of Qamishli on October 26, 2019. **DELIL SOULEIMAN/AFP**

Set it off

How US invasion of Iraq led to chaos in Syria today



By Peter Van Buren
Retired US Foreign Service employee

OPINION

If a time traveler from 2024 landed in the Middle East of say 40 years ago, with the intent of revealing the future, he might not be believed. He'd tell how the stalwart regimes of Gaddafi, Saddam, and the Assad dynasty were gone, their former countries now embroiled in some gradation of security chaos, state failure, or chronic political dysfunction. Egypt survives as a sort of US client state, saved by American do-nothingism from the democratic possibilities of the Arab Spring. When asked how all this could have happened, he'd explain that much of it had to do with the United States and its invasion of Iraq in 2003 — the destruction of a comparatively stable (but "evil"; they're all evil) regime that turned out to be the linchpin holding most of the whole Sykes-Picot world together.

That invasion began a process of inviting all comers to take hold of a piece of Iraq and see how far they might get with it. Many of the same ISIS and former Al-Qaeda elements that now stand athwart Syria (and will no doubt soon be fighting each other for control there) almost grabbed the entire country of Iraq after the US-trained and equipped post-Saddam Iraqi army ran from the field. The country was left for the Iranians to then take the reins, fashioning it into a client state after the US cut its losses by cooperating with Iran to wipe out most of ISIS (which was created amid the remnants of Al-Qaeda, destroyed by the US) in Iraq and abandoning the Kurds who had foolishly believed the US owed them a nation-state after all this. American hubris then led to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. But the much ballyhooed NATO bombing and Western-backed revolt of sorts ended up doing little more than creating a failed state in the fragile region. Pundits saw it, as they will wrongly see the fall of Syria, as a blow to Russian ambitions in the region, not calculating the negative value of unleashing chaos in a region consumed by the Iranian-US/Israeli shadow war and middle power politics in the Horn of Africa. Russia, by the way, is still fussing around there, to the consternation of the West. Bashar's father and the family ran Syria since a 1970 coup. Assad initially portrayed himself as a modern reformist, but he responded to peaceful protests during the Arab Spring (a multinational uprising against despots across the Middle East that had more than not used the US "Global War on Terror" to oppress their own populations) with brutal crackdowns, sparking a war there (with ISIS and US-backed Islamist militias joining the fray to overthrow Assad) in 2011. His notorious prisons are now being emptied of political pris-

oners, many of whom have endured unspeakable torture for years. Bodies are still being discovered. As with Iraq being left open for anyone who wanted a piece of it and could find a way to hold it, Syria is going to dissolve. Israel already grabbed snippets of territory this week to round out its border and destroyed the Syrian navy, rocket, and chemical stores, and much of its air force. Unlike in 2012, when Hezbollah came to Assad's rescue against insurgents, Hezbollah today has few shock troops available to help. Turkey, which many believe is at some level behind the current Islamist takeover of the country, sees renewed opportunity to rid itself of the Kurdish independence movement over its own border in Syria, setting up violent clashes with the US-backed Syrian Defense Forces in the northeastern part of the country. Surprise, that is where all the oil is, too. Will the US abandon the Kurds yet again? So, what's left is to see what America has to say. There are 900 American soldiers on the ground today in Syria, and US warplanes are flying bombing missions ostensibly against ISIS — which actually in the near past indirectly helped Assad (strange bedfellows and all that). Had all this happened a year ago, when Joe Biden was still nominally in charge of the US military, you might have seen some sort of intervention, more of a blocking move really, to keep the Islamist factions from uniting, to limit their success or at least slow it down, and to interdict any Iranian help arriving from the east. But Joe Biden is no longer really in charge of anything. He used up his Commander-in-Chief goodwill on two ugly proxy interventions, fighting Russia to the last Ukrainian and, of course, supporting Israel in Gaza.

A year — or more realistically two or three years — ago, Joe might have made the case for either direct involvement in Syria or hitching the old bull of America more directly to another proxy, maybe the beleaguered Kurds who still want a piece of Syria for their own. As it stands, Joe lacks the political oomph to do any of that in his final days in office, and good riddance. Frankly, we are in no position (and have no wherewithal) to take advantage of the situation in a positive way. This will be in spite of mustering faith that the lead Islamist faction — HTS — has moderation on its mind. Any future expedient rehabilitation of the Syrian terrorists seems analogous to the disingenuous glow-up granted to the Ukrainian neo-Nazi

militias and risks having the same result, no doubt. Incoming president Donald Trump has made it clear he wants no part of a war in Syria (and is not too enamored with continuing the one in Ukraine, either). He tried in Term 1.0 to withdraw American forces from Syria and failed, and will likely try early on in Term 2.0 to pull them out. It would be the right thing to do and likely engender wide support. If most of that does not come true, expect another failed state in the heart of the Middle East. But it is too early to call out all of the near-future moves on the chessboard. Will HTS actually succeed in forming some sort of united, central government, to keep the wolves away? Will Turkey or its proxy in Syria move against the Kurds and

will the US protect them or cede the territory? Turkey is the current winner in this struggle, having eliminated its southern enemy in Assad. Russia appears to be out of the game, leaving its strategic naval and airbases there in question. That leaves Iran, set back on its heels with the fall of Assad but by no means no longer a player. Iran could choose a side in the militia struggle, or it could pull back to lick its wounds. Our Middle East time traveler would certainly leave his audience flummoxed, though honestly, it is Washington that would have some explaining to do.

The full article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.



A US Marine watches a statue of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein topple over in 2003. **GORAN TOMASEVIC/REUTERS**

FIVB Men's Club World Championship: No all-Iranian semifinal as Shahdab undone by Ciudad

Sports Desk

Iran's Shahdab Yazd failed to progress to the FIVB Men's Club World Championship semifinals after a defeat against Argentine club Ciudad Voley in Uberlândia, Brazil.

Shahdab needed to avoid conceding more than a set to finish as the Pool B runner-up and book a last-four date with Foolad Sirjan. However, an all-Iranian semifinal was scrapped when Ciudad took the first two sets and went on to win 3-1 (25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 25-18) at Sabiazinho Arena. The result helped the host's Sada Cruzeiro, which had defeated Italian pool winner Trentino Itas in five sets on the preceding night, go through despite a 3-1 loss to Shahdab earlier in the competition.

Opposite Jonas Ponzio contributed with a game-high 21 points (18 kills and three blocks) for Ciudad, with mid-

dle-blocker Gustavo Maciel and outside-hitter Mauro Zelayeta adding 10 apiece. Veteran opposite Amir Ghafour chipped in 18 points, including 14 attacks, for Shahdab, while Pakistani outside-hitter Usman Faryad Ali finished on 14 points.

Shahdab got off to losing start in Uberlândia, suffering a straight-set defeat against Trentino Itas, before bouncing back to beat Sada Cruzeiro.

Three-time semifinalist Paykan is the most successful Iranian club in the last 18 editions of the flagship international club competition, having won a bronze medal in 2010.



Shahdab Yazd's Amir Ghafour (R) is seen in action against Ciudad Voley in the FIVB Men's Club World Championship in Uberlândia, Brazil, on December 13, 2024.

● FIVB



Iran coach tips weightlifting duo for Olympic glory



Iranian weightlifters Alireza Moeini (L) and Ali A'alipour pose with their medals in the men's 96kg event at the IWF World Championships in Manama, Bahrain, on Dec. 12, 2024.

● IWFFIR

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifting head coach Navab Nasirshahal tipped Alireza Moeini and Ali A'alipour for Olympic and Asian Games success in the coming years after the duo bagged three medals at the IWF World Championships in Manama, Bahrain.

A successful first lift of 176kg was enough for Moeini to win the snatch silver in the men's 96kg contest on Thursday, while A'alipour took the bronze medal in a tight clean & jerk competition, where the top three finished level at 214kg. A winner of three Asian medals in February, A'alipour, 20, went on to collect a second bronze of the afternoon, thanks to a total tally of 387kg, standing behind Kazakhstan's gold medalist Nurgissa Adiletuly (388kg) and Georgian Revaz Davitadze (387kg).

"Moeini and A'alipour worked really hard over the past year

and a half, dedicating a great deal to overcome their shortcomings for the world event," Nasirshahal said of the two weightlifters.

"They're both young and inexperienced weightlifters and were competing in their first World Championships, which is why they couldn't fully deliver their potential," added the Iranian coach. Nasirshahal was still pleased with the final outcome for the two Iranians, given "this was a first international event for Moeini in two-and-a-half years, while A'alipour had only participated in an Asian competition during that period."

"Any weightlifter familiar with the World Championships knows that the mental burden of the occasion can be overwhelming for all contestants. I'm still thrilled they had a decent performance and managed to finish their campaigns with medals.

"They are halfway through the

path to glory, which began 18 months ago, and I'm confident there is more to come for both of them, if they receive the right support in the future," said Nasirshahal.

Nasirshahal said the new generation of Iranian weightlifting is far from a finished article, adding: "They still need to take part in more international events to learn their trade and thrive."

"I've been with this group of young talents for quite some time and have seen how hard they try in training. I'm sure weightlifters like Moeini and A'alipour are capable of bringing glory to the country in the Olympics and Asian Games," added Nasirshahal, a 105kg bronze medalist in the 2012 London Games, who was awarded the gold medal six years later after the original top two, Oleksiy Torokhtiy of Ukraine and Uzbek Ruslan Nurudinov, tested positive for doping.

Kane to remain England captain, all players have clean slate under Tuchel

Harry Kane will remain England captain when Thomas Tuchel takes charge in January, the German said on Friday, signalling that all the players can count on a clean slate when the 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign starts under his management.

England were pitted against Serbia, Albania, Latvia and Andorra in Group K during the draw in Zurich, which was Tuchel's first engagement as England boss.

He was announced as head coach in October but will begin work on Jan. 1 ahead of the World Cup qualifying competition.

"There is at the moment no need to think about change," Tuchel told the reporters. "Harry was always a top captain for England. So why do you even think about it at the moment?" "You cross the river when you cross the river. First, come January, we will be in touch with everyone and get the feeling for St George's Park and also the players.

"And until March, there's still a lot of football to be played and then we will try to find the best group for the games that await."

Tuchel, 51, suggested he would act independently of former manager Gareth Southgate's choices, building a team of his own with all players able to count on a clean slate.

One of the players who can expect a chat is Arsenal defender Ben White, who did not want to be considered for selection after surprisingly leaving the squad during the 2022 World Cup for personal reasons.

"I will reach out to him," Tuchel said. "It should be a clean start and a clear narrative."

White, who so far only made four friendly appearances for England, was rumoured to have personal issues with Southgate and his assistant Steve Holland, which the former manager later denied.

"It starts from January. I will be in the stadiums from January. I will also not distract the players and they should just

know, 'okay, the boss is there from January,'" Tuchel added. "Then I will of course try to speak to them but also be respectful to the schedule that they have, because the schedule is busy in January, especially in the Premier League."

England were placed in a five-team group, meaning qualifiers will begin in late March and continue in June, as opposed to a September start for groups of four.

That signifies a fast start for Tuchel, who will embark on his England journey less than three months before the qualifying begins and make his managerial debut for the Three Lions just 15 months ahead of the 2026 tournament.

"I like the framework, the narrative. I like it to start when the World Cup qualification starts, to have it as you kick off and to go from there," he said.

"It gives clarity in the (selection process) and clarity in ... how we speak to each other and where we want to go. No distractions. We will be ready."



Iran: Increase in IAEA's inspections natural

Tehran says will not obstruct IAEA monitoring activities

International Desk

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI) confirmed that Iran has allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to increase the number of its inspections from Iran's nuclear program, saying that Tehran has not and will not impede the UN agency's oversight of its sites. "The relationship between Iran and the IAEA is within the framework of safeguards and the NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty]," Mohammad Eslami told reporters after visiting a nuclear achievements exhibition on Saturday. "To date, the agency has always had access for its monitoring within the framework of safeguards and NPT, and we have not created and will not create any obstacles for it," he said. "We have increased capacity. It is natural that the number of inspections should also increase," he said. Eslami's comments came after a report by the IAEA said that Iran had agreed to increase

monitoring. "When we carry out nuclear activities, and where we deal with nuclear materials, changing the scale will naturally change the monitoring level," he said. "When, for instance, three units become five units, it is only natural that the level of oversight increases proportionately." Last month, Iran announced it would launch "new and advanced" centrifuges in response to an IAEA board resolution censuring Tehran for what it called a lack of cooperation with the agency. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told AFP last week that Iran's expansion of enrichment was "a clear message that they are responding to what they feel is pressure." The decision came after Grossi toured Iran's key nuclear sites of Fordo and Natanz and agreed to carry out bilateral interactions in a spirit of collaboration. Eslami also dismissed allegations against Iran's nuclear program as fabrications driven by the Israeli regime.

Last month, Israeli officials were cited as claiming that the regime's aerial aggression at the end of October on Iran's military complex in Parchin had significantly hindered its ability to develop a nuclear bomb. "These distortions and provocations stem from the Zionist regime, which has long propagated against us. Their aim is to incite the world against Iran," Eslami said. Iran insists on its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and has denied any ambition of developing weapons capability. Nuclear tensions between Iran and the West have simmered since Donald Trump withdrew from a landmark 2015 deal with Tehran during his first term as US president, which had exchanged sanctions relief for limits on its nuclear program. In 2019, Iran started to roll back the limits it had accepted under the deal after the other parties, especially the European ones, failed to live up to their commit-



Chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami speaks to the media during a ceremony to unveil a domestically-made high power radio frequency generator during the 12th Iran Lab Expo in Tehran on December 14, 2024. AEOI

ments. Now, France, Germany and the UK, which are party to the nuclear deal, are threatening that they are ready - if necessary - to trigger the so-called "snapback" of all international sanctions on

Iran. Under the terms of the nuclear deal, which was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, all previous UN sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program can be re-imposed in the event

of "significant non-performance by Iran of JCPOA commitments" (the snapback provisions). The three European countries will lose the ability to take such action on Oct. 18 next year when the 2015 UN resolution expires.

Iran FM: Syria facing difficult test by terrorists, aggressors

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Syria was facing a tough test, highlighting threats posed by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Daesh as well as the Israeli-US aggression. "Today, Syria faces a difficult test. The threat posed by the movements of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh has heightened regional concerns, raising fears that the terrorists may turn Syria into their safe haven," wrote Araghchi in a note published by the Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar on Saturday. A senior UAE official also said on Saturday that his government had concerns about the affiliation of the Syrian militants with some radical groups.

"We hear some reasonable, rational language about unity, not imposing a system on all Syrians" from the country's new rulers, said Anwar Gargash, a presidential adviser in the United Arab Emirates, in remarks at the World Policy Conference in Abu Dhabi. But the nature of the new forces, the affiliation with radical groups, "I think these are all indicators that are quite worrying," he said.

Israel's military aggression
Elsewhere in his comments, the Iranian foreign minister said that the "acts of aggression and military interventions" by the Israeli regime in Syria, which he said are backed by the US

and allies from outside the region, have also created challenges. "The clear objective of these acts of aggression and interventions is the destruction of Syria's social foundations, scientific assets, economic infrastructure, and defensive capabilities," he said. "There is no doubt that the Islamic world is extremely worried about the future of the West Asian region, given the conditions that the Levant and Palestine are in," he added. The minister touched on the expansion of the Israeli regime's "barbaric crimes," and their extension to Syria, which began immediately after the fall of the Assad government.

Syria's transitional gov't calls on UN to compel Israel to stop attacks

The transitional government in Syria has submitted a complaint to the United Nations regarding the recent intensification of Israeli attacks on Syrian territories, calling on the international organization to compel Israel to stop its offensive and withdraw from areas it has entered.

In a letter addressed to the UN Security Council and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Syria's permanent representative to the UN Qusay al-Dahhak condemned the Israeli attacks, terming them as a "serious violation" of Syria's sovereignty, the UN charter and security council resolutions, and the 1974 Disengagement Agreement between the two countries.

"Syria renews its call on the United Nations and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities and take firm and immediate measures to compel Israel to immediately stop its ongoing attacks on Syrian territory, ensure that they are not repeated," read the letter.

Dahhak also urged the UN to pressure Israel to "immediately withdraw from the areas it has penetrated over the past few days, and to fully abide by the Disengagement Agreement and the UNDOF mandate," referring to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force peacekeeping mission which is tasked with maintaining the ceasefire between the two countries. On December 8, the same day that the



Syrian militants announced the fall of the Bashar al-Assad government, Israel launched a fresh offensive in Syria, carrying out hundreds of airstrikes across various parts of the country and seizing the UN buffer zone in the Golan Heights. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu stated that the 1974 agreement has "collapsed" after the Syrian soldiers abandoned their positions, claiming that Israeli troops moved into the zone to prevent "hostile forces" from establishing themselves at the border. Israel has continued its attacks on Syria since, and reportedly struck around 20 sites belonging to the Syrian army in different parts of Syria on Friday evening, including Damascus, Suwayda, Latakia, and others. Regional countries, including Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, have condemned the Israeli attacks and seizure of the UN-patrolled buffer zone, deeming it a violation of international law. The United States on the other hand has defended Israel's actions.

Arab FMs urge support for inclusive, 'peaceful' Syria transition

Top diplomats from eight Arab countries, meeting in Jordan on Saturday, called for a peaceful transition in Syria with UN and Arab League support following the fall of former Syrian government at the hands of militants. In a final statement after the talks in the Jordanian Red Sea port of Aqaba, foreign ministers from Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar said they had agreed to "support a peaceful transition process" in Syria, "in which all political and social forces are represented," AFP reported. Anti-government militants, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, toppled the longtime ruler of the country on Sunday following a lightning offensive. HTS is rooted in Al-Qaeda's Syria branch and is designated as a "terrorist" organization by many Western governments

but has sought to moderate its rhetoric. A transitional government installed by the militant forces has insisted the rights of all Syrians will be protected, as will the rule of law. The foreign ministers, meeting in Aqaba in the presence of Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheith, said the political process in Syria should be supported by "the United Nations and the Arab League, in accordance with the principles of Security Council Resolution 2254" of 2015, which set out a roadmap for a negotiated settlement. The Arab diplomats also declared their backing for a transitional rule agreed upon by Syrians, which would enable "a political system that corresponds to the aspirations of all parts of the Syrian people, through free and fair elections overseen by the United Nations". They also warned against "any ethnic,

sectarian or religious discrimination" and called for "justice and equality for all citizens". In their statement, the ministers said state institutions must be preserved to stop Syria from "slipping into chaos", also calling to boost joint "efforts to combat terrorism... as it poses a threat to Syria and to the security of the region and the world". They condemned "Israel's incursion into the buffer zone with Syria", demanding "the withdrawal of Israeli forces" from Syrian territory. They also denounced Israeli air strikes on Syria, which have targeted key military assets across the country in recent days. In addition to the Arab foreign ministers' meeting, Jordan was also hosting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and top EU and UN officials for talks on Syria Saturday.

Respect for Iran's...

In this context, if Mr. Trump aims to resolve issues through negotiations, Iran is equally prepared to step up to the plate and has the necessary capacity for direct talks. Therefore, all predictions about the success of negotiations hinge primarily on whether both parties are genuinely willing to engage in this process. The second and crucial condition that paves the way for negotiations is for the other side to respect Iran's rights. It is impossible to overlook a country's rights and expect fruitful

negotiations in return. Thus, if the incoming Trump administration genuinely intends to resolve issues, it must acknowledge Iran's legitimate rights in various fields. The nuclear agreement, known as the JCPOA, is merely one of the bones of contention that both sides can negotiate. As Iran has repeatedly stated, the US and Western countries must recognize its undeniable right to peaceful nuclear technology. Accordingly, we will pursue not only our nuclear rights but also our other rights in various topics at

the highest levels. Fortunately, Iran's Foreign Ministry, with its strong grasp of international conditions and global affairs, is well-equipped to advocate for the country's rights. Regarding nuclear matters, both parties could prioritize the revival of the JCPOA or work toward a new nuclear agreement. The key point here is that the US must recognize Iran's regional power and respect our rights as a significant country in the region. Iran, in turn, will strive to create the necessary conditions for a more favorable environment.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Cultural heritage serves as Iran's 'soft power' shaping national identity: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Reza Salehi Amiri, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, underscored the significance of cultural heritage as a form of soft power that plays a vital role in shaping the nation's identity. Speaking at the seventh national specialized meeting of commanders, deputies, and officials of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, held on December 14, at the Niavaran Cultural-Historical Complex, Salehi Amiri stated, "The protection unit is the guardian of the nation's

identity." Highlighting the geographical and cultural wealth of Iran, Salehi Amiri noted that both tangible and intangible heritage represent the country's soft power, IRNA reported. He emphasized that society thrives on this soft power while being safeguarded by hard power. "The protection unit safeguards the identity of a nation, a job that is both valuable and commendable," he added. Salehi Amiri pointed out that sites such as Jiroft, Hegmataneh, Shahr-e Sukhteh (Burnt City), Marvdasht, Estakhr, Firuzabad, and Naqsh-e Jahan are inte-

gral to the historical identity of Iran. He affirmed, "Iranian heritage stands as an unparalleled cultural and historical asset among United Nations member states. No other country possesses the diverse historical and civilizational capacities that Iran has." The minister also remarked on the community's intelligence and self-organization among cultural and religious components, emphasizing that religious elements have never opposed the national identity. "Iranian identity and Islam are two wings of our identity, and there is no conflict be-

tween them," he stated. Salehi Amiri acknowledged the shortcomings in preserving historical artifacts due to limited resources and facilities. He stressed the importance of developing and safeguarding the country's cultural heritage, particularly in light of the younger generation's passion for recognizing and protecting it. "We can organize complementary efforts with the protection unit and utilize local forces, organizations, and associations for more effective heritage preservation," he suggested. Furthermore, the minister highlighted the need for



joint and effective collaborations to enhance the capabilities, equipment, and human resources of the protection unit.



Reza Salehi Amiri (C), Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, speaks at a meeting of cultural heritage managers at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural-Historical Complex in Tehran, Iran, on December 14, 2024.

Call for identification of chemical suppliers

JAMPILEN Petrochemical company (public joint stock) intends to allocate the supply of required chemicals from domestic or foreign suppliers or manufacturers who have sufficient expertise and experience. We invite eligible and experienced companies in the preparation of chemicals as per the following table:

Row	required chemicals	Row	Required chemicals
1	TEAL	12	DONOR D
2	DHT-4A	13	A.O.B215 & DMDBS (without blue pigment)
3	A.O. 3114	14	ATMER 163 (A.S. 163)
4	A.O. 1010	15	CA STEARATE
5	M.S. 168	16	NA BENZOATE+ A.O. B225
6	A.O. B225	17	UV770
7	A.O. B215	18	PEROXIDE DHBP
8	GMS 90(ATMER 129)	19	NALCO 7330
9	WHITE OIL V-70	20	DSTDP
10	NALCO 3988	21	GREASE VASELINE
11	TALC	22	DONOR C

The deadline for submitting applications and required documents is from the date of publication of this advertisement until the end of the Wednesday on DECEMBER 25, 2024. Please deliver your application along with the necessary documents to the following address:
JAMPILEN Petrochemical company- Security Department, 4th floor, No.5, North Falamak St., Eyvanak Blvd., Farahzadi Blvd., Shahrak Qods, TEHRAN, IRAN 1467715171 Or send it to the security unit's email address: committee@jppc.ir

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- information, and documents confirming the applicant's expertise and experience, including:
 - Previous contracts with Iranian petrochemical companies
 - Technical specifications of chemical material (including TDS, MSDS, Catalogue, ...)
 - Shelf life
 - Manufacturing country
 - Proposed conditions, payment and delivery term, etc.
- Items 5, 6 and 7 are only accepted as Non Dust Blend or Granular.
- Items 2, 3, 4, 8, 13, 15 and 16 are acceptable in powder form, Non Dust Blend or Granular.

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Iranian film 'Unparallel World' awarded at Euroshorts in Poland

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'Unparallel World', directed and written by Mohammad Yaraghi, clinched the Main Award aka The Mayor of Gdansk Award at the 23rd edition of the Euroshorts Film Festival in Poland. This marks the second international award for 'Unparallel World' and the seventh international accolade for director Mohammad Yaraghi, ILNA reported. 'Unparallel World' has garnered significant attention for its innovative narrative and compelling storytelling. The film has previously screened in cities such as London, Budapest, Warsaw, and Gdansk, and has been featured at the 29th Portobello Film Festival in the UK and the 20th BuSho Film Festival in Hungary. The Euroshorts Film Festival, held annually since 1992, is a well-known event in Eastern Europe dedicated to showcasing the works of emerging filmmakers and innovative short films, animations,

and experimental pieces from around the world. In a synopsis of the film, 'Unparallel World' explores the notion that the events unfolding in the present day are not confined to a parallel or surreal universe; rather, they are the result of actions and influences from all of us. The exclusive distribution rights for 'Unparallel World' have been acquired by the Italian company Alpha Film, further cementing the film's international reach and recognition.

Health minister warns Iran to become oldest country in region within 15 years

Social Desk

Iranian Health Minister Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi highlighted the pressing issue of population aging in Iran, predicting that the country will become the oldest in the region within the next 15 years. "With the current rate of population growth, we will reach this significant demographic shift in the near future," he remarked during the 58th session of the Medical Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tasnim news agency reported. Zafarghandi emphasized the gravity of the situation, noting that by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2025), the country is expected to witness fewer than one million births annually. He stated, "The population issue is serious and carries cultural, economic, social, and political dimensions." The health minister point-

ed out that other countries are also grappling with demographic crises, but Iran's situation is particularly alarming as it has reached this point in just a decade, unlike other nations that have taken 50 to 70 years. He stressed, "Our development trajectory is different; we are facing this phenomenon while in the process of development." Echoing the minister's concerns, Mohammad Javad Mahmoudi, head of the National Institute for Population Research (NIPR), reported that the elderly population is increasing at a rate five times that of the overall population growth. He explained, "Aging is a process where the proportion of older individuals in the population rises while the share of younger people declines, primarily due to decreased fertility rates." Mahmoudi elaborated on the implications of this demographic shift, stating

that while reductions in mortality rates across all ages have minimal impact on age composition, a decline in mortality during the later stages of life significantly contributes to aging. "As economic and social conditions improve, mortality decreases and life expectancy increases, resulting in more individuals living to older ages," he noted. This trend, combined with declining fertility, leads to a structural transformation in the population's age distribution. He further highlighted global aging trends, indicating that in 2019, there were 703 million individuals aged 65 or older worldwide, a number projected to double to 1.5 billion by 2050. Mahmoudi warned that by 2050, nearly one-third of Iran's population will be elderly, with the percentage of those over 60 expected to rise from around 10% in 2015 to 33% in 2050.