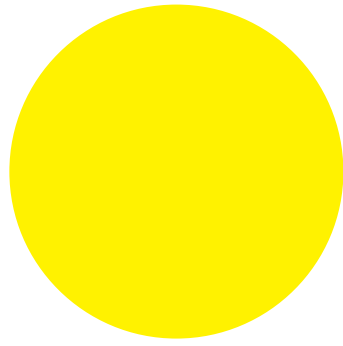


**Pezeshkian lauds Lebanese unity as army chief assumes presidency**

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# Iran Daily

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### President Calls for Urgent Reforms in Sistan and Baluchestan Province

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President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd R) visits a local villager in his home during a trip to the southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan Province on January 10, 2025. [president.ir](http://president.ir)

#### Lebanon's Aoun expected to engage with domestic parties, foreign actors

**PERSPECTIVE**

**International Desk**

Lebanon's parliament finally elected a new president on Thursday, choosing Army chief Joseph Aoun as the country's leader for a six-year term, ending more than two years of presidential vacuum. Aoun, a 61-year-old Maronite Christian, is the fourth military commander to assume presidency in decades, following Emile Lahoud (1998-2007), Michel Suleiman (2008-2014), and Michel Aoun (2016-2022). He is known for his independent and non-political stance, which led to a consensus among various political and religious groups and parties in his favor. This consensus emerged af-

ter none of the candidates from other parties could garner majority support, leading to an agreement on a non-partisan, independent candidate. General Aoun has maintained close ties with Western countries, particularly France and the United States. He is the first Lebanese president since 1989 not to be affiliated with the Hezbollah-led camp, as the previous three presidents were. The two main Shia parties in Lebanon, Hezbollah and Amal, initially opposed Aoun's election, advocating for their own candidates. However, after the main candidates from both sides withdrew, Hezbollah and Amal also conceded, allowing for Aoun's election.

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# President calls for urgent reforms in Sistan and Baluchestan Province

Efforts underway to secure Iran's water rights from Hirmand River: **Minister**

President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that the current situation in Zabol and southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan is unacceptable to him as an Iranian and official.

He emphasized that visiting Zabol and meeting with its people has once again reshaped the perspective of officials regarding the type of services that must be provided, saying, "This situation must be improved."

During his visit to Sistan and Baluchestan Province on Friday afternoon, Pezeshkian met with groups of people in Zabol and reflected on his past experiences in the region.

"Fifty years ago, I came to this area and spent time in villages like Zahak, Kuh Khajeh, and Deh Kolukhi. Witnessing the living conditions and challenges of the people back then changed my outlook on life and gave me a deeper understanding of the hardships and potential of this land," he said.

The president highlighted the changes the region has undergone in recent decades, noting that Zabol, especially its rural areas, faces more challenges today compared to the past.

"Areas that were once lush and fertile have become much harsher due to drought and resource shortages. This issue requires serious planning and action to restore life and prosperity to the region," he said.

## Criticism of Chabahar development plans

The president criticized the lack of comprehensive and progressive plans for Chabahar's development despite its potential as a gateway to the world.

"If Chabahar is supposed to be our gateway to the world, why are the roads and railways designed for it not aligned with its needs?" he asked.

During a meeting on the issues of southern part of the province, held earlier on Friday, Pezeshkian stated that his government's visits to provinces aim to address problems within their capacity.

"I believe that if the people participate, we can solve the problems. Without their cooperation, the government alone cannot resolve these issues," he said.

He added that after identifying the problems, he would discuss solutions with the governor and ministers. "I do not accept the idea of addressing education and healthcare issues in three phases. I believe these problems can be solved in one stage, provided the people join the effort. If we wait for others to solve our problems, we will remain stuck in the same situation."

Pezeshkian noted that national and local officials would design a robust

development plan for the region. "Unfortunately, the current development plans for the region are neither comprehensive nor forward-looking. Even the areas designated for tourism, if developed, will only worsen traffic congestion. The port is currently located in a place that requires passing through the city center. It's surprising that, despite the vast land available, development plans are designed in a way that creates issues like traffic and environmental damage."

## Visit to Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar

On Friday morning, the president visited various sections of the first phase of Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar as he was briefed by officials on the port's activities and development plans.

According to port managers, with support from the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the port is currently handling regular import, export, trans-shipment, and logistical services. Officials from the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) stated that studies for the second phase of the port have been completed, and its construction will begin next year to accommodate ocean-going vessels.

Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd added that the port's development will not proceed beyond the second phase to protect local fishing docks, and new port locations are being identified for further expansion.

## Belief in vision plan

On Thursday evening, Pezeshkian emphasized during a meeting on investment opportunities in Chabahar Free Zone that his visit to Sistan and Baluchestan aims to support the region.

"We have held numerous meetings with various agencies and have gained some understanding of the current situation. These efforts align with the Leader's vision for the Makoran region," he said.

The president criticized that the goals outlined in the 20-Year Vision Document are not being fully realized today. "This does not mean that the efforts made so far are insignificant. Major steps have been taken, and we appreciate them. However, the vision document represents the collective expertise of the country, approved by the Leader, which envisions Iran as a developed nation with leading economic, scientific, cultural, and managerial standing in the region. Achieving this requires significant effort, as it is not an easy task."

Pezeshkian stressed that the vision document must become a shared belief.

"If we want to succeed in the world we



live in, we must do everything in our power. What matters is not just reaching the goal but the effort made along the way. We must prepare all necessary foundations, environments, behaviors, laws, and regulations to achieve our objectives."

## Inauguration of Zabol-Zahedan highway project

During his visit to Zabol, the Iranian president inaugurated the final 200-kilometer section of the Zabol-Zahedan highway. At the inauguration ceremony, he noted that this is the incumbent government's second visit to Sistan and Baluchestan since taking office.

"We will do everything in our

power to address deprivations and solve the problems of the people in Sistan and Baluchestan and other deprived provinces," he said.

Also, the minister of roads and urban development provided a report on the construction process of the highway, which cost approximately 25 trillion rials (about \$31.25 million).

## Pursuing Hirmand River water rights through dialogue

On the sidelines of the president's visit to the province, Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi stated that efforts are underway to secure Iran's water rights from the Hirmand River through dialogue with Afghanistan.

"Several projects are being implemented to provide water for the people of Sistan and Baluchestan," he said on Friday.

Aliabadi emphasized the need to pursue the Hirmand water rights issue through interaction with the neighboring country. "Negotiations are ongoing, and the results will be announced soon," he added.

The minister stressed the importance of water conservation, stating, "The Ministry of Energy is making every effort to provide sustainable and quality water for all regions of the country, including Sistan. However, water conservation in all sectors is essential to help alleviate the water shortage in the province."

## Paknejad stresses support for private sector to realize oil industry progress

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad emphasized the need for collaboration with private sector actors to develop and sustain the country's oil industry, stating that the private sector paves the way to progress and prosperity.

He added that the Oil Ministry will utilize all legal capacities to remove obstacles facing the private sector, Shana reported.

Paknejad made the remarks during a meeting on Friday with representatives from oil industry equipment manufacturers' associations.

He highlighted the importance of the private sector's role in advancing the country's broader goals, stating that the Oil Ministry welcomes active private sector participation in various

areas, including investment, operations, technical expertise, knowledge enhancement and research.

Paknejad said the use of indigenously manufactured equipment is a top priority for the Oil Ministry, adding that serious measures must be taken to strengthen domestic oil equipment producers so they can compete and expand their presence internationally.

### Importance of effective collaboration

The minister stressed the importance of synergy and effective collaboration between the Oil Ministry and the private sector.

He reiterated the ministry's support for private sector activities at all stages of

oil projects, stating that the ministry is ready to provide comprehensive cooperation and support to enhance the country's oil industry through private sector involvement.

After listening to private sector representatives, Paknejad welcomed the points raised during the meeting and emphasized the need to build trust with the private sector.

He said, "To attract public investment in projects, we must first earn their trust."

Paknejad described the private sector as a complement to and supporter of the government, stating, "The private sector is the path to the country's progress and salvation. We must all work together to elevate Iran's standing. The

Oil Ministry will use all legal capacities to remove obstacles facing this sector."

### Need to address FATF issues

Private sector representatives at the meeting raised their challenges and concerns, including issues related to liquidity, debt settlements, receivables, fair competition with semi-state entities, and the need to establish joint task forces between the Oil Ministry and the private sector.

Industry players clarified that supporting domestic production does not mean halting projects to wait for local manufacturing or banning imports. Instead, they called for creating conditions that allow fair competition with foreign producers.

Representatives from oil equipment manufacturers' associations highlighted the urgent need to resolve issues related to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), stating that without addressing these challenges, the private sector will not be able to compete with foreign companies or enhance its capabilities. Private sector representatives also criticized the increasing state control over new technology-based firms (NTBFs), the expansion of semi-state entities, and insufficient oversight of their financial activities.

They stressed the need for government agencies to coordinate in formulating laws, regulations, and guidelines to foster economic growth and support entrepreneurs.



# Gonbad-e Kavus; a blend of nature, history

Gonbad-e Kavus is a city in northern Iran renowned for its stunning natural scenery and remarkable historical attractions, including the tallest brick tower in the world. Gonbad-e Kavus is located in Golestan Province, just three kilometers from the ancient city of Gorgan. It is bordered by Turkmenistan to the north, Shahrud to the south, Minoodasht to the east, Bandar Torkaman to the northwest, and Gorgan and Aliabad to the west. The city enjoys a moderate and humid climate, with annual rainfall around 500mm and an average temperature of 18.6°C. Situated 52 meters above sea level, Gonbad-e Kavus boasts fertile soil, supported by rivers and wells that provide ample water for agriculture. Key agricultural products include wheat, barley, rice, and citrus fruits, with numerous olive gardens in the area. The city is a major exporter of cereals to Tehran and other large cities, with agriculture serving as its economic foundation. Additionally, animal husbandry and related industries are prevalent.

Gonbad-e Kavus is known for its handicrafts, particularly carpets, rugs, and qarchins (a type of carpet). The region is famous for high-quality Turkmen red rugs, which symbolize local resilience. Horse breeding is also prominent, with Turkmen horses recognized worldwide. The city hosts flour, oil, cotton ginning, canning, compote, and chipboard factories.

## History

Archaeological findings suggest that the region's civilization dates back approximately 5,000 to 6,000 years. Gonbad-e Kavus has a rich and tumultuous history. Following the advent of Islam, it played a significant role in the flourishing of Islamic culture. Notable figures include Onsor Al-Ma'ali Keykavus, the last emir of the Ziyarid dynasty and author of the renowned Qabus Nameh, and Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, a prominent grammarian and theorist of Arabic literature. Scholars regard Qabus Nameh as a reflection of pre-Mongolian

Islamic civilization.

The city also made notable contributions to medicine, with renowned physicians like Abu Sahl al-Masihi and Sayyed Ismaeil (Hakim) Jorjani, author of Zakhireye Khwarazmshahi, gaining recognition in Iran and beyond. In ancient times, the city was known as Hyrcania, later renamed Gorgan or Jorjan, situated along the Silk Road. It served as the capital of Iran during the Ziyarid dynasty. Prominent scholars such as Sheikh Fakhredin As'ad Gorgani, the poet of Vis and Ramin, and the polymath Avicenna also lived in Gonbad-e Kavus. A devastating earthquake struck the city about a century ago, leading to significant rebuilding efforts, with remnants of the old city preserved in the eastern part of the modern city. The city was constructed in 1927 and named after Qabus ibn Vushmagir. It was designed by German urban planners, featuring a grid layout that avoids narrow, old passages.

## Gonbad-e Qabus Tower

This baked-brick tower serves as the burial site of Qabus ibn Vushmagir, the Sultan of the Ziyarid dynasty. It is the oldest tomb tower of the Razi style and stands 60 meters tall. Estimates suggest that construction of the tower began in the 11th century. The historic tower is situated near the city's National Park, on an artificial hill that rises 15 meters above the surrounding area. In 2013, UNESCO designated the Gonbad-e Qabus Tower as a World Heritage site, recognizing it as an important piece of Iranian tangible cultural heritage.

## Russian Bazaar

The Russian Bazaar, located at the entrance of Gonbad-e Kavus, is one of the city's major economic centers. This indoor bazaar boasts a long-standing tradition, with numerous shops lining both sides, making it a vibrant hub for locals and visitors alike.

## Golestan Dam

Golestan Dam, located in the northeastern part of Gonbad-e

Kavus along the Gorgan River, offers a stunning landscape and is a popular tourist attraction. This homogeneous earthen dam is situated about 12 kilometers northeast of the city, with its main tributary originating from the heights of the eastern mountains of the province. In addition to supplying agricultural water, the water from Golestan Dam is also utilized for fish farming. Surrounded by lush nature, the dam provides an ideal setting for enjoying fresh air and recreation. The city of Gonbad-e Kavus was established in 1927 and named after Qabus ibn Vushmagir. Designed by German urban planners, it features a grid layout that avoids narrow and old passages.

## Wetlands

Wetlands are another natural treasure of Gonbad-e Kavus. During migration seasons, a variety of birds flock to them, creating breathtaking views.

**Alma Gol Wetland:** Located north of Tangeli village, this square-shaped wetland spans 207 hectares and is close to the Iran-Turkmenistan border.

**Aji Gol Wetland:** Situated in the southern part of Tangeli village, this wetland covers 360 hectares and lies between Alma Gol and Ala Gol.

**Ala Gol Wetland:** About 60 km north of Gonbad-e Kavus, this wetland is characterized by green algae covering its bed,



Gonbad-e Kavus Tower



Golestan Dam



Alma Gol Wetland



Equestrian Complex

surrounded by common reeds and tamarisks.

## Artificial Lake

The recreational lake of Gonbad-e Kavus is situated at the city's entrance and spans five hectares. Its proximity to Shadi Park and nearby resorts enhances its appeal as a leisure destination. This lake, which was constructed in 2005 with an area of five hectares and a capacity of 120,000 cubic meters of water, significantly helps improve the air quality of Gonbad-e Kavus, especially in the southern parts, thanks to its location in the prevailing wind direction toward the city. Popular recreational activities in this area include walking, picnicking, and various sports around the lake.

## Equestrian Complex

The Gonbad-e Kavus Equestrian Complex is a large facility featuring parking, green spaces, horse racing tracks, suites, villas, stables, and swimming pools. Located on Moallem Boulevard in the northeastern part of the city, it hosts horse races in spring and autumn, attracting fans from across the country.

For international travelers seeking cultural and natural attractions, Gonbad-e Kavus is an ideal destination. Situated near the Caspian Sea, this area offers a glimpse into the nomadic lifestyle of local people amidst stunning landscapes. The diverse tourist attractions of Gonbad-e Kavus cater to enthusiasts of both historical and natural wonders in Iran.

## Ride through nature in Ahraar Cable Car of Lahijan



The Ahraar Cable Car, also known as Lahijan Cable Car, is located in the beautiful green area of Lahijan in Gilan Province. It started its operation in 2005 and has now become one of the important recreational and tourist centers in the region.

The Lahijan Cable Car has two stations. The starting point is at Bam-e Sabz Station, and the second station is located in an area known as Taj-e Khorroos. The first station has booths selling handicrafts and local snacks, while the second station features traditional and modern cafes and restaurants where you can stop and enjoy the view without time constraints. The approximate height experienced during the aerial journey is about 120 meters, and the travel time is around 20 minutes.

This cable car overlooks the city of Lahijan, allowing you to observe

the entire city and the green nature of the region from above. The operating hours of Ahraar Cable Car in Lahijan are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.. Due to its large backup generators, there is an assurance that the power supply will never be cut off, making it a completely safe and reliable mode of transportation. The area is equipped with private parking, an amusement park, and taxi services. On certain days of the year, especially during festivals or national holidays, celebratory events are held here. To reach the cable car, you can easily follow the clear and marked path to Bam-e Sabz.

The Lahijan region offers a variety of natural attractions, including the Sheitan Kuh Waterfall, vast tea plantations, lush green mountains, the Sheykhbar area, the international Amir Kalaye Wetland, Lahijan Pool, and the Sustan Wetland.

Due to the proximity of the cable car to the tea plantations, visitors can also explore these areas and directly purchase tea from local farmers. Lahijan is known as the most important center for tea cultivation and production in Iran, and its aroma and taste are famous among Iranians.

Lahijan has also been one of the most significant and oldest parts of Gilan Province throughout history. Its geographical location in the heart of the Gilan and its climatic conditions have attracted attention over the years. Until the Safavid era, it was the only point in Gilan that could be referred to as a city. In addition to nature exploration and cable car rides, Lahijan offers historical attractions such as Akbarieh Mosque, the Tea History Museum (Kaashef al-Sultan Mausoleum), the Brick Bridge, Jaame Mosque, Golshan Bathhouse, and the historical shrine of Sheikh Zahed Gilani.



# Good riddance, Justin Trudeau



By Andrew Mitrovica  
Journalist, columnist

OPINION

**Watching Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announce that he was quitting on a chilly Monday morning in Ottawa, I was reminded of the moment when battered prize fighter, Roberto Duran, raised his hands in a boxing ring and said, “No mas [No more].” It was a merciful and predictable denouement to an unexpected political career that had begun with promise and expectations and has ended engulfed by rejection and re-cremations.**

**“I’m a fighter,” the soon-to-be-ex-prime minister said. Clearly, the fight had drained out of Trudeau after some of his closest allies in cabinet abandoned him, and the party that once celebrated his youthful exuberance now considered the Liberal boy wonder a loser and a liability.**



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks during a news conference at Rideau Cottage in Ottawa, Canada, on January 6, 2025. Trudeau announced his resignation, saying he will leave office as soon as the governing Liberal party chooses a new leader.

DAVE CHAN/APP

Faithful readers know of my longstanding antipathy and, at times, disgust of a prime minister who struck me, from the first, as a dauphin whose hollow acts of performative nonsense were a trite substitute for conviction and intelligence. But much of the international press was smitten by Trudeau’s craven persona and empty antics, heralding him as a shining antidote to the United States President-elect Donald Trump’s politics of anger and grievance. Trudeau was a “progressive” fraud. Rather than mounting a sustained and determined challenge to the status quo, he devoted his almost 10 years as prime minister to defending it at home and abroad. He was adept at making practised speeches about the urgent need to bridge the chasm between rich and poor and then not doing anything tangible about it.

Trudeau and parochial company only agreed to pass legislation making universal, affordable day and dental care available to struggling Canadian families as part of a deal with the New Democratic Party to keep his minority government afloat — such was the Liberal Party’s calculated commitment to fairness and equity. Time and again, Trudeau made plain that he was an establishment man — through and through — who revelled in playing Cold War warrior vis-a-vis Ukraine and handmaiden to the Israeli apartheid regime led by an accused war criminal who is committing genocide in Gaza and razing the occupied West Bank. On the two defining geopolitical issues of this awful era, Trudeau not only toed but parroted, to the letter, the lines dictated to him by his superior in the Oval Office — US President Joe Biden — good, obedient errand page that he was.

Still, if Trudeau had any true sense of the prime minister’s duties and obligations, he would have heeded calls to resign when his racist, black-face-wearing-well-into-adulthood days were exposed in 2019.

Instead, Trudeau and his pack of myopic handlers put the prime minister’s interests ahead of the country’s. It was a humiliating affair that

confirmed, to my mind at least, that Trudeau had forfeited the privilege of holding any public office, let alone the prime minister’s office.

True to infantile form, Trudeau and company weathered the brief storm by having the jejune prime minister issue a succession of vacuous, unconvincing apologies that compounded his disgrace.

Perhaps the episode that best established Trudeau’s essential character — and, not surprisingly, has escaped the attention of both his devoted supporters and apoplectic detractors in the corporate media and beyond — was his shameful volte-face to desert injured Palestinian children.

Anyone, at any time, who reneges on a promise to help the innocent victims of war to appease racists and xenophobes in

and outside parliament is a contemptible hypocrite.

Justin Trudeau did just that, turning his sorry back on children in desperate need. That obscenity will forever stain his legacy.

As I explained in several columns, while the Liberal leader sitting in opposition, Trudeau openly and repeatedly threw his imprimatur behind an initiative organised by the celebrated Palestinian Canadian, Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish, called Heal100Kids.

Dr Abuelaish had enlisted the support of provincial politicians, doctors, nurses, hospitals, and other volunteers to arrange to have 100 wounded Palestinian children — accompanied by members of their immediate families — travel to Canada for treatment to mend their damaged minds, bodies, and spirits. After Trudeau won a majority in

2015, Dr Abuelaish — who has endured the killing by invading Israeli forces of three of his daughters and a niece in Gaza in 2009 with remarkable grace — made several public and private overtures to have Trudeau keep his word.

Trudeau never responded. Dr Abuelaish — a distinguished man not prone to hyperbole — told me that Trudeau was a liar and that history would judge his betrayal harshly.

He is right on both counts. Trudeau has betrayed others for other telling reasons. He betrayed his so-called “feminist” credentials when he fired female ministers, including an Indigenous colleague, for daring to challenge him at the cabinet table or defending the rule of law. As I wrote in September 2023, the supposed “champion” of

climate “action”, bought a floundering oil pipeline for 4.5 billion Canadian dollars (\$3.3bn).

The supposed “champion” of human rights and the rules-based international “order”, tried, with a little help from his insurrectionist-friendly friends in Brazil, to install a malleable marionette in Venezuela.

The supposed “champion” of the plight of hurting “ordinary” Canadians, allowed predatory corporate monopolies to continue to reap extraordinary earnings while the divide between the uber-wealthy and the other, much less fortunate 99 percent, mushroomed.

Despite the anguished rhetoric of amnesiacs in the House of Commons and newsrooms across Canada, Trudeau’s departure is not evidence of a national “crisis” or that the capital is gripped by “chaos” or “paralysis”.

It is further proof that, given the inexorable cycle of politics, prime ministers — Liberal or Conservative — have a natural life expectancy.

Trudeau’s Conservative predecessor, Stephen Harper, lasted a little shy of 10 years as prime minister before voters soured on him.

Harper’s Liberal predecessor, Jean Chretien, spent a decade as prime minister before voters soured on him.

Chretien’s Conservative predecessor, the late Brian Mulroney, also held office for approaching a decade before, you guessed it, voters soured on him.

I suspect the same fate awaits current Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, who looks poised — if the consensus among pollsters is accurate — to win a handsome majority during the next federal election that is likely to occur in the spring.

In the meantime, frantic Liberals will choose an eager sacrificial lamb — not named Trudeau — to take on the repellent, schtick-addicted Poilievre in a futile effort to stave off the inevitable.

So, to borrow a phrase made famous by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, “welcome to” 2025, Justin.

Good riddance to you.



The surfaced photo of Justin Trudeau in blackface from a 2001 party

X

“

On the two defining geopolitical issues of this awful era, Trudeau not only toed but parroted, to the letter, the lines dictated to him by his superior in the Oval Office — US President Joe Biden — good, obedient errand page that he was. Still, if Trudeau had any true sense of the prime minister’s duties and obligations, he would have heeded calls to resign when his racist, black-face-wearing-well-into-adulthood days were exposed in 2019.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.



# Unfit to lead

## Trudeau announces he plans to resign



By Patrick Carroll  
Managing Editor  
at FEE

### OPINION

In a subdued press conference on Monday morning, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that he plans to step down from his role. The date he would actually leave office was not specified, but it would be before the next election, which is set to take place in the coming months. The announcement comes in the midst of dismal polling for Trudeau's Liberal Party, with recent numbers putting the party's support at a mere 16 percent, the lowest it's been in over ten years.

While calls for his resignation have been mounting for months now, the pressure ticked up considerably when Chrystia Freeland — Trudeau's Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister — unexpectedly resigned from the Cabinet back in December.

"It has become obvious to me with the internal battles that I cannot be the one to carry the Liberal standard into the next election," Trudeau said. "...Removing me from the equation as the leader who will fight the next election for the Liberal Party should also decrease the level of polarization we're seeing right now in the House and in Canadian politics."

For many, this decision is long overdue. Whether it's the "costly political gimmicks" Freeland complained about in her resignation letter, the numerous scandals, or simply the economic slump Canada finds itself in, almost everyone is ready to begin a new chapter in Canadian politics. But before we leave the past behind completely, we should take a moment to reflect on Trudeau's nearly 10 years in office and the lessons we can learn from it.

From the very beginning, both Trudeau's competence and his character have been called into question. He sailed into power with a thin CV, but a cool haircut and a well-known surname (his father was Pierre Trudeau, Canadian PM from 1968 to 1979, and again from 1980 to 1984).

When asked why he selected a gender-balanced Cabinet in his first term — with 15 of 31 posts held by women — he famously answered, "Because it's 2015." That may have played well with his progressive base, but it was a flimsy case for his personnel choices. Many other cabinet and

policy decisions have likewise raised eyebrows regarding his aptitude.

Trudeau's character flaws have been even more apparent. "Trudeau clearly has narcissistic personality characteristics," said Jordan Peterson in a recent podcast episode, echoing criticisms he has been making for years. "[He] runs the country, what, as a testament to his own grandeur, it's something like that...The Trudeau government has skated through at least half a dozen scandals that under normal circumstances would have provoked an honorable government

to resign." Whether it was appearing in blackface at parties, or accepting gifts from a foreign magnate, his judgement seemed poor, to say the least.

In addition to the scandals, Trudeau and his wife Sophie separated in August 2023, after 18 years of marriage. This isn't to say that was entirely his fault, of course, but it does tarnish his "family man" image in the public eye.

Why worst get on top  
All of this is reminiscent of F. A. Hayek's chapter in *The Road to*



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with Aga Khan IV on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on May 17, 2016. Trudeau confessed that he received an overnight bag from the billionaire Ismaili leader during his vacation on his private island in the Bahamas.  
● SEAN KILPATRICK/CANADIAN PRESS

Serfdom titled "Why the Worst Get on Top." In the chapter, Hayek explains that positions of power in totalitarian regimes tend to attract the worst kinds of people because of the very nature of the system. Others have pointed out that a similar problem exists with non-totalitarian governments as well. As Trudeau's tenure illustrates, the kind of people who tend to gain power are precisely those who shouldn't have it.

"...[I]t is a well-known fact that those people who most want to rule people are, ipso facto, those least suited to do it,"

writes Douglas Adams. "...anyone who is capable of getting themselves made President should on no account be allowed to do the job."

Or as Frank Herbert put it, "All governments suffer a recurring problem: Power attracts pathological personalities. It is not that power corrupts but that it is magnetic to the corruptible." The propensity of people like Trudeau to acquire and maintain positions of power underscores the importance of limiting government power in every possible way. And this goes far beyond "checks and balances." This

means asking serious questions — at a constitutional level — about how much authority the government should have to tax us and interfere with our lives and businesses.

Imagine a world where the government had so little power that no one even particularly cared who the Prime Minister was. Maybe, instead of putting our hopes in a new ruler, that would be a better path for Canadians to pursue.

The article first appeared on the *Foundation for Economic Education (FEE)*.

# Justin Trudeau was his own worst enemy



By Stephen Marche  
Author

### OPINION

In the sunny beginnings of Justin Trudeau's time in power, a journalist asked him why his cabinet was 50 percent female. Mr. Trudeau gave a now well-known response: "Because it's 2015." If you want to know why on Monday he announced his plan to resign as prime minister, the answer is just as simple: Because it's 2025. Mr. Trudeau's political career has followed the arc of global progressive politics over the past decade, reflecting its transformation from a pose of optimistic cool to its present state of despair. At the beginning of his time in office, *New York* magazine depicted Mr. Trudeau as a cutout paper doll with costumes, which seemed about right. Now he's increasingly the butt of jokes from the manosphere.

In 2015, Mr. Trudeau was at the forefront of a new kind of politics, both in terms of how he came to power and how he chose to use it. He harnessed the emerging force of social media with his easygoing celebrity to win his first election. Once in office, he stressed the gender and ethnicity of the people he put in important positions as much as what they planned to do with the power they possessed. Now, identity politics have helped bring about his downfall, and social media networks have soured on him.

Mr. Trudeau stayed who he was. The times changed around him. The worst you can say about him, and I have, is that he could not face the realities of a newly polarized world. But that inability has roots in what brought him to office in the first place.

"There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada," he told *The New York Times Magazine* in 2015. "There are shared values — openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, to be there for each other, to search for equality and justice. Those qualities are what make us the first post-national state."

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The failure of Mr. Trudeau's inclusive vision is more than a culture war question. Canada's economic superpower has always been its widespread, cross-party support for well-regulated immigration, which has been

vital to replenishing the country's small, aging population with skilled workers. His government's policy since Covid of bringing in half a million immigrants a year, without any firm plan on how to manage their impact on housing and infrastructure, has been a disaster; his faith in immigration as a positive force may have been too naïve to allow him to inquire about its limits. The result has been that the number of Canadians who believe there is too much immigration has increased by more than 30 percentage points in the past two years alone.

At times, Mr. Trudeau seems to embody virtue signaling without effective policymaking, the worst feature of progressive politics as they have devolved over the past decade. During his time in office, land acknowledgments became common practice across Canada, while Indigenous life expectancy rates plummeted. I might add that virtue signaling is now, and has always been, a Canadian affliction, not just Mr. Trudeau's. What Canadians have come to hate about Mr. Trudeau they have come to hate in themselves, which explains, at least in part, the intensity of the hatred.

Canadians have a tendency to turn on their prime ministers every 10 years or so. The Harper government fell brutally in 2015, the Liberal government under Paul Martin with similar harshness in 2006. Before that, Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government lost all but two seats in the 1993 election. Mr. Trudeau's departure is traditional: The way Canadians thank their leaders for their service is by kicking them out the door with the pointiest boots they can find.

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In the first half of his time in office, the Trudeau government cut child poverty in half; legalized marijuana and medical assistance for dying; and made important investments in child care. The second half was defined by crises: negotiating with the increasingly chaotic first Trump administration, Covid, and inflation. By any reasonable assessment, Mr. Trudeau's government handled all three as well as could be expected. Leaders in power during the aftermath of Covid have been rejected around the globe. That rejection makes sense, but that doesn't mean that it's sensible.

Mr. Trudeau will be a lame-duck prime minister until his party chooses a new head. (He also announced on Monday that he would resign as the leader of his Liberal Party.) The year 2025 does not seem, at least so far, to be a year devoted to nuance and sympathetic understanding of events in context. Nonetheless, two things can be true at the same time. Mr. Trudeau's politics of representation have imploded in a fit of the best intentions, and yet he leaves behind a legacy that has shaped Canada for the better. Canadians might someday be able to recognize that duality. But it may take until 2035.

The article first appeared on *The New York Times*.



Canadian Gov. Gen. David Johnston (sitting 2nd-R) joins Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his gender-balanced cabinet for a photo at Rideau Hall, in Ottawa, Canada, on November 4, 2015.  
● SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS



# Unfit to lead

## Trudeau announces he plans to resign



By Patrick Carroll  
Managing Editor  
at FEE

### OPINION

In a subdued press conference on Monday morning, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that he plans to step down from his role. The date he would actually leave office was not specified, but it would be before the next election, which is set to take place in the coming months. The announcement comes in the midst of dismal polling for Trudeau's Liberal Party, with recent numbers putting the party's support at a mere 16 percent, the lowest it's been in over ten years.

While calls for his resignation have been mounting for months now, the pressure ticked up considerably when Chrystia Freeland — Trudeau's Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister — unexpectedly resigned from the Cabinet back in December.

"It has become obvious to me with the internal battles that I cannot be the one to carry the Liberal standard into the next election," Trudeau said. "...Removing me from the equation as the leader who will fight the next election for the Liberal Party should also decrease the level of polarization we're seeing right now in the House and in Canadian politics."

For many, this decision is long overdue. Whether it's the "costly political gimmicks" Freeland complained about in her resignation letter, the numerous scandals, or simply the economic slump Canada finds itself in, almost everyone is ready to begin a new chapter in Canadian politics. But before we leave the past behind completely, we should take a moment to reflect on Trudeau's nearly 10 years in office and the lessons we can learn from it.

From the very beginning, both Trudeau's competence and his character have been called into question. He sailed into power with a thin CV, but a cool haircut and a well-known surname (his father was Pierre Trudeau, Canadian PM from 1968 to 1979, and again from 1980 to 1984).

When asked why he selected a gender-balanced Cabinet in his first term — with 15 of 31 posts held by women — he famously answered, "Because it's 2015." That may have played well with his progressive base, but it was a flimsy case for his personnel choices. Many other cabinet and

policy decisions have likewise raised eyebrows regarding his aptitude.

Trudeau's character flaws have been even more apparent. "Trudeau clearly has narcissistic personality characteristics," said Jordan Peterson in a recent podcast episode, echoing criticisms he has been making for years. "[He] runs the country, what, as a testament to his own grandeur, it's something like that...The Trudeau government has skated through at least half a dozen scandals that under normal circumstances would have provoked an honorable government

to resign." Whether it was appearing in blackface at parties, or accepting gifts from a foreign magnate, his judgement seemed poor, to say the least.

In addition to the scandals, Trudeau and his wife Sophie separated in August 2023, after 18 years of marriage. This isn't to say that was entirely his fault, of course, but it does tarnish his "family man" image in the public eye.

Why worst get on top  
All of this is reminiscent of F. A. Hayek's chapter in *The Road to*



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with Aga Khan IV on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on May 17, 2016. Trudeau confessed that he received an overnight bag from the billionaire Ismaili leader during his vacation on his private island in the Bahamas.  
● SEAN KILPATRICK/CANADIAN PRESS

Serfdom titled "Why the Worst Get on Top." In the chapter, Hayek explains that positions of power in totalitarian regimes tend to attract the worst kinds of people because of the very nature of the system. Others have pointed out that a similar problem exists with non-totalitarian governments as well. As Trudeau's tenure illustrates, the kind of people who tend to gain power are precisely those who shouldn't have it.

"...[I]t is a well-known fact that those people who most want to rule people are, ipso facto, those least suited to do it,"

writes Douglas Adams. "...anyone who is capable of getting themselves made President should on no account be allowed to do the job."

Or as Frank Herbert put it, "All governments suffer a recurring problem: Power attracts pathological personalities. It is not that power corrupts but that it is magnetic to the corruptible." The propensity of people like Trudeau to acquire and maintain positions of power underscores the importance of limiting government power in every possible way. And this goes far beyond "checks and balances." This

means asking serious questions — at a constitutional level — about how much authority the government should have to tax us and interfere with our lives and businesses.

Imagine a world where the government had so little power that no one even particularly cared who the Prime Minister was. Maybe, instead of putting our hopes in a new ruler, that would be a better path for Canadians to pursue.

The article first appeared on *the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE)*.

# Justin Trudeau was his own worst enemy



By Stephen Marche  
Author

### OPINION

In the sunny beginnings of Justin Trudeau's time in power, a journalist asked him why his cabinet was 50 percent female. Mr. Trudeau gave a now well-known response: "Because it's 2015." If you want to know why on Monday he announced his plan to resign as prime minister, the answer is just as simple: Because it's 2025. Mr. Trudeau's political career has followed the arc of global progressive politics over the past decade, reflecting its transformation from a pose of optimistic cool to its present state of despair. At the beginning of his time in office, *New York* magazine depicted Mr. Trudeau as a cutout paper doll with costumes, which seemed about right. Now he's increasingly the butt of jokes from the manosphere.

In 2015, Mr. Trudeau was at the forefront of a new kind of politics, both in terms of how he came to power and how he chose to use it. He harnessed the emerging force of social media with his easygoing celebrity to win his first election. Once in office, he stressed the gender and ethnicity of the people he put in important positions as much as what they planned to do with the power they possessed. Now, identity politics have helped bring about his downfall, and social media networks have soured on him.

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● SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS



# Inter's Taremi backed by Qalenoey to reach double figures for the season

## Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoey has tipped Inter striker Mahdi Taremi to build on his sublime performance against AC Milan in the Italian Super Cup final to add to his goal haul with the Nerazzurri colors.

Taremi, whose contribution since joining Inter in July had been limited to a goal from the spot in 20 games, provided Argentine skipper Lautaro Martinez with an assist and then found the net himself in Riyadh's Al Awwal Park on Monday.

The Iranian controlled Stefan de Vrij's long ball with a delicate touch behind the Milan backline and drilled his shot into the bottom corner to give his team a two-goal lead in the early stages of the second half in the Derby della Madonnina.

Milan pulled off a sensational fightback for a 3-2 victory as Taremi was denied a first taste of silverware with Inter, but his coach in the national team is confident the occasion will still be a watershed in the Iranian's career in the Italian top flight.

"The control and the composed finishing for his goal sums up what Taremi is all about as a striker," Qalenoey told La Gazzetta dello Sport.

"Inter fans must trust him. Now that he has broken the curse [of scoring from open play], I'm sure he can reach double figures for the season," the coach said of his fellow-Iranian, who became Porto's third all-time



Inter striker Mahdi Taremi celebrates his goal during a 3-2 defeat against AC Milan in the Italian Super Cup final at Al Awwal Park, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Jan. 6, 2025. [inter.it](https://www.inter.it)

leading marksman with 91 strikes in 182 outings before leaving the Dragons in the summer.

"There are dozens of games left, and he will also provide several assists. Taremi is a team player and contributes to the success of

his teammates on the pitch. "I'm sorry about the Super Cup defeat, but a derby goal will be remembered forever. The game was a turning point, and from now on it will be a different story for him," added the Team Melli head coach.

Asked about Taremi's best trait as a striker, Qalenoey said: "The sense of responsibility towards his teammates."

"Taremi knows how to stimulate those around him. He has always done so since his days at Porto,

where he scored in droves. He works hard on the pitch and is a committed player. Mahdi is an asset for every coach, and [Inter boss] Simone Inzaghi realized that from day one."

Many in the Italian football be-

lieve Taremi's qualities resemble those of former Inter forward Edin Dzeko, but Qalenoey says the Iranian is "even a more complete player than the Bosnian."

"Taremi can play as both a center-forward and as a second striker. From a technical point of view, he is even better than Dzeko. He knows how to play between the lines and drop deep to help with the buildup play and feed the strikers."

Assessing Taremi's debut campaign in the Inter shirt, Qalenoey said: "His season should be divided between the Champions League and Serie A. He has been a starter in all of Inter's six European games, and has a goal and double assists under his belt. In the domestic league, however, he has found less opportunity as Inzaghi likes to rotate his strikers. It is not easy to adapt to Italian football, but he will soon start scoring on a regular basis."

Asked if he has any suggestions for Inzaghi, the Iranian coach said: "He's one of the best coaches in Europe and doesn't need my tips. All I can say is that Taremi is someone who needs to be the focal point of the project to perform at his best."

## Djokovic wants to 'focus on tennis' after poisoning claim



ISSEI KATO/REUTERS

BBC - Novak Djokovic says he wants to "focus on tennis" after claiming in a magazine interview he had been "poisoned" when detained in a Melbourne hotel. Local reporters unsuccessfully demanded further explanation as the 37-year-old Serb walked out of a pre-Australian Open news conference which ended in bizarre fashion. Djokovic, a record 10-time

men's champion at Melbourne Park, was deported from the Australian city in 2022 after arriving without a vaccination against Covid-19. The deportation came when he failed to overturn a decision from the Australian government to cancel his visa on public health grounds. In an interview with GQ magazine, published on Thursday, Djokovic said he had

"some health issues" when he returned to Serbia. "I realised that in that hotel in Melbourne I was fed with some food that poisoned me," he added. "I had a really high level of heavy metal. Heavy metal. I had the lead, very high level of lead and mercury." The Australian Border Force has not responded to the accusations. "For privacy reasons, we

cannot comment on individual cases," the Department of Home Affairs told BBC Sport.

Djokovic's news conference on Friday had been wrapped up by a moderator before the player said he would answer another question from an Australian reporter.

She asked Djokovic if he had evidence to support his claim the food he was served while detained in the Park Hotel caused the heavy metal levels.

"I've done that interview many months ago," he replied.

"I would appreciate not talking more in detail about that, as I would like to focus on the tennis and why I'm here."

Djokovic flew to Australia at the end of December and told Melbourne's Herald Sun newspaper this week he still feels "trauma" when he arrives in the country.

One Australian academic, speaking to the Guardian, external said Djokovic's claim was a "wild accusation". "It's possible but very unlikely given how long he was locked up," said Damian Manganja, research fellow in food policy at the George Institute for Global Health.

"These meals were probably made in mass amounts and there haven't been other reports as far as I know."

## Iran to play in March's futsal tourney in Brazil

### Sports Desk

The Iranian national futsal team will play in a four-team tournament in Brazil - also featuring the host, Afghanistan, and France - in March's international break.

The event will be a first for Iran since last September's Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan, where Vahid Shamsaei's side won the group with maximum points but suffered a last-16 exit after a 4-3 defeat against Morocco.

Iran will begin the tournament in Brazil against the home side, which lifted a sixth World Cup trophy last year, before taking on Afghanistan. Beaten by Iran in the 2024 Asian Cup, Afghanistan secured a surprise berth for the showpiece in Uzbekistan before falling to a 3-1 loss to Paraguay in extra time in the round of 16. Iran's final game in Brazil will be

against World Cup semifinalist France - a repeat of the controversial encounter between the two sides in the World Cup, which the Asian powerhouse won 4-1 to finish atop the group.

France, however, faced tanking allegations after the game, as a defeat would have meant a much easier passage through the knockout phase for the runner-up in the group.

The French recorded only six shots on goal over the course of the entire match, scoring a consolation after Iran had eased to a 4-0 lead, while their goalkeeper Thibaut Garros clearly moved away from the ball in the buildup to Iran's opening goal. While even a win against Morocco would have seen Iran play Brazil in the quarterfinals, France defeated Thailand and Paraguay to reach the last four on its World Cup debut.



GETTY IMAGES



# Pezeshkian lauds Lebanese unity as army chief assumes presidency

**International Desk**

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed confidence that the unity of the Lebanese and solidification of their resilience would counter the aggressive ambitions of Israel towards the country's territory as he felicitated Joseph Aoun on his election as Lebanon's new president. "Strengthening resilience and unity will doubtless thwart the Zionist enemy's avarice towards the Lebanese territory," Pezeshkian wrote in his congratulatory message on Friday, a day after Aoun secured the majority of votes in the Lebanese parliament. The Iranian president voiced Tehran's readiness to further enhance cooperation in "all fields" with Beirut, president.ir reported. "The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran expresses its readiness to

further enhance bilateral cooperation in all fields during your presidency," he said. The Iranian president also hoped that the election will bring "political stability, continuous economic growth, and peace and comfort to the dear people of Lebanon." Aoun secured 99 votes from the 128-seat parliament to win the presidency in a second round of voting on Thursday afternoon. "A new phase in the history of Lebanon begins today," sixty-year-old Aoun told the chamber after he was sworn in. Aoun's victory, which saw members of parliament erupting in celebration as he reached the required threshold of 86 votes, came on the legislature's 13th attempt to find a successor for Michel Aoun - not related - whose term ended in October 2022. On Thursday, the Iranian Embassy in



Lebanese lawmakers applaud the newly-elected Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, standing at the top, as he gives his first speech at Parliament after being sworn in as president in Beirut, Lebanon, on Jan. 9, 2025.

● HUSSEIN MALLA/AP



Lebanon congratulated the Lebanese nation and Aoun on election results, hoping for strengthened relations between the two states that would "serve the mutual interests of our two countries and promote stability and prosperity in the region." Following his election, Aoun who had served as the 14th commander of the Lebanese armed forces since 2017, formally stepped down from his military role. He entered the parliament to take the oath of office as he was dressed in civilian attire. Aoun will need to oversee the imple-

mentation of a cease-fire between Israel and Lebanon and forming a new cabinet capable of addressing post-war reconstruction.

## California's raging fires reminiscent of Israeli savagery in Gaza: Zarif

Iran's vice president for strategic affairs has compared the devastation caused by the "wrath of nature" in the form of raging fires in California to the destruction brought by the "savagery of Israel" in the Gaza Strip after a 15-month Western-backed aggression on the besieged Palestinian territory. Mohammad Javad Zarif, the former Iranian foreign minister, expressed sympathy with Californians in a post on his X account on Friday after an ongoing series of multiple catastrophic wildfires have affected the Los Angeles metropolitan area and surrounding regions, Press TV reported. "Grim footage out of California is reminiscent of ravaged homes, schools and hospitals in Gaza," Zarif wrote. "It's only human to sympathize with Californians who've lost everything to wrath of nature—particularly as many there have stood with Gazans who lost everything to savagery of Israel." Since Tuesday, the fires, engulfing iconic Los Angeles neighborhoods and tearing through the Hollywood Hills, have so far killed 10



people and destroyed nearly 10,000 structures, Reuters reported. Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said late on Thursday he expected the death toll to grow. As of early Friday, five fires were still burning. They have consumed more than 34,000 acres and turned entire neighborhoods to ash. Zarif's post comes as the Israel has since October last year killed at least 46,006 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 109,378 others, in Gaza after razing almost the entire



A man looks for belongings in the remains of his home after being burned down by wildfires in the Los Angeles area, at the Eaton Fire in Altadena, California, US, on January 9, 2025.

● RINGO CHIU/REUTERS

besieged territory to the ground. Washington, Israel's biggest ally and weapons supplier, has repeatedly vetoed UN Security Council resolutions on a cease-fire in Gaza and has since provided the regime with unstinting intelligence, financial and logistical support.

## Suicide drones unveiled on last day of IRGC military drills



**National Desk**

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force unveiled its advanced defensive systems, including new types of suicide drones Rezvan and Meraj 521, as the military unit continues to upgrade its cutting-edge warfare technology. On Thursday, during the final day of Great Prophet 19 military drills in western Iran, the loitering drone named "Rezvan" was operationalized, with a range of 20 kilometers and a 20-minute flight endurance, IRNA reported. The suicide drone is equipped with a camera mounted on the front that sends images after being launched from its cylindrical launcher, allowing the operator to select, lock on and attack a target.

The warhead weight of the Meraj 521 drone, which entered into service during the drills, is available in three classes, including 500 grams, 700 grams, and 1,000 grams. The drone has a flight endurance of 5 to 15 minutes and a range of up to 5 kilometers, Tasnim reported. Owing to their versatility and rapid deployment, the loitering UAVs provide the IRGC Ground Force's rapid response units with new capabilities to combat terrorist groups, not least in complex mountainous geography, Press TV reported. Loitering munitions refer to a group of weapons that, after being launched, are guided towards the target by optical and thermal systems, and detect and destroy the target by crashing into it.

## Iran backs domestic, int'l initiatives of Iraq for regional peace: FM

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized that the Islamic Republic supports Iraq's internal decisions and international initiatives to resolve regional issues. Simultaneous with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani's visit to Tehran on Wednesday, Araghchi said in a brief interview with Iraq's Al-Ahd network that the Sudan government is pursuing its relationships in the region through effective, positive, and stable diplomacy. "Iraq is a powerful country, and its decisions are significant, and other countries pay attention to Iraq's initiatives." He also said that during the Iraqi prime minister's visit to Tehran, critical discussion on various political and security issues were held between the two nations.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Lebanon's Aoun expected ...

On Thursday, before the final vote, lawmakers representing Hezbollah and Amal held positive talks with Aoun. However, during his inaugural speech in the Lebanese parliament, the Amal and Hezbollah MPs refrained from applauding him, especially when he vowed that weapons should be exclusively in the hands of the state. In his speech, Aoun emphasized that Lebanon would "get rid of the Israeli occupation." The election of Lebanon's new president comes on the heels of major developments in Lebanon and the Middle East. It follows the Israel-Hezbollah war and the cease-fire deal, the assassination of Hezbollah's Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah

and his successor Hashem Safieddine and the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria, which was a key player in Lebanon's politics. Furthermore, the event takes place as Iran and Saudi Arabia, two rival actors in Lebanon, have resumed diplomatic relations. The resolution of the presidential stalemate would have been unlikely if Tehran and Riyadh had remained at odds. Aoun's election as the fourth army commander to become Lebanon's president in the last 27 years highlights the deep-rooted bonds between politics and the military in Lebanon. His successful tenure as army chief, particularly his efforts to combat corruption within the military, earned him the support of local media. During

his command, he held a non-political and uncontroversial profile, avoiding opposition to Hezbollah being armed while maintaining a relatively neutral stance, despite attempts by adversaries to create divisions between the army and the resistance group. Aoun is expected to keep his centrist positions during his presidency, engaging with all domestic parties and external actors. Like any politician, he will likely work through the complexities facing Lebanon both at home and abroad. He is neither seen as a supporter of Hezbollah nor as its opponent. Instead, it appears the general will respond to the influence of the Resistance within Lebanon's political and social arenas, when he acknowledges its importance.



# Minister promotes Makoran coast as Iran's upcoming tourism hotspot

## Arts & Culture Desk

The Makoran Coast, located in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, is set to become a key player in Iran's tourism development, according to the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri. He described it as "one of the best beaches in the world" and an essential platform for the country's growth, IRNA reported.

During a visit to the region accompanying the President Masoud Pezeshkian, Salehi Amiri emphasized the government's focus on improving infrastructure, which he categorized into two levels, "basic infra-

structure such as roads, water, electricity, and gas," and "tourism infrastructure," including hotels and ecotourism for visitor accommodation.

He remarked, "We need to create attractions in this region to draw private investment." Currently, Iran boasts 17,000 accommodation centers, with 2,700 projects underway. "Projects that are over 80% complete will receive financial support to expedite their opening," he noted.

Salehi Amiri pointed out that the interconnection of tourism, security, and accessibility in Sistan and Baluchestan is vital. "This area has the best geographical location along 300 kilometers of coastline,

and there are promising spots for tourism," he stated.

He also highlighted that improving road access to southern villages could attract a large influx of tourists, stating, "This area has the potential to be the best coastal destination in the country."

The minister's remarks come as the government continues its efforts to address the region's challenges while promoting its tourism potential. In a follow-up visit, President Pezeshkian and his cabinet plan to discuss regional issues and inaugurate significant development projects aimed at enhancing the living conditions of locals and boosting economic growth.



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri (2nd L) visits Chabahar Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department in southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan on January 9, 2025.  
 ● CHTN

# Rise of Simorgh as a symbol of Iranian cinema



## Arts & Culture Desk

In the public view, Simorgh (phoenix) is recognized as a symbol of Iranian cinema. This mythical bird is intimately linked with the most significant cultural and artistic event in Iran, and winning the Crystal Simorgh statue at the Fajr Film Festival has become a dream for many artists. But how did the Simorgh become the most important emblem of the country's cinema?

The seventh Fajr Film Festival in 1989 marked a momentous turning point when Iranian cinema introduced its most important symbol. The golden plaque, awarded to winners until the 6th edition of the festival, was suddenly replaced by the "Simorgh," establishing this name as a mark of the highest cinematic honor in the country. This report explores the journey of the Simorgh from 1988 to the present.

The Simorgh is a mythical and legendary bird in Iranian culture and one of the significant symbols of Persian literature. It prominently features in celebrated stories such as 'Manteq-

ot-Tayr' by Persian poet Attar and 'Shahnameh' of Ferdowsi. Plus, there are prominent representations of this bird in the 'Avesta', stone inscriptions, and texts from the Sassanian era. In 'Shahnameh', the Simorgh symbolizes wisdom and possesses all the answers to life's questions. Its presence in this epic begins with the birth of "Zal," whose father, "Sam," abandons him in the desert due to his albinism. The Simorgh, out of divine compassion, takes Zal to its nest and raises him.

Another significant appearance of the Simorgh in 'Shahnameh' occurs during the battle between "Rostam" and the invulnerable "Esfandiar." Unable to defeat Esfandiar, Rostam seeks the Simorgh's help, and ultimately, through the guidance it provides, he successfully brings Esfandiar down.

In Attar's allegorical and universal narrative, 'Manteq-ot-Tayr,' a group of birds, led by the hoopoe, embark on a journey to reach the Simorgh. Each bird symbolizes a specific group of humans, and the hardships of the journey gradually

deter them from their initial desire. Ultimately, only thirty birds reach Mount Qaf, discovering that the Simorgh is, in fact, themselves.

In contemporary society, the Simorgh is recognized as the emblem of Iranian cinema, deeply intertwined with the nation's most significant cultural and artistic event. Winning the crystal Simorgh statue at the Fajr Film Festival has become an aspiration for many artists.

Interestingly, during the first six editions of the Fajr Film Festival, there was no crystal Simorgh; instead, winners received a golden statue. At that time, the Farabi Cinema Foundation was responsible for organizing the festival, and the cinema officials sought a unique and authentic symbol for the event. Ebrahim Haqiqi, a prominent graphic designer, was chosen to design this award.

Haqiqi chose the legendary Simorgh after studying ancient symbols and artifacts. He found traces of this bird in various forms of Iranian art, such as tile work, miniature

painting, carpets, gilding, and wood carving. Before reaching the final design, he reviewed numerous sketches and drafts. Haqiqi believes that the crystal Simorgh is the most famous symbol he has ever designed. Unlike many renowned film awards worldwide, which are represented in three-dimensional forms, the Simorgh's design is two-dimensional, etched onto a crystal base. Haqiqi explains this choice by stating, "The Simorgh is not just a bird or a volume; it is a concept in literature and mysticism, representing transcendence and light. Therefore, nothing but crystal could symbolize it."

In another interview, Haqiqi mentions, "In designing the Simorgh for the Fajr Film Festival, I aimed for this symbol to break away from the regular geometric structures. Most of our symbols are geometrically structured due to visual training and education in art schools, so I intentionally distanced myself from this method to evoke our miniature painting."

This intelligent choice not only differentiates the design and structure of this award from those of other festivals but also reflects and embodies the culture, thought, and ancient philosophy of Iran.

At the seventh festival, where the crystal Simorgh was unveiled for the first time, the award had a different appearance than it does today. The base of this crystal statue was made of black stone, possibly symbolizing Mount Qaf and its nest. The design depicted this mythical bird in flight from its nest. Notable figures such as Massoud Jafari Jozani, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Fatemeh Motamed-Arya, Mahmoud Jafari, Roya Nonahali, and Ezzatollah Entezami were among the first recipients of the historic crystal Simorgh award.

The use of stone as the base of the statue made it excessively heavy, making it difficult for one of the veteran winners to carry during the closing ceremony of the seventh festival. Consequently, in the 8th edition of the festival, Haqiqi made changes to the statue's structure, replacing the stone base with a hollow bronze one while retaining the two-dimensional design of the Simorgh in its crystal form.

The structure of the crystal Simorgh remained unchanged in the 9th festival, but by the 10th edition, the statue was lightened again, with the base color changing from gold to black. The shape and treatment of the crystal Simorgh over the years largely reflect personal tastes, as minor modifications did not significantly alter its visual quality.

For a long time, the general shape of the Simorgh statue remained constant, although certain details would change periodically. For instance, the geometric shape of the crystal body would shift from angular lines to curves and revert to its previous form after several editions. The base color would also fluctuate between gold and black over various periods. However, during the 14th edition, another change occurred in the statue's design. The two-dimensional form of the crystal Simorgh was represented with golden lines in harmony with the base color.

Another significant change in the appearance of this award coincided with the 25th edition of the event in 2006.

At the 25th festival, the film 'Persian Carpet,' produced by Reza Mirkarimi, was screened out of competition. This work involved the contributions of notable filmmakers such as Abbas Kiarostami, Majid Majidi, Kamal Tabrizi, Bahman Farmanara, Dariush Mehrjui, Beh-

rouz Afkhami, Bahram Bayzai, Mohammad-Reza Honarmand, and Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami.

During this festival, 'Persian Carpet' won the award for Best Film from the National Perspective. Interestingly, for the first time in this edition, the Simorgh statue was awarded in a three-dimensional form. This statue weighed 550 grams and was made of gold, awarded to Mirkarimi, the producer of 'Persian Carpet.' However, the awards in other categories continued to be the crystal statue.

The practice of awarding the Best Film from the National Perspective with a three-dimensional golden Simorgh continued for several editions. However, a significant change in the appearance of the crystal Simorgh occurred during the 31st festival, when Haqiqi designed a different, three-dimensional version. This led to considerable negative reactions, as the final statue resembled other commonly designed birds and no longer embodied the mythical essence of the Simorgh.

As a result, from the following year onward, this statue returned to its former design, and the crystal Simorgh was awarded to the winners once again.

The form of this important award in Iranian cinema became standardized from the 33rd Fajr Film Festival, with the base and main body both made of crystal, more elegant than ever.

Another interesting point is that the crystal Simorgh was manufactured in the Czech Republic until the thirty-eighth festival. However, in 2019, a call was issued for a domestic company to produce the statue according to the specified standards, and since then, this award has been produced in Iran.