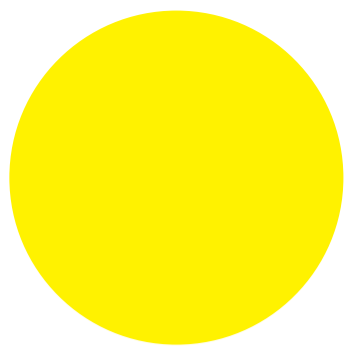


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Iranians excel with 15 more medals **6** >



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## Pezeshkian congratulates pope on birth anniversary of Jesus Christ **7** >

# East Euphrates Crisis: A defining moment for Iran's regional strategy



Gunmen stand on the roof of a building to push away looters from the Najha military housing complex in southeast Damascus on December 17, 2024. **ARIS MESSINIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES**

### Tehran's multi-layered strategy to counter American influence

#### EDITORIAL

The fall of Bashar al-Assad has propelled the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East into a more complex phase. From the perspective of Iran's national security, the consequences of this development extend far beyond Syria's geography. One of the key epicenters of these changes will be the area east of the Euphrates, which, due to the presence of US forces, Kurdish groups, and plentiful natural resources, is set to become a crucial factor in the future direction of developments in Syria and the wider region.

#### US push to bolster its presence east of Euphrates

The region east of the Euphrates, currently under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) led by the People's Defense Units (YPG), also called People's Protection Units, holds strategic importance both geographically and economically. This area, which encompasses a significant portion of Syria's oil and gas resources, serves as an economic and military lever for extraregional actors, especially the United States and its allies. In the post-Assad scenario, the extensive

US military presence in this region is likely not only to continue but also to expand.

Since 2019, under the pretext of preventing the resurgence of Daesh and maintaining control over Syria's energy resources, the US has been sending equipment and establishing multiple military bases in the east of the Euphrates. Reports indicate that amidst escalating tensions, the US has been increasing the flow of forces and military equipment to its bases in Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor, solidifying its presence in the region. Washington's goal is to create a quasi-state structure and strengthen the role of proxy forces to obstruct Iran's access to the Mediterranean.

#### Implications of fall of Damascus on US activities

Before the fall of the Syrian government, the US presence east of the Euphrates signified control over Syria's economic resources and the prevention of funding for resistance forces. This strategy, implemented through economic sanctions and obstructing Syria's reconstruction, effectively placed the economic and security burden of the Syrian crisis on Iran and other supporters of the resistance axis. **Page 7** >

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# NPC: Sustainability of petrochemical industry hinges on innovation



MOJTABA MOHSENI/SHANA

## Economy Desk

The managing director of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) believes that the sustainability of the petrochemical industry depends on innovation, describing it as a significant market for domestic manufacturers. Speaking on Sunday, December 22, at the opening ceremony of the "PetroFan 1403" conference, Hassan Abbaszadeh noted that the petrochemical industry is a critical link in the oil value chain, deeply intertwined with technology. "It is impossible to engage in this industry's processes without access to the necessary technology," he said. Abbaszadeh explained that Iran's petrochemical industry has reached middle age, adding, "Innovation is essential for our survival in this field. Many of the processes in the petrochemical industry are outdated and need to be modernized. We must focus on upgrading and improving these processes."

Referring to the industry's trade dynamics, Abbaszadeh stated, "The petrochemical industry exports approximately \$15 billion worth of products annually, while importing goods and equipment costing around \$2 billion. Of this, \$700 million is spent by subsidiaries of the Persian Gulf Holding Company, presenting a significant opportunity for domestic production." The NPC head went on to say that, "Additionally, around \$2 billion worth of petrochemical products not currently produced in the country are imported each year. A major reason for this is the lack of technical knowledge for producing these products." To address this issue, the NPC has introduced 20 value chain project packages. "These projects have been provided to petrochemical companies and investors and are underway. Some technical knowledge is being introduced for the first time, but there is still more work to be done," Abbaszadeh said.

Highlighting the importance of localization in the petrochemical industry, the official noted, "To achieve this, the company has established a new management department focused on research, technology, and domestic production. This department identifies capable new technology-based firms (NTBFs) and connects them with petrochemical firms to reduce foreign currency outflow and strengthen local capabilities." Abbaszadeh also stressed the importance of collaboration among petrochemical holdings. "We aim to increase cohesion and interaction among petrochemical holdings to optimize synergies within the industry," he added.

## Developing completing value chain

Abbaszadeh also on Saturday, December 1, underscored the role of the petrochemical industry in the country's economic and industrial development, announcing plans for the second phase of the Petrochemical Special



Economic Zone, saying "This initiative aims to ensure balanced growth while completing the value chain." Speaking at the induction ceremony of the Petrochemical Special Economic Zone Organization CEO, Abbaszadeh described the petrochemical industry as a key driver of value creation and economic development. "In line with the Leader's directive to prevent raw material exports and complete the value chain, the industry is leveraging all available capacities for balanced growth," he said. He noted that Iran's petrochemical production capacity has

reached nearly 100 million tons. "With development programs outlined in the Seventh Development Plan (2024-28), we aim to achieve a 30-million-ton increase, raising total capacity to 131 million tons," the NPC head added. Abbaszadeh highlighted the region's strategic importance, stating, "Iran's petrochemical industry is a regional leader, and Mahshahr serves as a critical hub, producing essential and practical products."

## Domestic consumption of Mahshahr products

"Most products produced by the Petrochemical Special Economic Zone are used domestically," Abbaszadeh said, noting that a diverse range of feedstocks enables petrochemical plants to meet the country's needs. He also pointed to the importance of projects such as NGL 3100, which will soon be operational, emphasizing its pivotal role in supplying feedstock to the Petro-

chemical Special Economic Zone. The NPC managing director stressed the importance of supporting the local community, maintaining safety and security in the area, enhancing industrial and social infrastructure, and effective measures for the second phase of the region's development. Abbaszadeh called for greater private sector investment in the petrochemical industry. "We must create favorable conditions for attracting investors and avoid imposing unnecessary restrictions," he said. He also highlighted the development potential of the second phase of the Petrochemical Special Economic Zone, noting its capacity to boost the local economy and create jobs. "The Petrochemical Special Economic Zone is ready to collaborate with organizations and government bodies. We must use all available capacities to serve the honorable people of the region," Abbaszadeh stated.

## Iran in dire need of all-inclusive insights to achieve 30m-ton hike in petchem output

By Reza Abesh Ahmadi  
Staff writer

Iran's petrochemical industry stands as a cornerstone of the national economy, with a production capacity of nearly 100 million tons annually. Leveraging vast reserves of natural gas and oil, the country has developed an extensive network of production facilities, pipelines, and export terminals. Major hubs like Mahshahr and Assaluyeh are pivotal in producing key petrochemical products, catering to domestic demands and international markets. However, despite its potential, the industry faces challenges, including outdated infrastructure, international sanctions, and gaps in adopting cutting-edge technology. In recent years, the industry has been strained by limited access to advanced machinery and materials due to trade restrictions. Many facilities rely on aging equipment, leading to inefficiencies and higher production costs. Furthermore, global shifts toward sustainability have intensified the need for Iran to align its petrochemical operations with environmental standards to maintain its competitive edge. To address these challenges, Iran needs to initiate measures to modernize its facilities, diversify its product portfolio, and invest



in research and development. Despite these hurdles, Iran remains a regional leader in petrochemicals. The country's Seventh Development Plan (2024-28) outlines ambitious targets, including a 30-million-ton increase in production capacity, raising the total to 131 million tons. Achieving this goal requires adopting innovative technologies and fostering international partnerships to overcome technical and operational challenges.

## Rising energy demand, industry pressures

With global energy consumption projected to rise by up to 60% in the next 30 years, Iran's petrochemical sector must address escalating demand. Traditional

energy sources are increasingly under pressure, compelling scientists and industry leaders to explore new methods to enhance production efficiency. The sector's future hinges on integrating sustainable practices and groundbreaking technologies to ensure environmentally friendly operations and products.

## Role of nanotechnology in transformation

Nanotechnology has emerged as a game-changing tool in addressing these challenges. By enabling precise manipulation of materials at the molecular level, nanotechnology has opened doors to new possibilities in refining and production. Nanomaterials (NMs), with their superior physical, thermal,



MOJTABA MOHSENI/SHANA

and chemical properties, are driving innovations across the petrochemical industry. From improving catalytic efficiency to enhancing corrosion resistance, these materials are reshaping the sector.

## Catalysts: Enhancing reaction efficiency

Catalysts are vital in refining processes, accelerating chemical reactions without being consumed. Nanomaterial-based catalysts, characterized by their high surface area and porosity, significantly boost reaction efficiency and reduce energy consumption. These advancements play a crucial role in optimizing the conversion processes in refineries, ensuring higher yields with minimal waste.

## Addressing industry challenges with nanomaterials

Iran's petrochemical industry has faced several operational challenges, including pipeline corrosion, and inefficiencies in reaction processes due to ordinary materials. Nanotechnology provides innovative solutions, such as nanomaterial-based corrosion inhibitors and gas sensors. These materials offer superior durability, resistance, and precision, addressing long-standing issues and enhancing operational safety and reliability.

## Broad applications of nanotechnology

The integration of nanotechnology spans the entire value chain of the petroleum industry. From

enhancing drilling fluid performance to improving oil recovery methods and refining processes, nanomaterials have proven invaluable. Despite these advancements, comprehensive research into the combined applications of nanomaterials remains limited, highlighting the need for focused studies to unlock their full potential.

## Future research and development

A detailed exploration of nanomaterial synthesis techniques and their applications in petrochemical operations is essential for driving progress. Such research will not only improve exploration and recovery efficiency but also offer insights into managing extreme conditions, ensuring the industry's sustainability and growth.

## Building a comprehensive vision

Iran's petrochemical sector stands at a critical juncture. While challenges persist, the industry has the potential to achieve significant growth through modernization, technology adoption, and international collaboration. By embracing advancements such as nanotechnology, Iran can secure its position as a leading producer in the region, fulfilling its ambitious production goals while aligning with global sustainability trends.

# Kuhpayeh neighborhood; home to breathtaking waterfalls, valleys

## Iranica Desk

Kerman and its surrounding areas are often perceived by tourism enthusiasts as dry and warm regions with few significant natural attractions. While much of the province is desert, there are sections that feature lush pastures and mountains, making them some of the best sightseeing spots in the area. The Kuhpayeh neighborhood consists of several mountainous villages that serve as popular summer retreats for both residents and tourists of Kerman. When visiting the historical sites of Kerman, you can also take some time to enjoy the beautiful nature in Kuhpayeh, located approximately 35 kilometers northeast of the city.

The villages in this neighborhood are clustered in a mountainous area, with only a few situated farther from the main settlements. Access to all the villages is possible by private vehicle via a road that is only closed during heavy rainfall. The natural attractions scattered throughout these villages are a major draw, enticing residents of Kerman and those from the warmer parts of the province to enjoy the cool weather and lush landscapes.

The Kuhpayeh neighborhood features rivers, bubbling springs, flowing waterfalls, and tall mountains, contributing to a significant temperature difference between these areas and other cities in Kerman Province. Agriculture and horticulture thrive in Kuhpayeh, and from the first days of spring, the atmosphere in the gardens of this region is stunning.

Surrounding each of these villages are valleys that attract the attention of professional climbers and trekkers. For canyoning in these areas, it is advisable to seek assistance from local guides familiar with the routes. Unfortunately, in the past decade, this region has experienced unfortunate incidents involving climbing and trekking groups unfamiliar with the area.

The mountains overlooking Kuhpayeh neighborhood are located along the western edge of the Lut Desert. These mountains separate the desert climate of Kerman from the villages of Kuhpayeh. The highest peak in these mountains rises over 4,200 meters and is situated in the Polvar heights. In the villages, there are facilities such as grocery stores and mosques. Among the most famous local products of this region are citrus fruits, vegetables, walnuts, and honey.

To visit some of these attractions, a certain level of physical fitness is required, although access to some of the sights isn't too difficult. Each village in this area has a high potential for rural tourism and exploration of local areas, attracting those interested in getting to know the local culture of the people of Kerman. Below, we will introduce the most famous attractions in Kuhpayeh neighborhood.



## Shangestan Valley

Shangestan Valley is one of the scenic spots in the Kuhpayeh neighborhood, near Vameqabad village. It is situated along the Derakhtangan River. The distance between this river and Gohar Spring marks the location of Shangestan Valley. The valley, which is approximately five kilometers long, sits at about 2,200 meters above sea level, resulting in a

cool mountainous climate. A variety of plant and animal species inhabit Shangestan Valley. During your trek through the valley, you will encounter beautiful landscapes and rushing waterfalls, the most famous of which is Gohar Waterfall. To reach the valley, you should follow the river from Vameqabad village. To visit the waterfalls, you need to trek for about 1.5 to 2 hours.



## Darb-e Anarestan village

Darb-e Anarestan village is one of the central villages in the Kuhpayeh neighborhood and is located a short distance from Simk Village. Access to this village is via a secondary road leading to Simk, with the entrance situated before Deh-e Lulu Village. Attractions in Darb-e Anarestan include flowing rivers, bubbling springs, and qanats (ancient under-

ground aqueducts). During spring and summer, the slopes surrounding the village are filled with aromatic and medicinal plants, while the adjacent mountain serves as the main habitat for various aromatic species in the area. Exploring the natural surroundings of Darb-e Anarestan and hiking in the nearby heights are particularly appealing to visitors.

## Lulu village

Lulu village is another prominent village in the region, often regarded by tourists as the main village of the Kuhpayeh neighborhood. The area is surrounded by mountains, each offering some of the best climbing

routes in the region. An ancient plane tree in Lulu is one of the village's most important natural attractions. Throughout the village, bubbling springs and flowing rivers contribute to the lush greenery of the region. Many

local accommodations and newly built villas are found in and around Lulu village. This village also provides an excellent opportunity to learn about the culture of the local people and to purchase local handicrafts and souvenirs.



## Foosk Valley

Foosk Valley is considered one of the most beautiful natural attractions in the neighborhood, located near a village of the same name. This valley offers significant opportunities for exploration and trekking; however, a suitable level of physical

fitness and professional trekking gear are necessary to traverse it.

As you move deeper into the valley, you will encounter more challenging sections. The most notable sights in Foosk Valley are the numerous beautiful waterfalls scattered throughout it. There

are about 45 waterfalls, with the shortest one measuring approximately three meters in height. One of the most famous climbing routes in the Kuhpayeh neighborhood is Kafar Kuh (Kafar Mountain), which is adjacent to this valley. The route to access Foosk Valley begins from the nearby village.



## Simk Valley

Simk Valley is one of the beautiful and pristine valleys in the Kuhpayeh neighborhood, featuring numerous natural attractions. This valley is home to 13 waterfalls of varying heights, which are among the most famous

sights around Kerman.

To navigate Simk Valley and ascend and descend its waterfalls, professional trekking and climbing equipment, as well as appropriate physical fitness, are required. The walls of Simk Valley are quite tall,

but the width of the valley does not exceed five meters. Many birds have built nests in the crevices of the valley walls, which can be seen during your trek. Simk Peak, rising over 3,700 meters, is another attraction of this area.



## Best time to travel

The best time to visit the Kuhpayeh neighborhood is in the spring. The villages in this region serve as pleasant retreats, experiencing cold weather and rainfall during the winter. Due to the different climate of this area compared to Kerman and neighboring cities, visiting the neighborhood is

also suitable during the early and late days of summer; however, as autumn begins, the weather in the region starts to cool down.

In spring, the natural beauty of the villages reaches its peak. During this time of year, waterfalls, rivers, and springs are abundant, and aromatic flowers and plants

cover the slopes of the mountains. For hiking in this area, the best time is from late May until the last days of summer. If you plan to visit the villages during your trip to Kerman, it's advisable to avoid the summer season, as enduring the heat of Kerman at this time of year can be quite challenging for tourists.

## Accommodation

Not too long ago, the villages of the Kuhpayeh neighborhood were pristine areas with only orchards, agricultural fields, and rural houses. However, today, there is a wide variety of villas and newly built homes in these areas, with many people

engaging in construction activities. Currently, the appearance of the villages is different from the past, and the number of simple rural houses is more limited than before. When traveling to the villages, if you decide to stay overnight in these areas, you will have the option

to rent various types of villas and rural homes. The garden villas are situated in areas with beautiful views and are fully equipped with amenities for tourists. If you want to save on accommodation costs, consider choosing smaller suites and rural houses.

# 'Trade with Iran is significant to EAEU

## Economy Desk

Iranian Parliament has agreed to the general principles of the free trade deal between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union, which comprise Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. During the public session on December 22, the report of the Economic Commission on the agreement was reviewed, and the representatives endorsed the overall terms of the Free Trade Agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union and its member states.

Leaders of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries will grant Iran an observer status and discuss the joint work of the members and the Islamic Republic within their Free Trade agreement in a meeting to be held in St. Petersburg today.

They are also set to sign a number of documents on forming a unified customs transit system, a common electricity market, and a single market for services that harmonizes financial laws and implements liberalization plans for certain sectors of services.

The meeting comes just a year after the Eurasian bloc signed a fully-fledged agreement with Iran to eliminate customs duties on almost 90% of goods and establish a preferential regime for almost all trade between Iran and Russia.

The Free Trade Agreement between the intergovernmental economic union and its member states, of the one part, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, of the other part was signed on December 25, 2023 on the sidelines of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. The agreement will enter into force after all the necessary procedures are completed and will replace the Interim Agreement, which signed on May 17, 2018 and came into force on October 27, 2019.

The FTA did not come into effect in the territories of the union and Iran. Four out of the five countries party to the deal with Iran have ratified it in their own parliaments, with the final ratification pending in the Iranian Parliament and another country's parliament.

Following the final ratification of this agreement, 87% of the exports to the union have already been exempted from customs duties, and the remaining 13% of exports to these countries will be exempt from these tariffs in the future.

Observer members of the union are Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Cuba.

The bloc was established on Jan. 1, 2015, after it superseded the Eurasian Economic Community that functioned from 2000 to 2014.

Andrei Slepnev, the Minister of Trade for the Eurasian Economic Union, has recently described the agreement reached with the Islamic Republic on the free trade zone significant for the union "because this country is a close neighbor to the south and one of the key countries in the Caspian Sea region."

Slepnev, in an interview with the Izvestia news agency, addressed the importance of the union's relations with Iran and other trade issues:

Iran has made significant achievements in import substitution, developing its own technologies, and resisting the pressures of sanctions, Slepnev said.

In response to the question of whether all countries have ratified the FTA with Iran, he said: "We are actively developing our network of free trade agreements; the ratification of the recent agreement with Iran has now been completed in four member countries of this union".

The Minister of Trade of the EAEU emphasized, "We plan to have an agreement in place by the time the leaders of this union meet in St. Petersburg in late December 2024, and for it to be implemented at the beginning of the following year."

### Shift of trade to Global South

In another part of this conversation, Slepnev stated that by the end of 2024, the share of Global South countries in trade exchanges with the Eurasian Economic Union will be 75 percent, thus the union has completely restructured its priorities.

He noted that the bloc has "shifted its trade priorities from Western countries to Global South countries". According to the trade minister, by 2022, the European Union's share of trade exchanges with the Eurasian Economic Union was over 40 percent, while the share of Global South countries was less than half. "However, today, the share of our European partners has

decreased by about 2.5 times. The share of Global South countries has been steadily growing, and we now predict that by the end of 2024, it will reach 75 percent of our trade turnover. Our transition of trade to the Global South has essentially been completed," he said.

### China, main partner of EAEU

"Today, China is the main partner of this union, and this country accounts for just over one third of our total foreign trade. By the end of 2023, the growth of trade between the parties was very significant, and it is expected that by 2025, the trade growth of the union and this country will reach three percent. Slepnev continued, "95 percent of all settlements with China are conducted in national currencies".

### Plans for trade development

The Minister of Trade of the Eurasian Economic Union stated that a significant increase in the union's trade with other partners, including Turkey, India, the United Arab Emirates, and Brazil, has been observed, and it is expected that trade with Turkey and India will reach 60 billion dollars by the end of 2024.

Slepnev continued, in trade with India, the share of settlements in national currencies has seen substantial growth. We anticipate that by the end

of this year, another record will be achieved in this area, with over 65 percent of settlements conducted in national currencies.

He stated that a free trade agreement with Mongolia is also set to be signed in December, which is expected to increase trade with this country by one and a half to two times. He added that the union also intends to strengthen cooperation with African countries, noting that trade volume with Tunisia is on the rise.

Slepnev emphasized that the Eurasian Economic Union is also prioritizing the digitalization of processes; currently, between 90 to 95 percent of transportation processes in Russia and Belarus are conducted using paperless technologies.

On December 11, the United Arab Emirates and the EAEU successfully concluded negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive economic partnership agreement to enhance bilateral trade in goods between the UAE and the five members of the EAEU bloc.

The UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi and Andrei Slepnev have confirmed the conclusion of negotiations toward an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the UAE and the EAEU.

The agreement reinforces the centrality of foreign trade to the UAE's economic agenda. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement program now boasts six deals in force with a further nine

Slepnev believes that the EAEU actively forms a network of economic partnerships with friendly countries. The Economic Partnership Agreement with the United Arab Emirates is a significant milestone, given the UAE's role as a global hub in



Andrei Slepnev, the Minister of Trade for the Eurasian Economic Union

signed and awaiting implementation.

"With a combined population of some 200 million people and a GDP approaching US\$5 trillion, the EAEU offers a rich seam of opportunity for our private sector, while the UAE and its growing network of global trade partners offers EAEU exporters streamlined access to the competitive, high-growth markets in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and South America. This agreement deepens vital links between the Persian Gulf and Eurasia region, and we look forward to seeing the tangible benefits our deeper ties unfold," Al Zeyoudi said.

the region. The EPA will provide additional boost for mutual trade, which is already showing unprecedented growth, and create systemic basis for cooperative ties," he said.

### Overview of Iran's trade with EAEU member states

The press service of the Eurasian Economic Union previously announced to IRNA that the trade volume between this union and the Islamic Republic of Iran increased by 11 percent in the first nine months of 2024 compared to the same period last year.

The increase in trade volume between Iran and the five



The FTA reached with the Islamic Republic of Iran is important for the EAEU because this country is a key partner at our southern borders and one of the key countries in the North-South corridor.

member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union comes as it is expected that the country will be accepted as an observer member at the summit of the union in January 2025.

Earlier, Dmitry Volvach, Deputy Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, announced on December 4, 2024, that Iran's request for observer membership in the Eurasian Economic Union was approved at the meeting of the deputy prime ministers of the union, a decision that must be confirmed by the leaders of the union.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also stated in his second televised conversation with the public on December 3, 2024, that Iran is set to be announced as an observer member at the Eurasian summit, allowing us to engage with the member countries of this union with low or zero tariffs.

"This situation creates a market



for us where our producers and traders can participate in these markets with low tariffs".

The Free Trade Agreement between the EAEU and its member

states, of the one part, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, of the other part was signed on December 25, 2023 on the sidelines of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council.

The agreement aims to enhance trade relations between Iran and the member states of the EAEU and marks a significant step in economic collaboration, partic-

ularly focusing on non-oil trade. Recent developments underscore Iran's growing economic integration with the EAEU, facilitated by the FTA and the ac-

tive participation of the private sector. Trade figures from Iran's northern provinces, particularly Mazandaran, reveal significant increases in both the volume and value of non-oil exports.

Thanks to the FTA, Iran's trade relations with the EAEU have intensified in recent years. The agreement has led to reduced tariffs, facilitating greater market access for Iranian goods.

The enhanced economic collaboration between Iran and the EAEU provides an opportunity for Tehran to strengthen its non-oil exports and pursue economic diversification, thereby easing the repercussions of Western sanctions.

This deepening relationship, particularly with Moscow, is further reinforced by both countries' involvement in developing the International North-South Transport Corridor (INTSC), which is expected to benefit not only them but also other EAEU members.

## Iran's trade with Eurasia on the rise

### Economy Desk

*Strengthening ties with Eurasian countries to tap into global markets is a top priority for the Pezeshkian administration's foreign policy, which has seen a 2.5-fold increase in exports through careful planning and trade facilitation.*

*Iran entered into a free trade agreement with Eurasia four years ago, resulting in a significant reduction or elimination of tariffs. Consequently, trade with member states has increased by 2.5 times.*

Iran has been a party to a free trade agreement with Eurasia for the past four years, which has resulted in a substantial reduction or elimination of tariffs. Consequently, trade with member states has surged by 2.5 times, according to Head of the Trade Promotion Organization Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi.

Speaking to manufacturers and traders at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, the TPO chief has noted that Eurasia represents Iran's first foray into free trade, with a significant 87% of tariffs being waived. This development is expected to intensify competition, as Iranian traders must adapt to new market realities, while member countries also seek to capitalize on the opportunity to expand their market share in the country.

The Free Trade Agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union and Iran was signed on December 25, 2023, in St. Petersburg, Russia, aiming to reduce or eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers and promote economic and trade interactions. Upon signing the final agreement, 87% of tariff codes for trade between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union will be zeroed out.

The ratification process for this agreement has been completed in the parliaments of Belarus, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan. Armenia and Kazakhstan, as the other two member states of the Eurasian Union must also go through the legal ratification process for the Free Trade Agreement to take effect.

The goal of forming this union is to develop the market and facilitate trade, create a uni-

fied economic space, establish a single market for member states, reduce prices by lowering transportation costs for raw materials, promote fair competition in the common market, and implement joint policies in agriculture, energy, technology, transportation, and other areas.

### Participation in Eurasian Economic Union's annual meeting

The annual meeting of the Eurasian Economic Union was held in Yerevan, Armenia, on September 30 and October 1, with a high-ranking delegation from Iran, comprising government and private sector representatives, in attendance. On the sidelines of the meeting, a trade dialogue between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union was held, featuring roundtable discussions on topics such as developing trade and economic cooperation, strengthening industrial cooperation in the agricultural, industrial, transportation, and financial sectors, as well as reviewing various issues.

Iranian Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Aref emphasized at

the Eurasian Economic Union's prime ministers' meeting that his country aims to bolster and broaden its ties with member states, particularly through bilateral and multilateral engagement. "We are convinced that sustainable economic growth can only be achieved by fostering robust cooperation among regional nations, and forums like the Eurasian Economic Union serve as a vital catalyst for realizing this objective."

He added that Iran is ready to play a more active role in the union, given its internal capacities, including a potential trade capacity of over \$80 billion with union members, rich oil and gas resources, significant transit advantages, and notable technical and engineering capabilities.

The vice-president emphasized the importance of the International North-South Transport Corridor as one of the key areas of cooperation between Iran and Eurasian Economic Union members, and the creation of a valuable logistical link between Eurasia and vast markets. He announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to pro-

vide special facilities to union member countries for establishing trade logistics centers in the northern and southern ports.

In addition to the vice-president's remarks, Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Mohammad Atabak elaborated on the key issues, challenges, and solutions for strengthening economic and trade ties with Armenia, including the removal of banking guarantees for technical and engineering services, the elimination of currency commitments for exporters, and the vast potential for Iran's presence in technical and engineering fields, infrastructure projects, and other economic sectors. He also highlighted the importance of removing trade barriers through the efforts of the Trade Development Organization.

According to a report by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, Iran's exports to Eurasian Economic Union member countries have seen a significant 16% increase in the first five months of this year, compared to the same period last year. The volume of exports

to these countries has reached 2.2 million tons, representing a 35% growth compared to the same period last year.

The report also reveals that the value of exports to the five Eurasian Economic Union member countries during this period has totaled \$748 million, marking a 16% increase compared to the same period last year. Notably, Kyrgyzstan has experienced the highest growth in exports.

### Free trade for 87% of goods among member states

Deputy for International Business Promotion at the TPO, Mohammad Sadeq Qanadzadeh, shed light on the development of Iran's trade relations with Eurasian Economic Union member states. He highlighted that the implementation of trade agreements will lead to 87% of goods traded among Eurasian Economic Union member states being exempt from tariffs, with 87% of traded goods benefiting from free trade.

In an interview with IRNA, Qanadzadeh revealed that the free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Econom-

ic Union has been inked and is currently under review in the Iranian parliament, with a presentation to the open session expected soon. He noted that the approval process for this agreement has been finalized in the parliaments of Belarus, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan, and Iran is now awaiting its approval in the parliament.

Qanadzadeh underscored that developing Iran's relations with Eurasian Economic Union member states hinges on the provision of infrastructure. "To boost trade, we need to establish a robust infrastructure in transportation and logistics, while also tackling the challenges faced by exporters and traders in the financial and monetary sectors, as well as other areas," he emphasized.

The TPO official stressed that Iran must seize the Eurasian opportunity to expand its global market presence, thereby driving trade growth. The Islamic Republic of Iran's top priority is to strengthen trade ties with its neighbors, particularly Armenia, as a stepping stone for enhancing the volume of trade and economic relations between the two countries.



# Bagheri tipped to showcase coaching credentials on Persepolis bench



## Sports Desk

Persepolis's interim coach Karim Bagheri has been backed by high-profile figures in Iranian football for a permanent role on the Reds' bench.

The former Iranian international midfielder was given the caretaker job for the upcoming two fixtures in the Persian Gulf Pro League, after ex-Spanish head coach Juan Carlos Garrido parted ways with the club by mutual consent, following a 3-1 home loss to Mes Rafsanjan on Sunday.

A fourth defeat in six league outings left the defending champion in the fourth place of the Iranian top-flight table with 23 points – five points

adrift of top two Tractor and Sepahan and one behind Foolad Khuzestan. Persepolis will take on Khaybar at home on Friday and then plays away to bottom-side Havadar next Wednesday before heading into the mid-season break.

The club hierarchy has reportedly begun seeking a new foreign coach, with numerous names popping up in the Iranian media in recent days to replace Garrido before Persepolis resumes league action against Zob Ahan on January 21.

Widely regarded as one of the finest players of his generation, 50-year-old Bagheri has served as an assistant coach during Persepolis's domestic dominance over the past decade, working under Ali Daei, Branko Ivankovic, Gabriel Calderon, Yahya

Golmohammadi, Osmar Loss Vieira, and, most recently, Garrido.

However, Bagheri, the club captain in the 2000s, has repeatedly insisted over the years that he has no intention of being the number one in the Tehran Reds' dugout, though some retired players believe he will have to seize the opportunity in the upcoming double-header to justify an extended tenure.

Persepolis legend Ali Parvin, who coached Bagheri in Persepolis and the national team, said in an interview on Tuesday that he will try to convince him to stay on as the head coach.

"I think he will be the best fit for the job if his team wins the next two games," Parvin said.

"I will surely persuade him to continue as the manager. That's how I

became the Persepolis head coach – starting with the interim role for a couple of matches," said Parvin, adding that Bagheri has "a decent group of players at his disposal" to succeed. Meanwhile, Khodadad Azizi, who formed a deadly trio with Daei and Bagheri in Team Melli in the late 90s, said he was thrilled to see his former international teammate given the job, though he believes Bagheri deserves a long-time contract.

"I think Persepolis should offer Karim a deal until the end of the next season. In my eyes, he is the all-time greatest player in Iranian football. He has worked as an assistant coach at the club for years and now deserves a shot at the managerial role. I truly wish him the best of success at the job," Azizi said.

## Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships: Iranians excel with 15 more medals

### Sports Desk

The Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships continued with 15 more medals, including triple golds, for the Iranians on the penultimate day of the competitions in Doha, Qatar.

Aria Paydar headlined Iran's medal hunt on Tuesday, making a clean sweep of golds in the men's junior 109kg contests.

The Iranian lifted 169kg in his third snatch attempt and then registered 211kg in the clean & jerk discipline to finish on 380kg in the total standings.

Joining Paydar on the podium was fellow-Iranian Hassan Emadi, who tallied a 164-195-359 record to collect the snatch and C&J bronzes,

before settling for the total silver.

There were further medals for the Iranian boys in the men's 102kg event, where Alireza Nassiri bagged three silvers with a 171-218-389 result, while Abolfazl Zare' won three bronze medals, courtesy of a 172-194-366 finish.

In the women's draw, Kizhan Maghsoudi added three silver medals to Iran's haul.

Representing the country in the junior 87kg class, the Iranian girl raised 94kg above her head in the snatch contest, before overcoming the 115kg weight in the C&J event for an overall 209kg tally.

Tuesday's results took Iran's haul to a remarkable 45 medals, including 10 golds, in the Qatari capital.



● IWFFIR

## Gakpo hopes Salah will extend Liverpool stay



● HARRY MURPHY/GETTY IMAGES

**PA MEDIA** – Cody Gakpo is hopeful that his Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah will extend his stay at Anfield. The 32-year-old Egypt forward is out of contract at the end of the season and a new deal is yet to be agreed.

Salah has been in sensational form this season and the two goals he scored against Tottenham on Sunday took him above Billy Liddell into fourth place on Liverpool's list of all-time leading goalscorers.

"It's very special what we are all witnessing," Gakpo told the club's website. "The amount of goals he scores but the assists he gives as well, the way he plays the game, how he puts other attacking players or midfielders like myself in a position to score and to be dangerous is from a high level.

"I hope for us and for him that he can continue doing that for a long time. We are very lucky to have him and proud that we can be his teammate[s] and try to make him better. And he is trying to make us better as well."

Gakpo has also been a key man in Liverpool's surge to the top of the Premier League table, scoring nine goals, including seven in his past 12 games in all competitions. The Dutch international joined Liverpool two

years ago after stellar performances at the World Cup, and he expressed his hope to stay at the club for "many more years".

Gakpo said: "I enjoy every minute I'm here. It has been a fantastic two years for myself. A lot of things happened obviously – a lot of good moments, some less good moments – but a lot of things that I've learned. I'm very happy to be here at the club, hopefully for many more years. I think now we are in a good place as a team and I'm very happy that I can contribute as well."

Boxing Day will bring an Anfield reunion for Gakpo with the Leicester City manager, Ruud van Nistelrooy, with whom he worked at PSV Eindhoven. Having begun his tenure with victory over West Ham, Van Nistelrooy has been quickly brought down to earth by heavy back-to-back defeats against Newcastle and Wolves.

"He was the striker coach for me when I was in the first team a little bit and also when I was in the academy," Gakpo said of Van Nistelrooy. "I learned a lot from him and I'm very grateful for all the lessons. He was also my head coach in the last half-season I was at PSV, so very grateful for all the lessons he taught me and it was an honour to get all those teachings from him."

# Pezeshkian congratulates pope on birth anniversary of Jesus Christ

President meets with families of Iranian Christian martyrs



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd R) meets with the families of two Iranian Christian martyrs on the Christmas Eve in Tehran, Iran on December 24, 2024. [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)

## International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in a message to Pope Francis on Wednesday extended his congratulations on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ (PBUH). "Commemorating this significant event serves as a spiritual foundation for recalling divine commandments and the teachings of all prophets aimed at achieving justice, peace and freedom," Pezeshkian was quoted as saying by IRNA. As the New Year approaches, Pezeshkian expressed hope for effective actions toward peace, security, and freedom for oppressed nations, particularly the Palestinian people. In his Christmas address on Wednes-

day, Pope Francis condemned the "extremely grave" humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, where more than 45,300 Palestinians have been killed in more than 14 months of Israeli aggression.

The leader of the Catholic Church further urged the delivery of aid "to the people worn out by hunger and by war" in Gaza, as well as the release of Israeli captives held in the territory. On Christmas Eve, the Iranian president also met with the families of two Christian soldiers who fell during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s to honor their sacrifices and express gratitude for their steadfastness.

Pezeshkian praised the two martyrs who defended their homeland along with their countrymen and "brought

pride and honor for Iran" through their resilience and determination.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also extended Christmas and New Year greetings to Christians around the globe, including "fellow Christian compatriots" in Iran, emphasizing that the occasion served as a reminder of Jesus Christ's teachings of justice, peace and love.

"Merry Christmas and happy New Year to all Christians across the world, and to our fellow Christian compatriots in Iran," Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said in a post on his X account on Wednesday.

"Christmas is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the lofty teachings of Prophet Jesus Christ calling for justice, peace, love and compassion," Baghaei added.

## Iranian FM: 'Too early' to predict Syria's future

### International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said it was "too early" to make any predictions for Syria's future as there were a multitude of developments in the Arab country following the ouster of former president Bashar al-Assad's government. "I think it's too early to make judgments now, both for us and for others who think that they have achieved victories there," Araghchi told Iranian TV late Tuesday.

He pointed out that numerous factors would shape Syria's "highly uncertain" future. Militants, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, took control of Damascus on December 8 and declared an end to Assad's rule in a surprise offensive that was launched from their stronghold in northwestern Syria, reaching the capital in less than two weeks.

The HTS militant group, supported by the US and its regional allies, has promised to form an inclusive government but the United Nations says the situation remains "fluid."

Araghchi's remarks came a day after Fatemeh Mohajerani, the Iranian government spokeswoman, stressed the importance of a Syrian government based on the popular vote of its citizens, describing it as a key concern for Iran.

Another critical concern, she noted, was preventing the rise and expansion of terrorism, as it significantly would impact both



Syria and the entire region. Syria's stability and future are threatened by various factors, including Israel's occupation of the Syrian territory and the presence of many other militant groups. Meanwhile, Syria's newly appointed Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shibani warned Iran Tuesday over "spreading chaos in Syria" and urged Tehran to "respect the will of the Syrian people and the country's sovereignty."

During a weekly press briefing in Tehran on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaee emphasized the Islamic Republic's unwavering commitment to preserve Syria's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He asserted that the Syrian people hold the exclusive right to decide their fate free from foreign interference. Iran helped former Syrian government to eradicate terrorist groups in the country during 13-year of foreign-backed conflict in the country.

However, following the ouster of Assad, Iran pulled out its military advisors from the country.

## At least 32 survive Azerbaijan Airlines plane crash

An Azerbaijani airliner with 67 people onboard crashed Wednesday near the Kazakhstani city of Aktau, leaving at least 32 survivors, according to officials. More than 30 people may be dead.

The plane was en route from the Azerbaijani capital of Baku to the Russian city of Grozny in the North Caucasus.

Kazakhstan's Emergency Ministry said in a Telegram statement that those on board included five crew. A total of 29 survivors, including two children, have been hospitalized, the ministry told Russia's state news agency, RIA Novosti. The Embraer 190 aircraft made an emergency landing 3 km from the city, Azerbai-

jan Airlines said earlier.

Kazakhstan's Emergency Ministry initially said 25 people survived the crash, later revising that number to 27, 28, and then 29 as the search and rescue operation continued at the site of the crash, bringing the supposed death toll down.

The Prosecutor General's Office in Azerbaijan later reported that at least 32 people survived the crash, adding that the number wasn't final. Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that some of them were in critical condition.

The number of survivors could mean that over 30 people may be dead.

According to Kazakhstani officials, those aboard the



Emergency specialists work at the crash site of an Azerbaijan Airlines passenger jet near the western Kazakh city of Aktau on December 25, 2024. [ISSA TAZHENBAYEV/AFP](https://www.issa.tazhenbayev.afp)

plane included 42 Azerbaijani citizens, 16 Russian nationals, six Kazakhstani and three Kyrgyzstani citizens, it said.

RIA Novosti quoted Russia's civil aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, as saying that preliminary information showed that the pilot had chosen to

divert to Kazakhstan's Aktau after a bird strike on the aircraft led to "an emergency situation on board".

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian in a message to his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev expressed his condolences to the president and the people of Azerbaijan.

## Iran condemns Israel's 'brazen admission' of assassinating Hamas ex-leader

### International Desk

Iran on Tuesday denounced Israel's "brazen admission" of having killed former Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran earlier this year, accusing the regime of having carried out a "heinous crime" and defending its missile-strike response.

"This brazen admission marks the first time the Israeli regime has openly confessed to its responsibility for this heinous crime," said Iran's ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani in a letter addressed to the UN secre-

tary-general.

On Monday, Israel's defense minister Israel Katz acknowledged the regime was responsible for the killing, the first time an official admission had been made.

Haniyeh, who was seen as leading Hamas's negotiation efforts for a cease-fire in Gaza, was assassinated in a guesthouse in Tehran on July 31.

Until Monday, Israel had never admitted to killing Haniyeh, but Iran and Hamas had attributed the Hamas political leader's death to the nation.

Iravani said that the regime of

Israel remains the most serious threat to regional and international peace and security.

He urged the UN Security Council to end the impunity of a regime that flagrantly defies international law and destabilizes the region. The Iranian envoy also warned that continued silence of the council would only embolden regime to commit more atrocious crimes.

"It also reaffirms the legitimacy and legality of Iran's defensive response on 1 October 2024," the Iranian diplomat said.

In October, Iran said it fired 200 missiles at Israel, a response to

the assassination of Haniyeh in Tehran.

"It also reaffirms the legitimacy and legality of Iran's defensive response on 1 October 2024, as well as Iran's consistent position that the occupying and terrorist regime of Israel remains the most serious threat to regional and international peace and security."

On September 27, Israel also killed Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah in a Beirut bombing, which was followed by the killing of Haniyeh's successor Yahya Sinwar on October 16 in Gaza.

## East Euphrates crisis:

### Kurdish-US cooperation in East Euphrates

**Page 1 >** Kurdish forces in the east of the Euphrates, particularly the YPG, serve as a key partner for the US in the region. Backed by American intelligence, weapons, and logistics, these forces aim to solidify their governance in the region through the establishment of quasi-state structures. This development poses direct implications for the security of Iran's borders.

### Border threats to Iran: Scenario of a second Kurdistan

The experience of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region has shown that the empowerment of Kurdish groups in the region is closely linked to similar movements in Iran's border areas. Strengthening the Kurds east of the Euphrates could incite ethnic tensions within Iran. Consequently, Iran faces a multilayered threat: increased military activity along

its western borders on the one hand, and heightened ethnic and separatist sentiments within its borders on the other.

### Turkey's role in East Euphrates developments

The fall of Assad's government will also activate Turkey as a key player in the developments east of the Euphrates. Ankara, viewing the Kurdish presence in northern Syria as an existential threat, is likely to launch ad-

ditional military operations in the region. Although Turkey's policies may appear aligned with US interests on the surface, deep-seated conflicts between these two actors could add further complexity to the regional dynamics.

### Iran's strategy to manage crisis

Under these circumstances, Iran must adopt a multifaceted strategy to counter the expan-

sion of US influence east of the Euphrates. Iran's priority will be to strengthen local proxy forces and establish security networks in eastern Syria. Leveraging the capacities of Arab tribes and local communities dissatisfied with the US presence and the SDF's activities in these areas could form part of this strategy. Additionally, Russia, which shares common interests with Iran in curbing US influence, may continue some level of in-

telligence and military cooperation in Syria during the post-Assad era.

Ultimately, the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government will present a formidable challenge for the resistance axis, particularly Iran. The east of the Euphrates will emerge as the focal point of regional developments, and Iran must harness all its geopolitical and security tools to turn this crisis into an opportunity to reinvigorate its presence in Syria.

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# Portraits that speak volumes

## What drew thousands to 'Eye to Eye' exhibition?

The 'Eye to Eye: Portrait in Modern and Contemporary Art' exhibition is showcasing a selection of portraits from Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art's collection, with a research-oriented and psychoanalytic approach to portraiture in the modern world, examining the evolution of this art form through 120 works by renowned Iranian and international artists. You may have also heard about or seen videos of the long lines of visitors on Amirabad Street in Tehran, where the exhibition is being held at the museum. The museum officials describe the reception as unprecedented, saying that no exhibition at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art has ever received such a huge turnout; although over 10,000 people visited the 'Five Treasures' exhibition during Nowruz of two years ago, the response to the 'Eye to Eye' exhibition has been unprecedented in the museum's history. The exhibition opened on October 6 and was initially scheduled to run until December 20, but due to its immense popularity, it has been extended until January 12.



### Power of social media

However, the story of this sudden popularity, which unfolded in the final weeks of the exhibition (before its extension), began with a viral video of the long line in front of the museum, which sparked curiosity and brought enthusiasts together. Before that, many visitors had posted photos of their visit to the exhibition on social media, and as the viral news spread, many people came to the museum out of curiosity. The exhibition was so popular that even Persian-language networks reported on the event, which further increased the number of visi-

tors, and the exhibition was extended for another week. In the meantime, hearing the experience of visiting the valuable treasures of the museum's collection was not without its charm. We spoke with some visitors to the exhibition about their experience. Ms. Saadi, a 65-year-old retiree who seriously follows art exhibitions, said, "I've always been interested in such exhibitions, and I've contacted the museum several times to ask when they will display the treasures. Finally, this exhibition was held, and I said to my-

self, 'This is it!' As someone who loves genuine art, I think seeing the works of great artists always lifts one's spirits, and such an exhibition is a great opportunity to become familiar with art legends." Maryam Tafreshi, another visitor who learned about the exhibition through social media, said, "I think radio and television should report on such artistic events so that everyone knows about them. The main problem is that often people are not aware of such exhibitions, and that's where awareness and advertising play a crucial role. I myself

found out about the exhibition through Instagram and videos, and my friends sent me links, and eventually, I came to the museum to see the artworks." Farzad Yousefi, a 25-year-old student who is passionate about art, said, "Seeing some of these valuable works, such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Lautrec, and Léger, was my dream, and I'm thrilled to have finally seen a collection of the most important works of Iranian and foreign artists in one place. I think those who are interested in art and history should not miss this exhibition, and I recommend that art lovers and painting en-

thusiasts plan to visit this exhibition." He continued, "I also found out about the exhibition through Instagram and Persian-language networks, and it was surprising to me that there was no advertisement for the exhibition in the city, so people who are out and about during the day can see the advertisements and plan to visit the exhibition." The visit of student groups was another interesting aspect of the exhibition. A group of students from a Tehran girls' high school came to the museum as a school trip, making the museum even more crowded than before.

### Exploring the exhibits?

Upon entering the museum, the viewers begin a visual exploration of how portraiture has developed over time, tracing its progression through different artistic styles and periods, as introduced by an introductory wall display at the exhibit's entrance. Jamal Arabzadeh, the curator of the exhibition, writes in part of the gallery's introduction: "A portrait establishes a necessary relationship with the subject's inner self, but until the late 19th century, a mechanical connection was assumed between

the subject's mental states and their appearance. With the emergence of modern psychology in the early 20th century, people began to study individuals from the inside out, and this perspective encouraged modern artists to explore the psychological and emotional aspects of human beings. Expressionists, with their exaggerated colors and forms, emphasized the subject's inner emotions, while Surrealists, referencing Freud's concept of the unconscious, delved into the complex world

of individual imagination." Gallery 1, titled 'Psyche and Portrait,' features works by Picasso, Francis Bacon, Joan Miró, Ardeshir Mohassess, Alireza Espahbod, Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Gholamhossein Nami, Bijan Basiri, Fernand Léger, and Salvador Dalí. In the final section of this gallery, the massive sculpture 'L'Opportuniste' (The Opportunist) from 1976, a work by Jean Dubuffet, one of the most influential and creative painters of the 20th century, is on display.

### Self-portrait

In another section of the gallery, you will see 'Self-Portrait: Me in Another Mirror'. "The self-portrait has been recognized as one of the most important forms of artistic expression since the Renaissance. Although early self-portraits mostly showcased the artist's social status or intellectual depth, in later centuries, the self-portrait transformed into an artistic tool for exploring personal identity. The emergence of modern psychology in the early 20th century turned the self-portrait into a new form of psychological expres-

sion, and artists used self-portraits as a medium to display their innermost thoughts, fears, and desires. Gallery 2 features works by Diego Rivera, Kamal-ol-Molk, Mehdi Vishkaei, Richard Hamilton based on a photograph of Francis Bacon, Mahmoud Javadipour, Manouchehr Motabar, Ali Heydarian, Georges Rouault, Emil Nolde. Also, on display is 'The Gates of Hell' by the famous Dutch Impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh, one of the most important works in this collection.

### Portraits of the past

Since the beginning of art history, portraits have been reserved for individuals with social significance. With the advent of modernism and the breaking of strict rules regarding representation, formal and stiff courtly portraits gave way to more honest and raw depictions of subjects, to the point where portraits no longer merely celebrated the status of a historical figure, but also mocked their aesthetic innovations. Gallery 3, titled 'Historical Portraits,' features valuable works such as a caricature of Ahmad Shah by Ghasem Hajizadeh, a portrait of Mao by Andy War-

hol, a portrait of Kamal-ol-Molk by Sani-ol-Soltan, a portrait of Sandro Botticelli and Ruhollah Khaleqi by Aydin Aghdashloo, a portrait of Yanaihara by Alberto Giacometti, a portrait of Nassereddin Shah by Kamal-ol-Molk, which has been restored and is now on display, and works by Mohammad Hassan Khan Sadr al-Dowleh, Douglas Johnson, and Robert Rauschenberg are also on display. The next series of works on display in this gallery features photographs of famous artists from around the world by Eddie Navarro; portraits of Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Marcel Du-

champ, Parviz Tanavoli, and Bahman Mohassess, which are hung on the museum walls. Gallery 4 is dedicated to 'Portrait of a Woman: Subject or Object,' featuring works such as Mahmoud Javadipour, Ahmad Nasrallah, Ardeshir Mohassess, Nasser Ovisi, Roy Lichtenstein, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec with two famous works 'The Female Clown at the Moulin rouge' and 'Woman with a Hat,' as well as Picasso's portrait 'Jacqueline with a Headband,' and portraits of 'Marilyn Monroe' and 'Jacqueline Kennedy No. 2' by Andy Warhol, Mary Cassatt, and Fernand Léger.

### Celebrities in focus

Gallery 5 is titled 'The Dark Room and the History of Portraiture' and 'The Bright Room: A Tool for Precision,' and visitors can

experience portrait-making in this section. Further on in this gallery, a work from the 'Memories of Destruction' series by

Aydin Aghdashloo and Bahman Mohassess, titled 'Jet Society 1,' are on display, as well as works by James Ensor, Georges Rouault,

Jazeh Tabatabai, Charles Cottet, Marcos Grigorian, and Ali Akbar Sadeghi, offering a showcase for enthusiasts.

