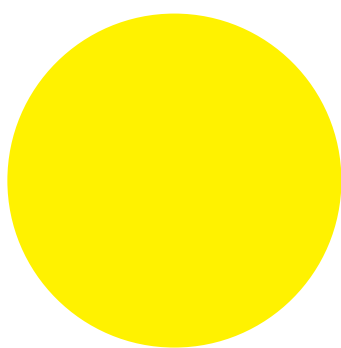




Hamas, Israel complete fourth captive-prisoner swap

7 >



# Iran Daily

Vol. 7760 ● Sunday, February 2, 2025 ● Bahman 14, 1403 ● Sha'ban 3, 1446 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages



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

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

| IranDailyWeb



## **Pezeshkian:** No power can bully us if we stand united

Hassan Khomeini says people expect officials to exert courage in decisions

7 >

*Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (4th R) and his cabinet pay tribute to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Republic, in Tehran, Iran, on February 1, 2025. The grandson of Ayatollah Khomeini and the custodian of his mausoleum, Seyyed Hassan Khomeini (3rd R), accompanied the president.*  
[president.ir](http://president.ir)

### Pitfalls of oversimplifying negotiations



By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Journalist

#### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

These days, the potential negotiations between Iran and the US have become a topic of polarization among supporters and opponents. This is not the first time, and it probably will not be the last. Both sides, within the legal and customary frameworks, have the right to criticize, express opinions, and provide analysis, which can ultimately contribute to expert assessments of diplomatic talks, whether with the US or other countries. However, it seems that the issue of Tehran-Washington negotiations is being noticeably oversimplified by both proponents and opponents. It is as if there is no historical precedent or experience, no obstacles to negotiations, and both sides can start talks and reach a deal as soon as they decide to. Opponents take a firm stance, viewing any dialogue with the US as an outright betrayal of the Establishment and the people, as if the other side has already rolled out the red carpet for the Iranian negotiators, and the only remain-

ing issue is the composition of Iran's delegation! Moreover, this group of actors likely assumes that entering negotiations means striking an agreement, and given their negative perception of the JCPOA, they consider Tehran as a player destined to lose. Therefore, based on this analytical framework, they deem any negotiation with the US invalid. On the other hand, some supporters of US-Iran negotiations believe that the new US administration will welcome talks with Iran under any circumstances, and the only remaining factor for starting talks and hammering out a deal is the will of the Iranian government. In this context, they see the government the sole and ultimate decision-maker. Some in this camp even assume that negotiations will lead to an agreement in a few days or weeks. The will of both parties to adopt a diplomatic path to manage tensions and, if possible, settle or partially resolve differences is an important factor and, in fact, the beginning of a process. However, mere will is not sufficient. Even to kickstart negotiations, the existence of will is necessary but not sufficient. As President Masoud Pezeshkian said a while ago: "Trump must first prove that he will keep his word. We will talk when he keeps his promises."

Page 7 >



Veep says gov't bent on ensuring energy supply for industry, mining

2 >



Embracing nature and tradition in Ravansar

3 >

### Achievements, regional impacts of Gaza cease-fire

#### ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

5 >



Persian Gulf Pro League: Foolad, Persepolis share the spoils in Kartal debut

6 >



Maduro calls for new beginning in bilateral ties with US

7 >

Iran eyes attracting 15m tourists through int'l collaboration: **Minister**

8 >





## Iran Air head urges national investment in advanced technologies

### Economy Desk

The CEO of Iran Air, the national flag carrier of Iran, emphasized the aviation industry's significant contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP), accounting for 9% of the total.

Hossein Khanlari also stressed the need for continued investment in advanced technologies and innovation to enhance the industry, IRNA reported. Khanlari noted that the aviation industry has been one of the most transformative developments of the 20th century, revolutionizing global transportation and commerce.

He described the airplane as one of humanity's most impactful inventions, enabling rapid movement of passengers and goods worldwide.

### Pillar of global economy

Khanlari highlighted the aviation industry's role as a cornerstone of the global economy, facilitating international travel and trade.

He underscored the importance of developing Iran's aviation sector to capitalize on its economic benefits.

### Challenges facing Iran's aviation industry

The CEO pointed out several challenges, including the aging fleet of aircraft and outdated technologies, which he said could compromise flight safety. He also cited a shortage of skilled personnel as a compounding issue, calling for optimal use of existing legal frameworks and a focus on knowledge-based production to address these problems. Khanlari criticized restrictive regulations that hinder new entrants into the market, stifling competition and deterring investors.

He also called for a revision of Iran's foreign investment laws, which have not been updated in over two decades, to attract new capital and spur industry growth.

### Irreplaceable service

Khanlari described air transportation as an irreplaceable service due to its time-saving and high-speed nature and noted that technological advancements could reduce fuel consumption and optimize aircraft performance, lowering costs and increasing profitability. Khanlari also underlined that addressing the industry's challenges would not only benefit Iran's economy but also improve the quality of air transportation services.

# Veep says gov't bent on ensuring energy supply for industry, mining

### Economy Desk

Vice President Mohamadreza Aref visited the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade on Saturday for a cordial discussion with the minister and deputies and said the government is committed to ensuring energy supply for industry and mining sector.

He praised the ministry for being led by an experienced minister and acknowledged its critical role in driving development, wrote fvpresident.ir.

During the meeting, Aref emphasized that the ministry combines the responsibilities of three ministries and expressed satisfaction with its experienced leadership, which has a strong grasp of the industrial, mining, and trade sectors.

Aref reviewed reports on challenges such as deficits in industry, mining, and trade, as well as production declines in sectors like steel, cement, and automotive.

He noted, however, that positive growth trends in other areas and increased exports reflect the success of the government in recent months and affirmed that the slogan of unity declared by the president has been maintained at the highest level.

Describing the ministry as a "catalyst for development," Aref highlighted its unparalleled potential to spur growth. He expressed confidence that the ministry, with its capable team, would achieve desired growth outcomes, aligning with the Seventh Development Plan.

He acknowledged that industrial growth had slowed in recent years but remained optimistic about future progress.

Addressing energy short-



ages and their impact on industry and mining, Aref reiterated the government's commitment to ensuring energy supply and supporting these sectors. He praised the president's active involvement in resolving these issues, noting significant achievements in this area.

Aref called for greater efforts from the industrial sector to address energy shortages, criticizing inefficiencies in optimization. He pointed out that outdated heating, cooling, and refrigeration systems in the country contribute to energy waste, contrasting this with practices in other nations where such systems are regularly upgraded.

Aref recalled a water shortage during his stud-

ies abroad, where local authorities reduced water waste by 40% through simple upgrades.

He urged attendees to propose similar solutions for energy imbalances, suggesting that replacing outdated systems could be cost-effective.

Aref advised ministry officials to identify and address institutional challenges in coordination with other government bodies to ensure a smoother start to the next year.

### Empowering private sector

The VP emphasized the private sector's role in advancing development programs, noting past shortcomings in supporting this sector.

He stated that the government is now committed to creating a more enabling environment for private enterprises, with a clear strategy in place.

Aref highlighted the private sector's importance in market regulation and called on chambers of commerce, trade, and co-operatives to play a more active role.

### Addressing unfair competition

Aref referenced discussions with Iranian traders in Almaty, Kazakhstan, during the Eurasian Economic Union meeting and acknowledged that minor issues have hindered Iranian businesses and stressed the need for regional cooperation in Eurasia.

He noted that unfair competition following the Soviet Union's collapse has allowed other countries to surpass Iran in Central Asia.

### Strengthening automotive industry

Aref called for a more competitive approach in the automotive industry, urging officials to develop strategies for producing successful vehicles.

He highlighted past opportunities in Central Asia, where Iranian cars once had a strong presence, and encouraged the industry to learn from past experiences to regain competitiveness.

### Household power plants a solution

Aref proposed household

power plants as a solution to energy shortages, citing examples from countries like Germany where such systems contribute significantly to electricity production. He urged the development of a detailed plan to implement this solution in Iran.

Addressing domestic trade officials, Aref emphasized the importance of monitoring direct supply of goods during Ramadan and the New Year holidays.

At the start of the meeting, the minister and deputies presented updates on structural reforms, growth initiatives in industry, mining, and trade, upcoming projects, and support packages.

## Minister: Bilateral pacts with neighbors poised to boost Iran's economy



### Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade stated that bilateral agreements with neighboring countries, alongside joining the Eurasian Union and the BRICS treaty, have positioned Iran's resilient economy on the verge of a significant leap.

In a message issued Saturday, Mohammad Atabak congratulated the nation on the anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution as he emphasized that despite obstacles imposed by enemies, Iran has achieved remarkable growth and prosperity in industry, mining,

and key industrial sectors.

He highlighted the country's increasing self-reliance in critical industrial and mining areas, reliance on domestic engineering expertise, the rise of new technology-based firms, rapid advancements in nanotechnology, and the training of young, skilled managers and human resources as factors that have elevated Iran's role as a key player in the region and the world.

Atabak noted that observer status in the Eurasian Union and joining the BRICS, combined with bilateral agreements with neighboring countries, have set the stage for a transformative phase in Iran's economy. He reiterated that this progress reflects the nation's belief in its capabilities.

The minister expressed hope that with the collective efforts of all citizens, the path toward a more advanced and prosperous Iran will become smoother than ever before.

## Iran's postal service climbs 14 spots in global rankings

### Economy Desk

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) announced that Iran's postal service has climbed 14 spots in the 2024 Integrated Index for Postal Development (2IPD), securing the 37th position out of 174 countries. This advancement reflects a 28% growth in Iran's postal development.

According to the report, Iran's postal service scored 73.2 points, placing it ahead of several regional postal operators, including those of India, Russia, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

The UPU's 2024 2IPD report evaluates member countries' postal development based on four key indicators of reliability, reach, relevance and resilience.

The report analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of selected postal operators in delivering quality services, focusing on speed, predictability, international connectivity, business model success, and the ability to overcome economic, social, tech-



nological and environmental challenges. In the 2024 rankings, the Switzerland and Germany's postal services topped the list with 108.6 points, followed by Japan with 105.9 points, and the United States with 102 points, securing the top three positions.

This achievement highlights Iran's continuous efforts and strategic planning to improve service quality, expand access to postal services, and enhance customer satisfaction.



# Embracing nature and tradition in Ravansar



## Iranica Desk

Hawraman encompasses over 700 villages, towns, and districts across both Kurdistan and Kermanshah provinces, extending into parts of Sulaymaniyah Province in the Kurdish region of Iraq. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its beautiful, water-rich landscapes attract numerous tourists throughout the year. These historical and natural advantages, combined with its tourist attractions, have positioned Ravansar as one of the key tourism destinations in western Iran, drawing both domestic and international visitors year-round. Ravansar, with a population of approximately 47,000, is situated 60 kilometers northwest of the provincial capital city of Kermanshah and serves as the gateway to the culturally rich and historically significant region of Hawraman. The area, nestled between the provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshah, is characterized by its stunning mountains and rushing rivers. The breathtaking natural landscape has fostered valleys where residents have coexisted

harmoniously with nature from ancient times to the present, a connection vividly reflected in the region's terraced gardens, vibrant festivals, and authentic rituals. The eco-lodge in Kani Kechkineh village of Ravansar has played a significant role in boosting tourism in recent years, facilitating a reverse migration of villagers returning from urban areas to their homes. Nasser Ahmadi, the manager of the eco-lodge, shared with IRNA the positive impact it has had on revitalizing the village. He remarked, "We established the first eco-lodge in Ravansar. The surrounding villages were gradually becoming deserted, and only two families remained in our village, who were also preparing to migrate to the city." Ahmadi noted that the eco-lodge's establishment has sparked reverse migration; by this year, about 40 new houses have been built in the village, and 20 households have moved back from the city. "Today, Kani Kechkineh is recognized as one of the prominent tourist villages in the country and

even globally. He further mentioned that several initiatives have been launched in recent years, including the first pottery workshop, the first local doll museum, a dried fruit workshop, numerous rain-fed orchards, and the first eco-camp in western Iran." While the eco-lodge has made significant strides, Ahmadi pointed out that many related sectors in the village remain inactive due to financial difficulties. "We are in need of grants or low-interest loans to launch these prepared projects and achieve rural development, tourism growth, and sustainable employment," he stated. He also explained that, following the establishment of the eco-lodge, 200,000 rain-fed trees have been planted in the village, which are now bearing fruit. Currently, Kermanshah Province offers a diverse array of tourist accommodations, including 27 hotels, three apartment hotels, 19 guesthouses, seven traditional restaurants, 15 individual roadside catering units, 17 roadside restaurants, 14 tourist complexes, 20 eco-lodges, and 50 guest

houses with temporary permits. Dariush Farmani, the director general of Kermanshah Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, emphasized that Ravansar is a region brimming with tourism potential and captivating attractions. He noted that Hawraman is the 26th cultural heritage site in Iran to be registered internationally, with Ravansar providing essential access to this pristine area. Farmani added that Ravansar is home to numerous natural tourist attractions, making the city a popular destination for travelers seeking both natural beauty and historical significance. He stressed the need for more recreational facilities to be developed for visitors in the county, highlighting that, with private sector support, a hotel and a tourism accommodation complex have been established in Ravansar as part of a broader tourism initiative. "Ravansar is one of the key cities in Kermanshah Province and serves as the gateway to Hawraman. Its strategic location along

the tourism route allows us to conduct handicraft training classes, which helps us train more artisans to capitalize on tourism opportunities and secure a larger share of employment in this sector," he stated. Manouchehr Habibi, the governor general of Kermanshah Province, also highlighted during his visit to Ravansar at a meeting of the county's administrative council that Hawraman is a paradise for tourism. He emphasized that tourism and agriculture are the two pillars of Ravansar's development, urging all managers and stakeholders to focus on these areas and formulate more comprehensive plans. Additionally, Mohammad Khojasteh, the director general of Kermanshah Province's General Governorate's Office for Rural Affairs, stated that his office supports employment generation and development projects in villages. Khojasteh highlighted that the office has various responsibilities in capacity building and rural development, which can be

divided into two dimensions: one involves monitoring programs through village councils, while the other focuses on oversight by district administrations. He further emphasized their commitment to enhancing the role of district and village councils in provincial development, aiming to make these entities more active and dynamic. Kermanshah Province is often referred to as the "India of Iran" due to its four distinct seasons, diverse ethnic groups and religions, rich traditions, various languages and dialects, colorful attire, and captivating customs. The province also has an ancient historical background, featuring inscriptions and historical buildings that date back to before the Islamic era and other periods, reflecting its rich culture and civilization. Kermanshah boasts 4,200 nationally registered cultural heritage sites and two globally registered sites. Furthermore, with its railway, airport, and communication infrastructure, the province is well-positioned for tourism development.

## Embark on an unforgettable journey at Tehran's Jurassic Park



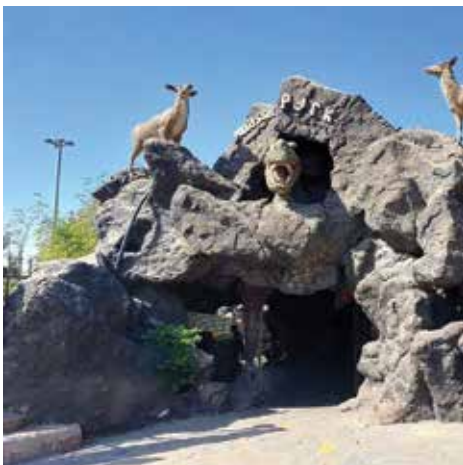
Jurassic Park of Tehran is an essential attraction in the capital, transporting visitors back millions of years to the era of dinosaurs. The park is dedicated to educating guests about this historic period by recreating the living environments of these prehistoric creatures. Named after the renowned film series, the park showcases life-sized models of dinosaurs that once roamed the Earth during the Jurassic period. Please note that there is an entrance fee to visit. Established in 2013, Jurassic Park aims to raise awareness among nature enthusiasts and biology lovers. The park features remarkably lifelike, moving dinosaur statues complete with realistic hand movements and sounds. In this article, we'll provide an overview of Jurassic Park Tehran, highlighting its location, facilities, and various sections. Join us as we delve into this captivating destination! The park is situated in the Sa'adat Abad area, adjacent to Parvaz Park.

### Facilities and sections

Dinosaur and animal statues: Visitors can encounter numerous animal statues up close, including a hippopotamus, gorilla, elephant, King Kong, panda, mammoth, and bear. Additionally, there are a variety of herbivorous and carnivorous

dinosaur statues, such as the Europasaurus, Tall Europasaurus, Stegosaurus, Tyrannosaurus Rex (T-Rex), Torosaurus, and Allosaurus. Each statue emits unique sounds, and informative plaques accompany them, offering comprehensive details. Children are encouraged to touch the statues and take memorable photos. **Jurassic Studio:** While imagining life among these gigantic creatures is exciting, capturing photos with them is even more exhilarating. The Jurassic Studio provides an opportunity to take photos alongside the dinosaurs, creating lasting keepsakes. The studio staff will print these photos immediately for visitors. **8D cinema:** The park's 8D cinema boasts the latest viewing technology, showcasing thrilling films associated with Jurassic Park. Among the most exciting screenings are those featuring dramatic dinosaur escape scenes. The cinema operates daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., but ticket prices may be higher on Fridays and holidays. **Gift and toy shop:** Visitors can enjoy additional activities, such as exploring the gift and toy shop. Inside, there's a chance to participate in competitions, like tossing balls at small dinosaur targets for a chance to win larger dinosaur toys. **Pottery workshop:** This engaging

activity allows children to create sculptures of dinosaurs and other park creatures, fostering their creativity through hands-on experience. **Spider Park:** Following the success of Jurassic Park, the Tehran Municipality established Spider Park, which focuses on insects and arthropods. Guests can view over 20 different sculptures, including spiders, bees, ants, snails, ladybugs, and reptiles like turtles, iguanas, and crocodiles. **Insects' world:** This section employs multi-dimensional simulators to immerse visitors in the insects' world. Guests can explore various insect exhibits and unwind at the park's café. **Microscopic insects:** Visitors can examine preserved insects (taxidermy) and view intricate parts of insects through a microscope in this section. **Recreational facilities:** After an exciting day of exploration, guests can relax at the café, enjoying a selection of drinks and snacks. **Nearby attractions** Nearby sites of interest include Milad Tower, Phase 1 of Nahjol-balagheh Park, and Parvaz Park, making Jurassic Park Tehran a perfect starting point for a day of exploration in the city.





# Possible options to prevent snapback of sanctions: New deal or extension of Resolution 2231

## International Desk

### INTERVIEW

October 2025 marks the expiration of Resolution 2231 and the complete lifting of United Nations Security Council resolutions against Iran. Meanwhile, the three European countries that are parties to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) recently warned Tehran about the potential activation of the snapback mechanism during a UNSC meeting in December. Germany, France, and the UK issued a caution to Iran regarding the so-called "snapback" mechanism being triggered during the periodic six-month session of the Security Council on Resolution 2231.

In a statement, the European members of the JCPOA declared, "We are prepared

to use all diplomatic tools, including snapback, if necessary, to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons." This comes as the US itself unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, which disrupted the full implementation of the agreement. As a result, starting from that point—especially after Iran began scaling back its commitments under the JCPOA in 2019—ambiguities surrounding this ten-year timeline emerged.

The Geneva talks involving Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi and representatives from the UK, France, and Germany took place in December, following a contentious resolution passed by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors. This resolution demands a report

on Iran's nuclear program and its lack of full cooperation with the IAEA by spring 2024. This resolution, marking the second such action against Iran in two years, has prompted Iran to announce it will activate new and advanced centrifuges as a retaliatory measure.

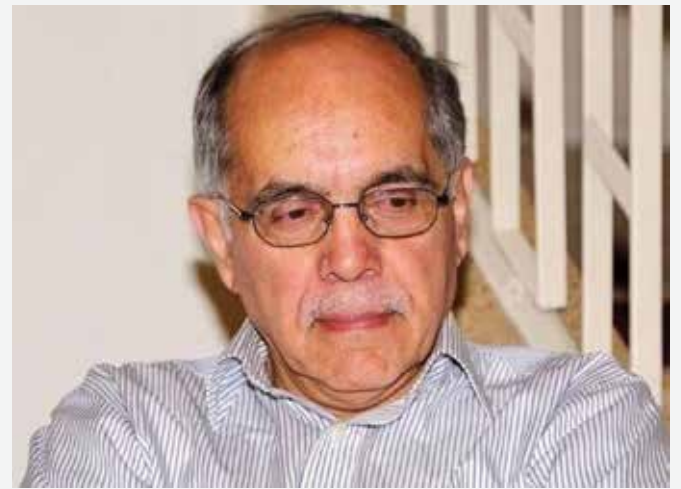
Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, issued a warning regarding the potential misuse of the snapback mechanism relating to the JCPOA, which could reinstate suspended sanctions.

"Any attempt to exploit the snapback mechanism will be met with a reciprocal response from Iran." Also, Takht-Ravanchi warned Tehran would withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty if a so-called snapback mechanism renews the UN

sanctions lifted by the 2015 nuclear deal.

Regarding the potential use of the snapback mechanism by the European countries, the spokesperson for the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of Parliament Ebrahim Rezaei, has recently said "According to our diplomats [Takht-Ravanchi and Kazem Gharib Abadi], the day this issue is activated, the Islamic Republic will invoke Article 10 of the NPT, and we will not accept any preconditions in negotiations."

According to Article 10 of the NPT, "If any member of the treaty determines that extraordinary events related to the subject of this treaty have jeopardized its national interests, it shall have the right to withdraw from the treaty in exercising its national sovereignty." To examine the trajectory of



Kourosh Ahmadi, Iran's former diplomat at UN

negotiations between Iran and the three European countries, as well as the possibility of Iran withdrawing from the "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," an

interview was conducted by IRNA with Kourosh Ahmadi, an international relations analyst and former diplomat at the UN, which is presented as follows:



The Security Council unanimously adopts resolution establishing a monitoring system for Iran's nuclear program on July 20, 2015.

UN PHOTO

### Only a new deal can prevent snapback

The significance of the snapback mechanism in the West's calculations during the quest for a new agreement with Iran before the October 2025 deadline is paramount. For Western countries, including the US and Europe, the snapback mechanism is a crucial issue; it seems that the only way to potentially avert it is if Iran and the West reach an agreement, with its terms finalized by late summer. Otherwise, it is highly unlikely that any measures to stop this mechanism will be successful. The Western assumption is that Iran's nuclear program has advanced significantly. They believe that Iran's stockpile of 60% enriched uranium has reached a level sufficient

to allegedly produce four or five bombs. Given that Tehran possesses such an advanced nuclear program, it is very unlikely that the West will allow the issue of Iran to be taken off the Security Council's agenda without an agreement.

The snapback mechanism is of great importance to the West, including the US and Europe; it may only be possible to avoid the return of sanctions if Iran and the West come to an agreement with the terms finalized by late summer. The West wants to keep the issue of Iran on the Security Council's agenda.

The matter of snapback and the return of seven Security Council resolutions against Iran is just one aspect of the situation. The crux of the issue is that, according to paragraph 8 of Resolution 2231, the validity of this resolution will expire on October 18, 2025. If this occurs, the issue of Iran will be removed from the Security Council's agenda, and Iran's nuclear program will return to a normal status.

Should this happen, given the global dynamics and the new wave of competition among major powers at that time, it is possible that the West will not be able to bring Iran back to the Security Council due to vetoes from Russia and China. Therefore, the non-utilization of the snapback mechanism by the West would mean that the issue of Iran is effectively off the Security Council's agenda. For this reason, the West, citing the problems it claims to have with Iran, is striving to keep the issue of Iran on the Security Council's agenda.

### Extension of expiration date

In this context, the only way [for the Europeans] to prevent Iran's nuclear program from being taken off the Security Council's agenda and to avoid the permanent expiration of Security Council resolutions against Tehran is through the implementation of the snapback mechanism. Thus, the key issue is that the only way [for Iran] to sidestep the snapback is to

reach an agreement between Iran and the West. This means that Iran and the West should find a way, whether through the same 1+5 format or, following the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, through the 1+4 framework, to revitalize the JCPOA or reach a new agreement that eliminates the necessity for Iran to remain on the Security Council's agenda. In such a case, the snapback will naturally be off the table. However, if both parties do not come to an agreement about two months prior to October 18, 2025, another possibility could arise: the West may agree to delay the expiration date of Resolution 2231. This would entail the three European countries presenting a formal resolution to the Security Council to extend the October 18 deadline by six months to a year, allowing more time for negotiation.

### Threatening withdrawal from NPT

Given the explanations provided, it seems unlikely that

simply threatening to withdraw from the NPT would suffice to prevent the snapback mechanism. This means that Iran's exit from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons would be a legal action, and it is unclear whether such a withdrawal would indicate an intention to pursue nuclear weapons. This scenario echoes North Korea's actions in April 2003 when it expelled inspectors from the IAEA and conducted its first nuclear test about three years later. The situation in our region is different from that of North Korea. The geopolitical landscape in Northeast Asia has led the West and the US to ultimately back down, even though they imposed conditions on North Korea that we are all aware of. However, regarding Iran, the dynamics are complicated by the regional context, including the positions of Arab countries, Turkey, and the issue of Israel, making it uncertain whether events would unfold in the

same manner. Nonetheless, the involved parties have threatened that, in such a case, they would resort to military action, and one could speculate about the positions China and Russia would take in that scenario.

### West's assumption of complete insight into Iran's nuclear program

Another consideration for the West, as implied in their rhetoric, is that they claim to have complete intelligence on the situation within Iran and can guess whether Iran intends to move toward nuclear weapons. They believe that if a decision is made in this regard, it will not remain hidden from them. Their assumption is that in such a case, they would face the issue more comfortably and would not necessarily have a problem with Iran's withdrawal from the NPT, as the act itself, in legal terms, would be significant and might not indicate a move toward bomb-making. In terms of Europe's role, Trump's position is crucial, and it remains to be seen how he will collaborate with Europe in this area and whether the Iran issue will become one of the few points of convergence between Europe and the Trump administration. The Europeans may also wish to leverage this card in negotiations with the US.

### Only two options ahead for Iran

The challenge is that we are currently facing the October 18, 2025 deadline, which means both parties must either reach an agreement before that date or, if possible, extend the deadline. While this extension is a feasible option, it carries its own legal risks—altering Security Council texts, which are intricately drafted, could pose significant issues. Ultimately, these are the only two solutions available to prevent the snapback mechanism.



Possible influence of Russia-Europe row

One of the key issues is how the format of the upcoming negotiations will take shape. Previously, the negotiating parties included the Security Council countries plus Germany. After the US unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA, the format shifted to 1+4. The question now is whether this format can continue in the future and whether its continuation would even serve our interests. The Europeans will likely express

their unwillingness to sit at the table with Russia, as they believe that Russia has jeopardized European security, with its invasion of Ukraine being an attack on Europe as a whole. As far as I know, this matter has not yet been thoroughly examined.

China, Russia lack leverage in negotiations

In reality, the core issue lies between Iran and the United States, with the main sanctions against Iran imposed by the

US. The question arises: given this situation, is it even necessary for other parties to be involved in the negotiations? Of course, the snapback mechanism is in the hands of the Europeans, and from this perspective, an agreement with them is essential. However, China and Russia bring nothing to the table, whether positively or negatively, regarding the negotiations, and at one point, the Russians even hampered the 2015 JCPOA talks, as Mr. Zarif has pointed out. During

the discussions to revive the JCPOA, the former foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, explicitly stated in an interview with Al-Mayadeen in March 2023 that “We were on the verge of reaching an agreement when the Ukraine war broke out and everything changed”. Countries like China and Russia may exert influence on Iran through pressure, but they hold no significant leverage in the 1+4 and 1+5 negotiation formats. They have neither sanctioned us nor are they

likely to oppose the lifting of sanctions against Iran as permanent members of the Security Council. From the outset, we sought their presence, perhaps with the consideration that we wouldn’t negotiate solely with the US, thus giving rise to such a format. While European sanctions were also in place at that time, the involvement of Russia and China was not particularly relevant. It’s possible that we may reach a format in which Russia and China are not present at all.

US-European cooperation in JCPOA revival

Regarding Europe’s role, US President Donald Trump’s stance is significant; we need to see how he collaborates with Europe on this front and whether the Iran issue will become one of the few points of common ground between Europe and the Trump administration. The Europeans may also want to leverage this card in their dealings with the US.



By Abouzair Pouradib  
International affairs analyst

ANALYSIS  
EXCLUSIVE

Achievements, regional impacts of Gaza cease-fire

It has been over 480 days since Operation Al-Aqsa Storm began on October 7, 2023, and more than 46,000 Palestinians have been martyred in this war. With the mediation of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, a cease-fire was recently signed between Israel and Hamas. This cease-fire will reportedly be implemented in three phases. In this article, various dimensions of the Gaza war and the cease-fire are examined, including what it achieved and how it changed the Middle East.



Palestinians celebrate the announcement of a cease-fire deal between Hamas and Israel in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, on January 15, 2025.  
● ABDEL KAREEM HANA/AP

Geopolitical impacts of Gaza war

The Gaza war and the humanitarian crisis it created, showed the extent that some will go to ignore human rights. The war was characterized by an economic blockade of Gaza; the destruction of vital infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, and water and electricity facilities; a severe shortage of medicine and medical equipment; negative psychological effects, and a lack of access to health and psychiatric services. Geopolitically, it also marginalized the normalization of Arab relations with Israel. Hamas’ attack on Israel and the start of the Gaza war on October 7, 2023, showed that the pattern of hostility in relations between Palestine and Israel still prevails. The support of some regional governments and Islamic groups for Hamas further indicates that being optimistic about an end to the violence is not realistic. The scope of the war eventually expanded in the region to include various countries and groups, most notably Lebanon, Yemen, and the Islamic Resistance movements in Iraq. As Israel’s war in Gaza intensified, the Lebanese group Hezbollah engaged in cross-border firefights with Israel. The two sides have a long history of war and conflict dating back several decades. Yemeni Ansarullah (Houthis), in support of Gaza, targeted ships sailing in the Red Sea to Israel; it soon prompted the United States and its allies

to take retaliatory measures, further expanding the war. Iraqi forces affiliated with the Resistance Front, in support of Hamas, attacked American positions in Iraq and Syria from time to time. The Gaza war forged a consensus in different parts of the world about the inefficiency of the order governing international relations. Consequently, they called for reform of global governance institutions, including the United Nations Security Council. It was shown that the current international order overlooks basic principles such as solidarity, justice, and trust, and cannot even fulfill its minimal responsibilities. As a result of all the above, the prospect of long-term peace in the Middle East is currently in a state of ambiguity.

Trump’s view on Gaza war

Regarding the new US president’s approach to the war in the enclave, we must first examine his approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a whole. In his first term as president, Donald Trump took three important steps in the interests of the Zionist regime: 1. He moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. 2. He proposed the Deal of the Century as a plan for Arab-Israeli peace through the creation of an independent Palestinian state with specific conditions that benefit Israel. 3. He jumpstarted the Abraham Accords to normalize Arab-Israeli relations. Trump’s past measures show his firm support for the Zionist regime. However, he has also repeatedly promised to end the war in the Middle East on

the campaign trail. It should be noted that he sees himself as a deal-maker and takes pride in that. Moving forward, the following scenarios can be considered: (a) The United States may continue previous policies, which will prolong the war and break Trump’s election promise; (b) the US may pursue ending the war through diplomacy and applying pressure on Hamas, such as disarming the group or asking for other guarantees; and (c) the US may increase pressure on Iran in order to reduce or prevent the Islamic Republic’s support for Resistance groups. Alternatively, Trump may choose to take a different route and deal with the Arabs to complete the Abraham Accords. This strategy makes sense for Trump for three reasons: First, realistically, this solution is in line with his proposed strategies of America First and Make America Great Again. As Trump promised in his campaign, he thereby avoids entering into conflicts that would erode America’s power in pursuing its national interests. Second, Trump’s view of the Middle East is economic. In order to achieve his economic goals, the United States must maintain strategic relations with its traditional allies in the region, lest they turn towards China. Third, given Israel’s crimes in Gaza and the outpouring of regional and global condemnations, Saudi Arabia has allegedly tied the establishment of an independent Palestinian state to normalizing relations with the Zionist regime. Pressuring Netanyahu to accept an independent Palestinian state in order to gain Arab consent to normalize relations is Trump’s likely option regarding how to

deal with the Gaza war. The first phase of the cease-fire did not discuss how Gaza would be governed in the future, but it is expected to be a significant challenge for both sides. Over the past 15 months, the United States has taken a dual stance on the Palestinian Authority’s governance of Gaza. Initially, they wanted Gaza to be handed over to the Palestinian Authority, but Israel’s failure to destroy Hamas led the Biden administration to back away from this decision. Secondly, the US and its regional and extra-regional allies have said that Mahmoud Abbas’s shelf life has expired, and they want Mahmoud Dahlan to replace him.

Achievements of Gaza cease-fire

1. Hamas was given international guarantees regarding the continuation of the cease-fire after the end of the first phase of the agreement 2. The presence of the Israeli regime in the Netzarim and Philadelphia corridors is to end. 3. The Rafah crossing is to reopen. 4. Refugees are to return to their homes unconditionally. 5. Commitments have been made by international entities for the comprehensive reconstruction of Gaza. 6. The Israeli regime evidently failed in destroying Hamas; when the war in Gaza began, Israel had declared its most important strategy to be the complete destruction of Hamas, but some 15 months after that statement, it was forced to negotiate a cease-fire with Hamas. 7. The United States’ strategies in the Gaza war fell flat as well. Following Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, the Biden administra-

tion announced its strategies for this war to be preventing the war from spreading to other countries in the region, releasing captives held by Hamas, and helping to reduce civilian casualties in Gaza in order to maintain the honor and credibility of the United States and the Zionist regime, but it failed to achieve a single one of these strategies. 8. For future negotiations, the principle of “land for peace” is being reconsidered for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Approved at the Arab Summit in Beirut on March 28, 2002, this principle is the main Arab plan to end the conflict between the Palestinians and the Zionist regime. This plan amounts to the withdrawal of the Zionists from the territories occupied in 1967, the return of Palestinian refugees, and the determination of the fate of Jerusalem. However, at the “Peace to Prosperity” economic workshop, which was held in Manama, Bahrain, on June 25–26, 2019, the United States proposed the principle of “money for peace” as the cornerstone of the Deal of the Century, replacing the principle of land for peace. According to this later principle, the United States claimed that by investing in the public and private sectors in the Palestinian territories, it would create at least one million jobs and invest \$27.5 billion in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, \$9.1 billion for Palestinians living in Egypt, \$7.4 billion for Palestinians living in Jordan, and \$6.3 billion for Palestinians living in Lebanon. Since the proposal favored Israel heavily, it was essentially dead on arrival, and we are now back to the earlier principle. 9. The acceptance of the cease-

Market stalls open amid the rubble of buildings destroyed during Israeli strikes on Khan Younis, southern Gaza, on January 15, 2025.  
● BASHAR TALEB/AFP

fire by the Zionist regime showed that it could not best the combat, intelligence, security, missile, and drone capabilities of the resistance groups. 10. It has proved ineffective the political efforts of Israel and its allies to achieve peace as these efforts, unlike the cease-fire, do not grant Palestinian rights in the slightest. 11. This cease-fire showed that lasting peace and security cannot be established if Palestinians do not have their own independent state. Even Saudi Arabia has conditioned the normalization of its relations with Israel on the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Outlook of Gaza war

It seems that the Gaza war will soon end; so will other regional conflicts that, following Israel’s indiscriminate bombing in response to Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, also brought Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria into the war. Direct military conflicts between Iran and Israel would ease or end for the short term as a result of the cease-fire. On the prospects of long-term regional peace, it has to be said that if Donald Trump continues to emphasize the normalization of Arab relations with Israel while the Arab governments continue to emphasize the prerequisite of establishing an independent Palestinian state for the normalization of relations, the achievements achieved in this cease-fire can pave the way for long-term regional peace.





# Persian Gulf Pro League: Foolad, Persepolis share the spoils in Kartal debut

## Sports Desk

Turkish head coach Ismail Kartal was denied maximum points on his Persepolis debut as the Tehran Reds played to a 1-1 draw at Foolad Khuzestan in the Persian Gulf Pro League on Friday.

Persepolis striker Ali Alipour, the joint leading marksman in the Iranian top flight, missed a glorious opportunity to take his tally to eight goals for the season, as his spot-kick was parried away by Uzbek keeper Utkir Yusupov after the referee had deemed ex-Persepolis defender Ali Nemati to have handled the ball in the box with eight minutes into the game.

The visitors still took the lead late in the first half at the Foolad Arena, with Issa Alekassir heading home Saeid Mehri's deflected effort in the 39th minute.

The home side, which had a one-point lead over its guest prior to the kickoff, desperately pushed for an equalizer after the break and was rewarded for its brave performance with 11 minutes from normal time, when substitute Abolazl Zadeh-Attar was first to the ball on the rebound on a corner kick to head the ball into the back of the net – a second goal in seven league games for Foolad's academy product.

"Our strikers should have done better with keeping the ball in



the opposition half," Kartal said after the game, adding: "We controlled the game in the closing stages but just couldn't find the winner. I guess the draw

was a fair result in the end. We will now be focused on our next game against Al Hilal."

The game was the first in a hectic fixtures list for Persepolis

and Kartal over the next 25 days – starting with a visit to Riyadh to face Saudi heavyweight Al Hilal in the AFC Champions League Elite on Tuesday.

The Capital Reds will then take on Golgozar, Sepahan in the Hazfi Cup, Al Nassr on the final day of the league phase in Asia, and Irarco, before squaring off



Foolad Khuzestan midfielder Farshid Baqeri (top) heads the ball above Persepolis striker Ali Alipour in a Persian Gulf Pro League game at the Foolad Arena, Ahvaz, Iran, on Jan. 31, 2025.

● MILAD ESMAEILI/ISNA

against Esteghlal in the Tehran Derby on February 27.

Esteghlal won a first league game in seven matches on Thursday, beating nine-man Esteghlal Khuzestan 2-0 at home.

Interim coach Sohrab Bakhhtiarizadeh was back in charge of the Blues bench for a second spell this season, after South African Pitso Mosimane had walked away from his job over unpaid salaries on Wednesday.

The visitors went down to 10 men after Mohammad Abshak was shown a straight red midway through the first half, but the home supporters at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium had to wait until the 72nd minute, when Ramin Rezaeian broke the deadlock from the spot.

Es. Khuzestan defender Aram Abbasi also received his marching orders in the 88th minute and Rezaeian bagged his second goal of the night again with a penalty in stoppage time, as Esteghlal moved up to eight in the table with 22 points ahead of Monday's home game against Al Shorta of Iraq in the Asian elite clubs' competition.

## Guardiola rues 'tougher schedule' after Madrid draw in Europe

**THE GUARDIAN** – Pep Guardiola could not hide his frustration with Manchester City's fixture schedule in February after being handed a daunting two-legged Champions League playoff tie with Real Madrid.

City's failure to qualify automatically for the tournament's last 16 means they have to face the current holders in order to reach that stage. City will host the first leg on 11 February before travelling to the Bernabéu on 19 February.

It is the fourth successive season that Guardiola's side have drawn the 15-time Champions League winners. City, who are preparing to face Arsenal in the Premier League today, also play Newcas-

tle, Liverpool, Tottenham and Leyton Orient in the FA Cup to make it seven games in 24 days. "The schedule is what it is," said Guardiola. "In the Premier League everyone has to play everyone but what normally happens is we have tougher schedules for the [Premier League] teams in Europe. It's tough playing against Real Madrid, the problem is in the middle playing Newcastle." He sarcastically added: "They are always so kind with the calendar, for many years it always happened that way."

Guardiola has previously argued English teams that compete in Europe should be afforded extra days' rest by the domestic fixture

schedulers. Now in his ninth season at City, he wearily accepts that is unlikely to happen.

"Are you asking me that question? Come on, don't make me say something impolite," Guardiola said in response to a further question about the fixture list. "I'm not complaining because we've had incredible success with this calendar. We accept it. We won the treble and the quadruple doing it like this. We survive and if we don't survive it's because the opponents are better."

"When I was training at Barcelona I followed the Premier League – because it's the most attractive league in the world – and Sir Alex Ferguson, José Mourinho, Arsène Wenger made

the same complaints. It's been this way for nine years. Do you think it's going to change? The broadcasters decide, they don't ask me."

Guardiola accepted that the extra games come as a result of City's own shortcomings, having won only three of their eight Champions League games to finish 22nd in the 36-team group phase. They beat Club Brugge 3-1 on the final match-day to snatch a playoff spot.

"We are happy because at 55, 60 minutes [against Brugge] we were out of the Champions League," he added. "It could be better, we could be in the first eight but we were not good enough, we don't deserve it."



● REUTERS

## Wembanyama has double-double to help Spurs beat Bucks 144-118



● ERIC GAY/AP

**AP** — Victor Wembanyama had 30 points, 14 rebounds and six blocks and the San Antonio Spurs had a season high in points to overcome 35 points and 13 rebounds from Giannis Antetokounmpo and beat the Milwaukee Bucks 144-118 on Friday night.

Keldon Johnson added 24 points and Stephon Castle had 20 as San Antonio snapped a two-game skid and won for just the second time in seven games.

Damian Lillard had 22 points for Milwaukee. Khris Middleton added 21.

Wembanyama was 9 for 20 from the field in an dynamic

showing one day after being named to his first All-Star Game as a Western Conference reserve.

Wembanyama banked in a 34-foot 3-pointer that hit the backboard, bounced off the front of the rim, hit the backboard again and dropped in with 7:18 remaining in the third quarter. The 3-pointer drew loud gasps and cheers from the fans and left Milwaukee coach Doc Rivers with his arms raised in puzzlement.

Wembanyama closed out a 14-point quarter by making a running, one-legged 3-pointer. Middleton was 8 for 9 from the field for the Bucks, including 3

for 4 on 3-pointers, in 23 minutes off the bench.

Castle is averaging 16.8 points and 3.3 assists in his past nine games since returning to the Spurs' starting lineup. Wembanyama was held to two points on 1-for-4 shooting in the first quarter, but he had three blocks to help San Antonio end the period tied at 35. Wembanyama blocked Antetokounmpo's shots twice in 14 seconds in the opening two minutes of the game. Antetokounmpo avoided a third block by powering in a dunk over Wembanyama.

San Antonio shot 15 for 25 from the field in outscoring Milwau-

kee 45-30 in the third quarter.

Elsewhere, Jayson Tatum's jumper with 0.7 seconds left gave the Boston Celtics a 118-116 victory over the short-handed New Orleans Pelicans.

Nikola Jokic made the tie-breaking 3-pointer with 39 seconds left, Jamal Murray had 31 points and 11 assists, and the Denver Nuggets overcame Tyrese Maxey's 42 points to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 137-134.

Jokic finished with 28 points, 13 assists and nine rebounds, just missing what would have been his NBA-leading 22nd triple-double.



# Pezeshkian: No power can bully us if we stand united

Hassan Khomeini says people expect officials to exert courage in decisions



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (L), accompanied by Seyyed Hassan Khomeini (R), the grandson of late founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, visits the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini in Tehran on February 1, 2025.  
● [president.ir](#)

### National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday called for unity among all sectors to address various challenges across the country, stressing that, "If we are united, no power can bully us." Accompanied by his cabinet members, Pezeshkian made the remarks during a visit to the mausoleum of the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini to renew allegiance with his ideals on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Since taking office last July, the Iranian president has repeatedly called for unity among different political factions in Iran to resolve the country's problems.

Referring to the unity among Muslim countries, the president added that if the Muslim countries are united and take a united stance against the Israeli regime, the "small regime" cannot challenge the entire Muslim countries in the region. Meanwhile, the grandson of Imam Khomeini, Seyyed Hassan Khomeini, delivered a speech during the visit by the cabinet members. He told the ministers that the people who have elected the officials expect them to have courage when they make a decision for the country. He added that Iranians saw such courage in Pezeshkian and voted for him. Since Friday, nationwide celebrations have begun in the country to

mark the 46th anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Ten-Day Dawn celebrations begin on the 12th day of the Iranian month of Bahman in the Persian calendar which marks the return of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, to Iran after several years of living in exile. The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 led to overthrowing of former Iranian monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. By toppling the Western-backed Pahlavi regime 46 years ago, the Iranian nation ended 2,500 years of monarchic rule and established a new political system – a republic based on Islamic values and democracy.

## Hamas, Israel complete fourth captive-prisoner swap

Freed Palestinian inmates were greeted by a cheering crowd in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah Saturday, after Hamas released three Israeli captives from the Gaza Strip in the fourth exchange under the group's cease-fire deal with Israel. Three other buses carrying freed Palestinians also arrived in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis, with the inmates in grey prison uniforms met by hundreds of well-wishers. In Ramallah, the bus carrying the inmates struggled to make its way through the jubilant throng of supporters as it arrived from the Israeli-run Ofer Prison. Several of the freed prisoners were hoisted onto the crowd's shoulders, including an elderly man who raised his crutches over his head in a triumphant pose. Earlier in Gaza, captives Ofer Kalderon and Yarden Bibas were paraded on stage by Hamas fighters before being handed over to the Red Cross in the southern city of Khan Yunis. American-Israeli Keith Siegel was freed shortly thereafter in a similar ceremony at Gaza City's port in the north. Israel's military later confirmed that all three were back



Palestinian prisoners arrive in Khan Yunis on February 1, 2025, following their release under a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas.  
● [EYAD BABA/AFP](#)

in Israel. Hamas began to release the captives on January 19 under the terms of the cease-fire deal with Israel. Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters have so far handed over 18 captives to the International Committee of the Red Cross in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of them women and minors. Israel released 183 Palestinians on Saturday. Hamas sources said a fifth captive-prisoner exchange would take place next Saturday. Hamas reported that many of the released Palestinian prison-

ers exhibit signs of torture and abuse. According to Hamas, the prisoners are currently receiving medical treatment at facilities in Gaza. "This confirms the brutality of what the prisoners are exposed to at the hands of the fascist Zionist gang, which is devoid of all human values and ignores international laws related to prisoners," it said in a statement. The Gaza cease-fire deal began on January 19, intending to end the 15-month Israeli war on Gaza and free captives still held in the blockaded territory in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

## Maduro calls for new beginning in bilateral ties with US

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Friday called for a "new beginning in bilateral relations" with the United States after the special envoy of his US counterpart Donald Trump visited Caracas. Maduro's government issued a statement after he met with Richard Grenell to discuss the deportation of migrants and criminals from the United States to Venezuela, a key demand of Trump, AFP reported. Six Americans detained in Venezuela were also released on Friday and returned to the United States with Trump's special envoy. The six men, who were not identified, were photographed smiling on a plane alongside Grenell. It is unclear exactly how many Americans were being held by Venezuela, but Venezuelan officials have spoken publicly of at least nine. Venezuela has accused most of them of terrorism and says some were high-level "mercenaries." Grenell and Maduro met at the Miraflores presidential palace in one of the first known meetings by the second Trump administration with a government it considers hostile. However, Maduro stressed the meeting had "zero agenda," and that he sought a "new beginning in bilateral relations" with the United States, according to a statement from the Venezuelan government. "There are things where we've reached initial deals and when they are complied with, new issues will open, hopefully new deals for the good of the two countries and the region," Maduro said, adding that he would be looking to see if what had been discussed with Grenell was reflected in what is communicated by the US about the meeting. "We say to President Donald Trump: we have taken a first step. Hopefully it can be sustained, we want to sustain it," Maduro said later during



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (R) shakes hands with US President Donald Trump's special envoy Richard Grenell at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas on January 31, 2025.  
● [ZURIMAC CAMPOS/VENEZUELA'S PRESIDENCY](#)

a speech. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said earlier that Grenell would demand Caracas allow repatriation flights for members of the Tren de Aragua – the Venezuelan criminal gang Trump has designated a terrorist group. "President Trump expects Nicolas Maduro to take back all of the Venezuelan criminals and gang members that have been exported to the United States, and to do so unequivocally and without condition," Mauricio Claver-Carone, US special envoy for Latin America, said separately. According to Caracas, the Maduro-Grenell meeting was held in "mutual respect" and various issues were discussed including migration and the "negative impact of economic sanctions." The government statement also expressed Venezuela's "willingness to maintain open diplomatic channels." Claver-Carone said the talks did not imply any softening of the position on Maduro, whose previous term Washington had also considered illegitimate.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Pitfalls of oversimplifying ...

Or, as Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in an interview with Al Jazeera, the release of Iran's frozen assets by the US would be one of the steps for confidence-building. Naturally, and especially based on past experiences, expressing the will to negotiate, whether in Iran or the US, requires certain prerequisites. Moreover, there have always been oppositions and lobbies on both sides to prevent reaching such a stage. So far, there are some indications that both sides are moving toward diplomacy. For instance, the new government in Tehran has based its foreign policy on balancing and constructive engagement with the world. The new US administration has not, at least in words and statements, shown any sign of choosing a path other than diplomacy. Moreover,

Page 1 >

the experience of the previous Donald Trump administration, its unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, and the acknowledgment by many US officials and analysts of the ineffectiveness of the maximum pressure policy against Tehran, are all before the new White House officials. Some realities in the region and the international system also necessitate that Iran and the US take steps to manage and reduce tensions, and any escalation of tensions will not benefit either side or their interests and considerations in the region. Apart from such oversimplifications about the potential talks between Iran and the US, there are defined principles in the policy-making norms of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which, if reminded to supporters and opponents, might help prevent the polarization of pro and anti-negotiation stances. One of

these principles is that decision-making on major foreign policy issues, such as talks with the US, follows a specific path in the Establishment. Araghchi has repeatedly emphasized this, saying on January 15: "Decision-making on important state matters, including negotiations to lift sanctions, follows a well-known path. All opinions are heard, and the decision is made where it should be, and the Foreign Ministry, of course, executes what the Establishment decides." The major drawback of the oversimplifications made about the potential US-Iran negotiations is, on the one hand, raising society's expectations when no agreement has yet been reached, and on the other hand, diverting or pushing the diplomatic framework away from its natural and defined path and reducing it to club and street-level debates.





# Iran eyes attracting 15m tourists through int'l collaboration: *Minister*

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced a strategic plan to attract 15 million international tourists. This ambitious goal aligns with the country's Seventh Development Plan, emphasizing the need for robust infrastructure and investment as critical priorities. Highlighting Iran's diverse tourism potential, the minister pointed out that the country boasts a wealth of attractions from north to south. "Each region represents a valuable asset for the development of this industry," he noted, specifically mentioning Mazandaran Province's unique offerings, which position it as a potential tourism hub, Tasnim News Agency reported. To effectively draw visitors, the minister stressed the importance of proactive engagement rather than passive waiting for tourists to arrive in Tehran. He added, "We must facilitate the entry of foreign tourists through diplomatic trips, inter-

national consultations, and collaborations with neighboring countries." Currently, efforts are underway to strengthen tourism ties with regional partners, including Tajikistan, which presents significant opportunities for Mazandaran. Reflecting on recent statistics, the minister revealed that approximately 6.3 million foreign tourists visited Iran in the previous Persian year, which concluded in March 2024. To meet the target of 15 million tourists, he reiterated that enhancing infrastructure and securing investment are paramount, leading to the upcoming investment opportunities conference in Mazandaran. The minister also emphasized the untapped potential of Iran's handicrafts, asserting that these cultural treasures could play a crucial role in bolstering the economy. "During my field visits, I've witnessed the extraordinary capabilities in this sector," he added, advocating for prioritizing handicraft exports and removing existing barriers. He expressed optimism, noting

that with international market development, Iran's handicraft sector could initially generate over \$1 billion in foreign exchange. Addressing the significance of Iran's rich historical and cultural heritage, the minister stated, "We live in a land that shapes identity, where our historical artifacts embody our national pride." He underlined the importance of educating the younger generation about this heritage to foster cultural appreciation. Plus, he highlighted the duality of Iranian cultural identity, which interweaves national and religious elements. Celebrations such as Yalda and traditional events during Muharram and Ramadan exemplify this blend, illustrating the deep-rooted connection between history and faith in Iran. The minister also talked about the need for developing ecotourism alongside traditional hotels, as sustainable tourism models like ecotourism can significantly contribute to the sector's growth. "Many travelers are



drawn to authentic experiences and local customs," he explained, asserting that promoting ecotourism would not only preserve local culture but also stimulate the local economy.

The minister expressed confidence in the current government's commitment to improving the nation's circumstances. "Today, with national unity and collaboration, the government is

tirelessly working to address the challenges facing our people," he affirmed, adding that ongoing cooperation among various state entities is paving the way for national development.

## Iran Film Week underway in Russia's Astrakhan



### Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian Film Week is being held for the second consecutive year in Astrakhan, Russia, celebrating the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. This cultural initiative, hosted at the Illyuzion theater, aims to bolster collaboration between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Astrakhan region. The opening ceremony, which took place on January 30, was marked by speeches from key figures including Mehdi Akuchkian, the Consul General of Iran in Astrakhan, and regional officials such as Vladimir Galafkov, the head of International Relations Agency of Astrakhan, and Olga Prokofieva, the Minister of Culture. Akuchkian highlighted the significance of cultural cooperation amidst what he described as a growing trend of cultural and media aggression by certain global powers. He added, "In recent years, we have witnessed attempts to present dis-

torted narratives of independent cultures and societies through media and cultural instruments." He further emphasized that cultural collaboration among independent nations—particularly those sharing values of peace, justice, and respect for cultural diversity—is essential in today's world. Galafkov echoed these sentiments, recognizing Iran as a principal trade partner of Astrakhan and asserting that bilateral relations are expanding not only in commerce but also in cultural and humanitarian spheres. He underscored the importance of the Iranian Film Week in deepening these ties and expressed gratitude for the efforts of the Iranian Consulate in making such events possible. In a similar vein, Prokofieva pointed out the importance of enhancing human connections between Iran and Russia. She noted the successful participation of Iranian artists in the "The Seasons" classical music festival and regarded cinema as a powerful

medium for fostering mutual understanding of each country's culture and history. Prokofieva expressed optimism for continued cooperation in the cinematic realm. This year's film selection features socially themed narratives that reflect the everyday lives of Iranians, aiming to enhance the cultural understanding of the Astrakhan audience. Akuchkian, in an interview with Astrakhan 24, shared his personal affinity for historical, social, and comedic films, underscoring cinema's critical role in bridging the gap between the Iranian and Russian peoples. He also mentioned that Iranians have a keen interest in foreign films, particularly Russian productions that explore World War II themes. As a well-established cultural event in Astrakhan, Iranian Film Week serves as a valuable opportunity to enhance cultural interactions and foster mutual understanding between the two nations. Both Iranian and Russian officials expressed hope for the further expansion of these collaborations, with cinema acting as a bridge to strengthen ties between their peoples. Following the opening ceremony, the film 'Sima's Unfinished Narration' was screened, with audience feedback collected post-viewing. The schedule for the upcoming days includes the film 'No Prior Appointment' on January 31, and 'In the Arms of the Tree' on February 1. Also, the animated feature 'The Passenger from Ganora' is set to be showcased on February 2.

## Iran's '21 Weeks Later' to compete at two int'l film festivals



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film '21 Weeks Later,' directed and produced by Nasrin Mohamadpour, will compete at the 17th Santo Domingo International Film Festival in the Dominican Republic and the 9th Santander International Independent Film Festival in Colombia. Taking place from January 31 to February 6, 2025, the Santo Domingo festival, which is officially recognized by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF), serves as a pivotal platform for showcasing cinematic talent. Established in 1933, FIAPF is a global organization dedicated to safeguarding the economic and legal interests of its members, which include producers of film and television content. Initially headquartered in Paris, the organization now operates from Brussels and is recognized internationally as a regulatory body overseeing film festivals to protect producers' rights. The Santo Domingo festival, also known as "FCGSD," is noteworthy for being the first festival in the Caribbean to receive

FIAPF accreditation. Meanwhile, the Santander International Film Festival, running from February 24 to 28, 2025, promises to be a gathering point for independent cinema from around the world, emphasizing its role in fostering global artistic collaboration. '21 Weeks Later' has already garnered significant accolades, including the Special Jury Award at the 11th La Mirada Tabú Film Festival in Spain, the Best Asian Short Film award at the 28th Busan International Film Festival in South Korea, and a Special Jury Award at the 31st Golden Bull International Film Festival in Adana. Also, it has been showcased at various prestigious events, such as the 32nd Raindance Film Festival in the UK and the 57th Hof International Film Festival in Germany. The international distribution of '21 Weeks Later' is managed by Cinérama, led by Neshat Baqeri. The film features a talented cast, including Banafsheh Riazi, Leila Hosseinzadeh, Soudeh Bahraminejad, and Parisa Asgari, all of whom contribute to its compelling narrative.