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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) speaks with a woman during a conference marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities Tehran on December 2, 2025.
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Netanyahu weighs Iran option to boost election chances

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently stated in his formal pardon request to President Isaac Herzog that the Middle East would witness "extraordinary events" in the

coming months, describing this moment as an unrepeatable opportunity to advance Israel's interests. This comes after a US-brokered cease-fire agreement to end the Gaza war was signed in October, while Israel and the United States have been trying to win over more countries to join the Abraham Accords. Iran may also factor into this equation, as the 12-day June war ended with a cease-fire that fell short of achieving Israel's objectives. Meanwhile, new military activity near Iran's western borders has intensified speculation about a possible renewed

confrontation. Mansour Barati, an expert on Israeli affairs, has told Iran Daily that the "Iran file" is among the issues Netanyahu is considering as he attempts to restore his popularity and legitimacy with an eye on the upcoming elections in October 2026, and that, if he fails on other fronts, he may fall back on another confrontation with Iran.

IRAN DAILY: How should Netanyahu's remark about "extraordinary events" expected in the Middle East in the coming months be interpreted? Is this merely

promotional rhetoric, or a sign of concrete military intentions?

BARATI: Since Netanyahu deliberately used language vague enough to obscure whether he was referring to Iran, it cannot be stated outright that his rhetoric points to a new war with Iran. The intended message could well be tied to Israeli-Saudi normalization, which under current conditions would also count as a significant, and in Netanyahu's words "extraordinary," development. However, what is clear in Israel today is that Netanyahu needs to stir up a new crisis as

he faces elections in nearly ten months. His political position is extremely fragile, and he has been performing poorly in impartial, credible polls. It appears he believes a new crisis is politically necessary. The most likely scenario, however, is escalation on the northern front, namely Lebanon. The probability of this is considerably higher. Hezbollah has resisted disarmament, is rebuilding its capabilities despite considerable obstacles, and the project Israel initiated during the last war in Lebanon cannot be completed in current circumstances.

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FM says US policies pushing world toward 'law of jungle'

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the US policy of "peace through strength" was steering global affairs toward "the law of the jungle."

"When the concept of peace through strength is invoked, it effectively means victory goes to whoever has greater power, while the real peace should be achieved through diplomacy," Araghchi said in an interview with the program Ma' Moosa Al Farei in Oman's capital, Muscat which was published late Monday night.

"But if the goal is to establish peace through force, it will only lead to more wars and more confrontations, as each side tries to become stronger to impose its will. This American approach effectively undermines all human achievements since the end of World War II", he added.

The foreign minister noted that all countries had been trying to establish international relations based on law for

more than eight decades, "but today these relations are unfortunately moving toward ties based on force; something that is called the law of the jungle."

Israel's plots in region

Referring to Israel's acts of aggression against regional countries in recent years, Araghchi said that the regime had invaded seven countries in the past two years and was occupying the territories of three regional states. However, it still enjoyed complete immunity from the US and some European countries.

"The amount of territory that the Zionist regime has occupied in Syria since the fall of Bashar al-Assad is greater than the entire area of the Gaza Strip. And what is more regrettable is that we are witnessing plans to divide Syria into several parts. We consider this issue to be very dangerous, a danger to the entire region, because it can completely destroy its stability. The Zionist regime seeks to destabilize the region and



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks during an interview with the program Ma' Moosa Al Farei in Oman's capital, Muscat, which was published on December 1, 2025.

● IRNA

divide it into small units and fragmented states".

He also pointed to the Israel's June aggression against Iran, saying that the war, conducted with direct US involvement, occurred in the middle of the nuclear negotiations between Tehran and Washington, which was an attack not only on Iran but on diplomacy itself.

Asked whether direct dialogue between Tehran and Tel Aviv could ever be possible, Araghchi said Iran "does not recognize any legitimacy for the Zionist regime."

The occupation entity "does not belong to this region," he said, adding that it was established through "the usurpation of Palestinian land" and maintained by "crimes, killings, and genocide."



Qalibaf: SCO's drill sends clear message of collective resolve against dominating powers

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said the ongoing large-scale "Sahand 2025" counter-terrorism exercise, involving SCO member states, sends a clear message of collective resolve against dominating powers.

Speaking during an open session of the parliament on Tuesday, Qalibaf stated that the drill reflects the continuous improvement of Iran's defense cooperation and joint anti-terror measures with other nations, Press TV reported. Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has hosted a major counter-terrorism drill code-named Sahand 2025 involving various military units from member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the north-western province of East



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf speaks during a session of the parliament in Tehran, Iran, on December 2, 2025.

● ICANA

Azarbaijan. The extensive exercise kicked off in Shabestar County on Monday, and is scheduled to wrap up on December 5. Qalibaf noted that Iran's defensive cooperation and joint counterterrorism efforts with other countries are continually advancing, and their operational results will be evident in "neutralizing threats against Iran and dismantling terrorist groups."

"Holding this exercise

sends an important message to the dominating powers, showing that there is a serious will among independent countries to defend themselves against unjust global practices," he added.

The commander of the joint anti-terrorism exercise Sahand 2025, Brigadier General Vali Ma'dani noted that the primary objectives of the drill are to enhance the military knowledge of commanders and

personnel in countering terrorism, and to facilitate the comprehensive transfer of expertise among member states.

"The exercise aims to enable member countries to synergize their efforts toward a common goal of combating terrorism," he underlined.

General Madani stated that the SCO member states — Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Kazakhstan, Iran, India, and Belarus — are participating as official members in the drill, adding that neighboring countries, including Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Oman, and Iraq, are taking part as observers. Throughout all five phases, live ammunition will be used, and the main drill will last about three hours, added the commander.

UNSC president: Guterres to report on JCPOA-related resolution

International Desk

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is expected to represent a report to the UN Security Council on the implementation of Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, Slovenia's UN Ambassador Samuel Zbogor, president of the 15-member body, said on Monday.

Responding to a question about next steps for the so-called snapback mechanism triggered by the three European parties to the JCPOA to reinstate UN sanctions on Iran, Zbogor said the Security Council would receive a report from Guterres on the implementation of Resolution 2231 this month and a meeting would likely be called afterward.

Zbogor, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council, said a committee would be formed early in 2026 regarding the sanctions.

"That might be challenging [...] because you need a consensus," he said, noting that council members did not agree among themselves on that issue.

Resolution 2231 endorsed the historic nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers. Upon ratification, it mandated suspension of nuclear-related sanctions against Iran.

The United States, though, unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018 and reimposed



Samuel Zbogor

● un.org

and reinforced its sanctions on Iran and forced the European parties to the deal — France, Germany and Britain — to abide by them.

On August 28, the European trio instigated the snapback mechanism, which led to reimposition of international sanctions on Iran.

Iran, China, and Russia in a joint letter to Guterres in October affirmed termination of the resolution, saying that they "affirm that in accordance with operative paragraph 8 of Resolution 2231, all its provisions are terminated after 18 October 2025."

The date, therefore, "marks the end of the Security Council's consideration of the Iranian nuclear issue," the countries' envoys added.

Israel's 20-year plot failed to disintegrate nation: Top commander



Ali Jahanshahi

● IRNA

The commander of the Iranian Army's Ground Forces said a plot hatched by the Israeli regime over more than 20 years and deployed during Tel Aviv and Washington's 12-day war on Iran in June failed to cripple fracture the country. Speaking on Tuesday during an event in the northeastern city of Mashhad, Brigadier General Ali Jahanshahi said the war, which was backed militarily and technologically by the US-led military alliance of NATO, had been engineered by the re-

gime with strategic goals, including disarmament and political collapse, none of which materialized.

"The Zionist regime imposed this war to eliminate Iran's missile power and pursue disintegration of the nation, but it did not reach its ominous goals," he said, pointing to sustained defense readiness, missile deterrence, and drone operations as key pillars of Iran's response during the assault.

"Iran stood against the West during the 12-day aggression" Jahanshahi placed the war within a broader campaign of pressure that followed Iran's Sacred Defense (1980-1988), noting its similarity to the Western-backed conflict imposed on the country by Iraq.

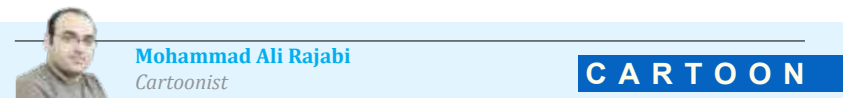
He noted that adversaries have since used "cultural infiltration, human-rights

accusations, the nuclear case, punitive sanctions, and finally the direct military confrontation [from June 23 to 25]" to attempt to destabilize the Islamic Republic.

On June 13, Israel launched an unprovoked war against Iran, assassinating many high-ranking military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

More than a week later, the United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories as well as the Al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi

Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran posts 150% surge in trade with D-8 in five years: *TPO* chief



Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi (front), the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), is seen at the D-8 Ministerial Meeting in the Egyptian capital of Cairo on December 2, 2025. ● IRNA

Economy Desk The head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced on Tuesday that Iran's trade relations with members of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation have grown by more than 150% over the past five

years and reached \$22 billion, even as he said the trade volume is still far from the desired level. Speaking at the D-8 Ministerial Meeting in the Egyptian capital of Cairo, Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi said the organization, with its rich resources, young population, and strategic location, possesses unparalleled potential to become an influential economic hub in the international arena. "Iran's trade relations with D-8 members have grown by over 150% in the past five years, reaching 22 billion dollars. Although this figure indicates the significant potential for trade among the group's members, it is still far from the desired level," Dehqan Dehnavi said. "Therefore, we urge all member countries to seriously commit to the full implementation and operationalization of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)." While welcoming the formation of an expert working group to examine tools for developing the PTA, which gives preferential access to certain products from the participating countries, Dehqan Dehnavi emphasized, "This working group, with the help of all members and the support of relevant international organizations, should conduct comprehensive technical evaluations and provide recommendations that guarantee the interests of all members. We expect the tangible results of this review to be presented at the upcoming ministerial meeting." The TPO chief underlined that, "Beyond the issue of tariff liberalization, it is essential that we

seriously pursue cooperation in other key areas, including customs cooperation and facilitation, logistics, transportation and transit, settlement mechanisms with national currencies, and private sector interaction through the cooperation of the member countries' chambers of commerce. Stressing that the Islamic Republic, despite facing unilateral and oppressive sanctions, remains committed to constructive cooperation within the framework of the D-8, Dehqan Dehnavi said, "We hope that member countries will consider our special circumstances and ensure that external restrictive measures do not hinder regional economic cooperation and integration." The TPO chief also expressed hope that the Cairo meeting would be a significant step towards achieving broader economic cooperation within the D-8 group.

ICT minister: \$20b investment required to enhance digital economy share

Economy Desk Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Sattar Hashemi, called on Tuesday for a 20-billion-dollar investment aimed at increasing the share of the digital economy in GDP to 10% as per the Seventh Development Plan (SDP). "Technology flows through all areas and aspects of our lives, and it's impossible to imagine living an hour without using communication capabilities," Hashemi said at a meeting in Kerman Province. Pointing to the fact that one of the most important duties emphasized by the SDP is economic growth, specifically the digital economy, the ICT minister said, "The plan's duty is to increase the share of the digital economy in GDP to 10%, which is currently below 5%, and to achieve this goal, we need a 20 billion dollar investment." Stressing that digital economy means how much we have been able to utilize technology's capacity to make services and products more productive, Hashemi said, "To achieve the 10% share, we inevitably must move towards the smartification of industries and mines, and Kerman can certainly be a trailblazer and helper in this path." The ICT minister also underscored the need for "communication infrastructure of appropriate quality" for digital transformation. "One of the issues on the agenda of the current government, after a century, is the migration from copper wire to fiber optic, and this large and lasting project will pave the way for digital transformation and the formation of a new economy in this field," he said. "The smartification of industries helps sustainable employment, and the content production ecosystem, which is extremely important, and data flows into the infrastructure, and all these events are possible with the private sector at the core. The important issue in this regard is that we can keep the province's elites in Kerman and make them a driving force for transformation and the digital economy," he added. Hashemi concluded that as we move towards a digital economy, cybersecurity becomes more important, and we are ready to advance work through interaction.



Sattar Hashemi ● IRNA

Iran proposed to revive Cuba's sugar industry for products marketing: *Chamber*

Economy Desk Head of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hassanzadeh, announced on Tuesday the offering of a proposal by the Cuban government for establishing a sugarcane agro-industrial complex in the Latin American country and a mechanism for marketing Iranian products, while detailing the achievements of an Iranian trade delegation's recent visit to Havana. "Cuban authorities expressed interest in accepting and facilitating the presence of reputable Iranian companies in their country, and it was decided that an Iranian company would directly and immediately market Iranian products in the Cuban market," Hassanzadeh said. "Cuba's Minister of Trade emphasized that the country's doors are wide open, and Iranian merchants and economic actors can count on the support of the Cuban government," he added. Pointing to the Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade's proposal to establish an agro-industrial complex in Cuba with the participation of Iranian investors, Hassanzadeh said, "Given the proposal, the Cuban government is ready to define a sugarcane agro-industrial project with Iranian investors in the first step; in such a way that a sugar production factory is established and sugarcane is cultivated in the lands around the factory. This project can either be in the form of an economic partnership or direct investment by Iranian companies." Hassanzadeh said the Cuban president had emphasized that the list of his country's needs and the areas of interest of the Cuban government for utilizing Iran's economic and production capacities would be announced to the Iranian Chamber of Commerce through the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Cuba. "With this positive approach from Cuban officials, the development of Iran's exports to Cuba is very achievable and attainable, even in the short term," he added.



Head of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Samad Hassanzadeh (L), signs a cooperation agreement with his Cuban counterpart, Antonio Carricarte Corona, during the Iranian business delegation's visit to Cuba for the 2025 Havana International Fair (FINAV) on November 25, 2025. ● otaghiranonline.ir

Netanyahu weighs Iran ...

Israel did inflict serious damage on Hezbollah's military infrastructure, command structure, and senior leadership, but in terms of changing Lebanon's political order to Hezbollah's detriment, which is Israel's strategic objective, very little progress has been made over the past year. Efforts to disarm Hezbollah or place all weapons solely under the control of the Lebanese army have been minimal. The process Israel hoped to see simply has not materialized. As a result, Israel now considers the Lebanon file an urgent priority. Without a more forceful push toward disarmament, Hezbollah could eventually make up for the previous losses through reconstruction. Lebanon also carries another layer of strategic significance. A confrontation there could ignite regional conflict.

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Escalation in Lebanon could spill over into neighboring states. Should Hezbollah find itself on the brink of disarmament, and Israel insist on imposing it militarily, potentially by sending its own forces and triggering another war, Iran might feel compelled to defend Hezbollah decisively. On the rhetorical front, with elections six to ten months away, Israeli politicians, especially a prime minister seeking re-election, have every incentive to crank up their political messaging. Netanyahu recently claimed in an interview that Israel "achieved its objectives" during the 12-day war with Iran, even though some of those goals included political change in Tehran, which Israel clearly did not achieve, or shifts in the military balance that ultimately were not realized despite the damage inflicted on Iran's defense

systems. So, although there is a degree of seriousness in his remarks, they also serve a political and promotional purpose and both aspects should be considered. **Given the recent military activity near Iran's western borders, is there a direct connection between these developments and Netanyahu's statements?** It appears the answer is yes. There is likely a direct link between incidents such as fighter jets reportedly entering Iraqi airspace, flying close to Iran's border, and Netanyahu's recent statements. Israel seems intent on provoking Iran into a reaction, gradually creating the pretext needed for a new confrontation. This suggests the region may be entering a ladder of escalation, moving steadily toward heightened tension.

What scenarios could lead to a renewed confrontation between Iran and Israel, and how likely are they in the short term? The first point is that if Netanyahu's domestic situation remains precarious, and if other agendas that could help him regain popularity fail to yield results, he may attempt to offset his legitimacy deficit through renewed military action against Iran. Several major issues could influence Israel's next elections and Netanyahu's potential political recovery. One is, of course, the Iran file. Another concerns formal annexation of the West Bank, or parts of it. A third relates to the future of Hamas; removing Hamas entirely from power in the Gaza Strip and allowing Netanyahu to present a political victory domestically. Another important one is the disarmament of

Hezbollah. Finally, normalization with Saudi Arabia is also on his agenda, and time is running short before elections. If Netanyahu fails to make progress on these fronts, he could be pushed toward renewed confrontation with Iran. Iran's internal political and social conditions will also be crucial. Should domestic dissatisfaction rise, widening the gap between the public and the state, and should new waves of protest emerge, the chances of confrontation would sharply increase, with Israel, and potentially the United States, almost certainly taking advantage of such conditions. Negotiations between Iran and Western parties are another factor. If diplomatic talks advance seriously, tensions could ease. But for now, tensions remain relatively high.

Peace in Ukraine; very near or very far?



By Ali Beman Eghbali Zarch
Expert on Eurasian affairs

OPINION

As the Ukrainian conflict approaches its fifth year, endeavors to terminate this asymmetric and exorbitant war, especially by the White House, have become more conspicuous. This occurred while the Russian military announced on November 20 that it had seized the city of Kupiansk, one of Ukraine's principal bastions in the Kharkiv region. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, stated in a meeting with Vladimir Putin that their forces are advancing on all fronts and reported progress in the regions of Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Pokrovsk, and Sieversk. The city of Kupiansk, which had approximately 55,000 inhabitants before the war, was occupied for several months in 2022 by the Russian army, but following a counteroffensive that resulted in the liberation of most of the Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine's Kharkiv province in September of the same year, General Gerasimov added that Russian forces continue to expand their zone of control in the Dnipropetrovsk region in east-central Ukraine, where they entered last summer, and in the Zaporizhzhia region in southeastern Ukraine, where they have advanced in recent weeks after months of a practically stagnant front there. Mr. Putin also stated in this session that they possess their own duties and objectives, that the principal point is unconditional attainment of the goals of the special military operation, and that the Russian people have placed their hopes in the leadership of the country and the armed forces and are awaiting the necessary results of the special military operation. Simultaneously, on November 19, 2025, several Western media outlets revealed details of a new peace plan for Ukraine, which members of the teams of Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump had been secretly working on without inviting Ukraine or the European Union to the negotiations. This 28-article document largely reiterates the Kremlin's maximalist demands. It appears that this plan is not regarded as realistic in Ukraine, nor in the West, and paradoxically not even in Russia. According to this plan, Russia could pay rent for Donbas to Ukraine. So, this plan requires Ukraine to relinquish the Donbas region entirely to Russia and to restrict its



From left to right: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and US President Donald Trump
● ANTHONY GERACE/THE ECONOMIST

armed forces. In return, Russia would return parts of the occupied territories in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces to Ukraine. Johann Wadephul, Germany's foreign minister, stated that Berlin had received no official information from its American ally regarding this plan, which had been secretly prepared by the White House and inspired by Trump's 20-article plan to achieve a cease-fire in the Gaza war. Jean-Noël Barrot, France's foreign minister, also stated regarding this plan that Ukrainians desire peace — peace that is equitable and respects the sovereignty of all, peace that is durable and does not undermine protection against future aggressions — and peace cannot be capitulation. Simultaneously, Marco Rubio, United States secretary of state, wrote on X that Washington will continue to prepare a list of possible ideas for terminating this war, based on the participation of both sides of the conflict, and that the attainment of a durable peace requires both sides to accept difficult but indispensable concessions. In Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated that Ukraine supports any strong and equitable proposal from Trump to terminate this war. However, he added, "The main thing for stopping the bloodshed and achieving lasting

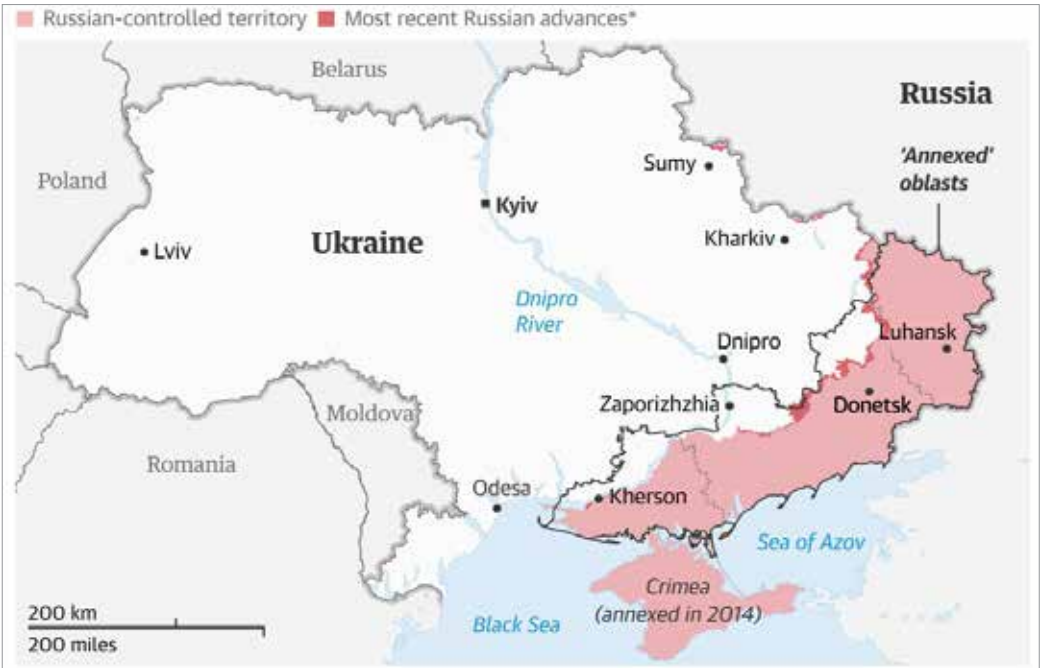
peace is that we work in coordination with all our partners and that American leadership remains effective, strong, and brings peace that will last long." Of course, Ukrainian officials acquainted with this plan have stated that it largely corresponds to the Kremlin's maximalist demands and is therefore completely unacceptable for Ukraine. Western analysts, especially Ukrainian ones, also believe that whatever is now presented as a new peace plan has no relation to peace; it is a plan for the gradual capitulation of Ukraine, and all theses contained in it entirely reiterate Putin's position stated almost four years ago. Conversely, Russian experts believe that this is not a plan but rather a synthesis of genuine, practical, and benevolent proposals, and that apparently this agreement envisages the transfer of Donbas by Ukraine to Russia. In Brussels as well, there is no optimism regarding this plan, since Kaja Kallas, the EU's chief diplomat, states that for any plan to become feasible, the support of Ukrainians and Europeans is required. Elina Valtonen, Finland's foreign minister, also stated that it appears the provisions of the peace plan were drafted in Moscow, and they entirely disregard the principles of the UN Charter and the juridical concept of territorial aggression. The reality is that the ensemble of

NATO countries — especially the United States — and even the populations, particularly the elites, of both Russia and Ukraine have become fatigued by the continuation of this war. NATO no longer possess a significant inclination for financial and military support for Kyiv. Washington also believes that Russia has become sufficiently debilitated and no longer possesses the capacity to assert itself as the world's second military power, and, on the other hand, Trump requires synergistic cooperation with Moscow for the implementation of some of his sweeping and ambitious projects from the West and East Asia to Latin America. In sum, although the rapid termination of this war serves, above all, the interests of the two nations of Ukraine and Russia, it may have additional consequences in the geopolitical dimensions of the European continent and other regions of the world. It may confirm the hypothesis that the war in Ukraine has been a conflict among the great powers and will also be concluded by them. Therefore, surrounding states and governments must remain vigilant so that they do not become among its victims or secondary beneficiaries.

The full article was first published in Persian by the Institute for Political and International Studies.



Russian service members hold a Russian flag in a park in Kupiansk, the Kharkiv Region, Ukraine, in this still image taken from a video released on November 21, 2025.
● RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY



The map shows areas where the Institute for the Study of War assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against Ukraine, but do not control as of November 23, 2025.
● THE GUARDIAN

Ukraine War; geopolitical gains, losses



By Lim Teck Ghee
Economic historian and
policy analyst

ANALYSIS

“The Ukrainian conflict should never have happened, and would not have happened if I were President.” — Donald Trump on Truth Social, September 2022

As the war in Ukraine stumbles into its endgame, analysts from the contesting sides will be evaluating the wins and losses in the struggle for power and dominance among Europe’s nations and other countries of the world having a stake in the outcome. What are the political and economic advantages gained or lost in this conflict supereminent in the arena of international geopolitics since it first started?

For now, it is clear that the 28-point peace plan currently providing the basis of a post-war settlement will have two winners — Russia and the United States. Both will be gaining strategic and economic advantages from what appears to be an asymmetrical plan requiring significant territorial concessions on the part of Ukraine.

An examination of the points likely to emerge from what could be the final Ukraine–Russia agreement provides the following list of potential gains and losses for the five key players in what has been amongst the deadliest wars in European history, and which ranks as one of the most casualty-intensive conflicts since World War 2.

Ukraine

For Ukraine, the end of active hostilities is likely to result in a loss of territorial sovereignty in Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, and other Russian-occupied areas. Its military is to be capped at a yet unresolved number, and no foreign troops are to be stationed on its soil. There will effectively be a ban on NATO membership — one of the catalysts of the war — though this is to be balanced by security guarantees already denounced as “vague”.

On the positive side, Ukraine will receive reparations primarily through a reconstruction fund financed in part by \$100 billion in frozen Russian assets — a proposal which Russia has rejected as amounting to “theft” — and an additional \$100 billion investment from Europe. Whatever the amount of reparations and resources poured into reconstruction, it can never make up for the devastating combination of hundreds of thousands of military and civilian casualties, massive displacement of over 11 million people, and hundreds of billions of dollars in economic and infrastructure damage that the present generation and future Ukrainians have to bear.

European Union (EU)

For the EU, the end of a devastating war on its doorstep has brought no territorial gain or enhanced security. Its war-oriented and fear-mongering policies have not produced any advantage against Russia. Rather, it has deepened internal divisions within the EU and undermined cohesion on how to engage with Russia. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which share a border with Russia and have imposed multiple rounds of sanctions, have taken big hits to their economy. The alleged threat of a Kremlin invasion has driven tourists and investors away, and sanctions have effectively shut down cross-border trade, which is unlikely to resume or recover anytime soon. Forced by Trump to drastically increase their defence budgets, EU member nations will find that whatever additional funding is provided, it is unlikely and unable to ensure greater security against Russia’s nuclear weaponry. An arms race in Europe, which the EU has committed itself to, will result in greater losses for the continent’s people due to significant economic and social costs, increased political fragmentation, dependence on external suppliers, and heightened security risks and instability. It will also



From left to right: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, a Ukrainian T-72 tank, French President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and Russian President Vladimir Putin
● GETTY IMAGES

make the prospect of a nuclear conflict breaking out in Europe more likely.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Whilst avoiding direct military confrontation with Russia, NATO has seen its expansion plans in Ukraine, Georgia, and other potential countries from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) thwarted. Just as important is its loss of prestige and standing as a powerful and potent political-military alliance with its professed peace-keeping principles now seen by many as meaningless or hypocritical.

NATO’s 32 member countries have a combined military force and defense spending far exceeding that of Russia. This includes superiority in personnel, air forces, and naval assets. But its military resources and industrial capacity, as well as financial resources, have been unable to provide a quick or delayed victory. As Ukraine’s military defeat is now almost inevitable, the end of the war is also seeing greater internal political disarray and coherence, particularly concerning long-term strategy and the relevance of NATO within Europe and in a multipolar world order.

Russia

The war in Ukraine has been enormously costly for Russia, with estimates suggesting the direct economic cost is over \$200 billion. Russia has also suffered a devastating human toll, with hundreds of thousands of casualties. However, Putin’s primary strategic objective to block NATO expansion into Russia’s eastern flank has been successful. Ukraine is now in the process of being neutralized and demilitarised. At the same time, it is highly probable that the territorial gains provided by the 2022 referendum in the four regions that were formerly part of Ukraine — as you may know, Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson voted overwhelmingly to formally join the Russian Federation — will be recognised and legitimized.

Also significant are the likely economic outcomes, even if modifications are made to the current peace plan in the attempt to push back on what is regarded as a US- and Russian-concocted agreement incorporating the maximalist demands of Putin. With the lifting of sanctions, Russia will see its reintegration into the global economy take place. Perhaps most significant is that it will restore Russia’s image as a major and respected global power. Within Russia, the peace deal is seen as a clear victory for Putin achieved on his own terms. The framing of the war’s conclusion as a triumph that has secured Russia’s national interest will undoubtedly enhance the Kremlin’s and Putin’s domestic and in-

ternational prestige and standing.

United States

US policy during Biden’s presidency was defined by its leadership of NATO and the provision of sustained military and financial support for Ukraine’s defense. The mission ostensibly to help Ukraine defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity saw the US become Ukraine’s largest military backer, providing billions in direct military aid, including advanced weaponry and intelligence. With Trump replacing Biden as the president, it is claimed that Trump’s realignment of American foreign policy in Europe — culminating with the peace agreement plan — will end US financial and military involvement in Ukraine’s war, reduce the drain on US resources, and prioritize an “America First” foreign policy approach.

Other key gains claimed include:

- **Financial benefits and reconstruction involvement:** The proposed peace plan includes provisions where the US would receive 50% of the profits from investments in Ukraine’s reconstruction. There is also the potential for US companies to gain access to Ukraine’s natural resources, including critical rare-earth elements.
- **Leveraging alliances for greater European contribution:** By conditioning US support and pushing a policy where the US sells weapons to NATO allies who then pass them to Ukraine, Trump can claim to benefit US industry.
- **Demonstrating diplomatic leverage/power:** By pursuing a separate US-Russia peace process and potentially recognizing Russian territorial gains, Trump can claim to demonstrate US power.
- **Potential of Russian reintegration:** A core part of the proposed plan involves

the potential reintegration of Russia into the global economy and a lifting of sanctions, which could lead to renewed trade and economic cooperation, benefiting US business interests. A big unknown is the potential of Russia as an ally against China, which both Republican and Democratic party leaders see as America’s existential rival in the world.

Beyond calculus of geopolitics

The scale of recent combined military casualties (killed and wounded) for Ukraine and Russia may run to over a million. The casualty count, along with its extensive debilitating socio-cultural, political, and economic impacts, will certainly be the focus of historians and others investigating the origins of the war while they debate whether the war was preventable or avoidable.

Besides questioning its inevitability — if President Trump is right, this war should never have taken place — analysts should also be focusing on how or why the combat and its horrific toll were permitted to go on for so long.

The possibility that Western leaders and their decision-making staff — Joe Biden, Boris Johnson, Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer, Emmanuel Macron, Friedrich Mertz, and others instrumental in encouraging the war and its prolongation — have as much, if not more, blood on their hands as their Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, is not as far-fetched as it may appear to be.

This question should be a fundamental concern for all skeptical of the propaganda of government explanations and the supportive narratives in the mainstream media, in any pursuit of an independent, objective, and critical account of the war.

The article first appeared on Eurasia Review.



● BÜŞRA ÖZTÜRK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Whilst avoiding direct military confrontation with Russia, NATO has seen its expansion plans in Ukraine, Georgia, and other potential countries from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) thwarted. Just as important is its loss of prestige and standing as a powerful and potent political-military alliance with its professed peace-keeping principles now seen by many as meaningless or hypocritical.

Golden girl Golshadnejad revels in fulfilled mission in Cairo



Iran's Atousa Golshadnejad poses with her gold medal on the podium at the World Karate Championships in Cairo, Egypt, on November 30, 2025.

WKF

Sports Desk

For Iranian karateka Atousa Golshadnejad, the objective was clear as she headed to Cairo: to capture gold at the World Karate Championships.

That goal was achieved on Sunday, when Golshadnejad secured her place in Iranian sporting history by winning the country's first-ever women's gold in 27 editions of the sport's flagship international event, defeating defending champion Li Gong of China 4-2 in the -61kg showdown.

The victory capped off a glorious international season for the 22-year-old Iranian, who had already captured a second Asian gold medal and a Karate 1-Premier League title earlier this year, before winning the ultimate prize at the Islamic Solidarity Games in mid-November.

"One of my primary goals was always to win gold at the World Championships," Golshadnejad told IRNA. "I wanted to be a worthy representative for the girls of my country, and now that I have done so, I am overjoyed to have brought this honor to Iranian karate."

The road to the top of the podium was demanding. "The level of competition was extremely high as every weight class featured the world's top 32 competitors," she noted.

Golshadnejad opened her campaign with consecutive wins over Cameroon's Dzeu Nelly (8-0) and Uzbekistan's Sevinch Otayboeva (2-1), then drew with Latvia's Beata Girvica (0-0) to finish atop the Pool 6 table and advance to the round of 16, where she overcame Chile's Bárbara Huaiquiman by hantei (decision).

A 5-0 quarterfinal victory over neutral athlete Maryia Azarava of Belarus was followed by a 4-1 semifinal win against Tunisia's Wafa Mahjoub in a repeat of their Islamic Solidarity Games final.

Reflecting on the final against her accomplished Chinese rival, Golshadnejad said: "I had faced her twice before — one win, one loss. A final always carries its own kind of pressure. I made a couple of early errors and gave up two points. Then I realized I couldn't just wait for her to slip up. I had to take the initiative. With crucial guidance from the head coach, I adjusted my approach, scored four straight points, and closed out the win."

That decisive voice in her corner belongs to Pegah Zangheh, a former Asian champion who also serves as Golshadnejad's personal mentor and trainer. Their partnership has fueled the Iranian athlete's trophy-laden rise.

"We have complete, mutual trust," Golshadnejad explained. "She is like an older sister to me. Even when I was behind in the final, her faith and her words gave me tremendous motivation to turn things around. I'm glad I could finally repay all her dedication and effort."

Behind the champion's determined composure on the tatami lies a deep story of family sacrifice.

"This gold belongs to my parents, especially my father," she said. "For 12 years, every single day, he drove me kilometers to the training hall, waited for hours until practice ended, and drove me home again. He always told me, 'You will become a world champion one day.' Now I've finally reached the day he envisioned. I truly owe this medal to him." Even so, Golshadnejad is conscious of the "great responsibility" that comes with her newfound status as the 'golden girl of Iranian karate.'

"I don't fixate on titles or labels. My focus is straightforward: to be a proper representative for my country and for all Iranian girls," she stated. "Iran's female karatekas have created so many proud moments in recent years, bringing genuine joy to the nation. We have been fortunate to serve as worthy representatives."

At such a young age, Golshadnejad's trophy cabinet already boasts the sport's most prestigious golds at the World and Asian Championships, as well as the Islamic Solidarity Games, with the Asian Games crown remaining the missing piece of glory in her career — one that could be achieved at Aichi-Nagoya 2026.

"I move forward step by step, with a plan," she said. "Our immediate focus is the Asian Championships. I must succeed there first, and then I will shift my full attention to the Asian Games." In Golshadnejad, Iran has found more than a champion; it has found an icon of perseverance, a testament to familial love, and a humble yet powerful voice for a generation of girls dreaming of their own golden moments on the world stage.

Women's Handball World Championship: Senegal setback sends Iran into President's Cup

Sports Desk

Iran suffered a third successive defeat at the IHF Women's Handball World Championship in Germany and the Netherlands, falling 30-21 to Senegal in Group B of the preliminary round. The result saw Senegal join Hungary and Switzerland in the main-round phase, while Iran will continue in President's Cup Group I, which also features Croatia, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Senegal showed determination from the first whistle to secure a main-round spot, opening with a 4-0 run and holding Iran scoreless for six minutes.

However, the momentum shifted as the midpoint of the first half approached. Senegal began making mistakes and rushing its attacks, while Iran stepped up its game. The contest remained tight for almost 20 minutes, but when Senegal pushed ahead to 13-8, it seemed the African side would close the half comfortably. Iran had other plans. The team found a way through Senegal's 6-0 defense, repeatedly reaching right wing Haniyeh Karimi, who led the charge in the first half. From trailing 12-16, Iran produced a 3-1 run to cut the deficit to 15-17 at halftime.



IHF


Senegal entered the second half with a change in goal, as Justicia Toubissa Elbeco finally came on and immediately made an impact, saving four early shots and giving her side the platform to pull clear. Senegal first built a five-goal lead and then extended it in the 43rd minute, when Dounia Abdourahim scored for 23-17.

Iran showed fighting spirit and pushed for more, but it was clear the team lacked fresh energy—especially when trying to break through a Sen-

egalese defense that grew more aggressive as the game went on. From that point, things steadily slipped away. By the 50th minute, Senegal held a double-digit advantage at 28-18 and had effectively secured the win.

Goalkeeper Justicia Toubissa Elbeco stood tall, finishing with a 57% save rate, while 12 of Senegal's 16 players scored at least once. Karimi remained Iran's top scorer with six goals.

Iran will resume play against Croatia on Thursday.




شرکت خدمات کشاورزی

Date: 1404/09/12 - No.:55/04/20334

INVITATION TO THE RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

Second Announcement

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY



وزارت جهاد کشاورزی

The Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to Ministry of Agriculture-Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below pesticide technical material, through renewal of one step international tender.

	Name	PACKING	Quantity/kg
1	Glyphosate Isopropylamine Salt Technical 62% w/w	200 or 250 kg drum	80,000

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Tuesday dated **2/12/2025** until **Monday** dated **8/12/2025** (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of IRI. Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30-character identification code of 3390397822635006500000000000008.

The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers the latest by **10:00 A.M. on Sunday, January 18, 2026** to our security office located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on **Sunday at 2:00 P.M., January 18, 2026** with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

We would like to emphasize that the value of the bid bond amount must be only submitted by the bidders in bank guarantee as follows:

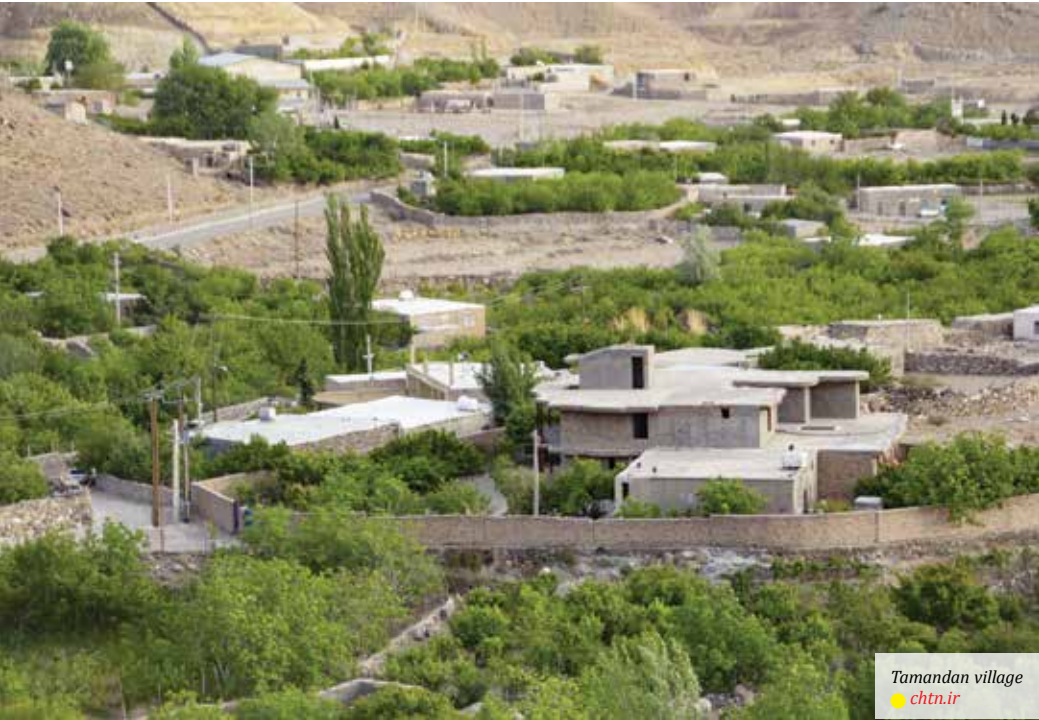
1- € 16170.65 for Glyphosate Isopropylamine Salt Technical 62% w/w equivalent to Iranian Rials 13,379,742,080.

- The bid bond value should be in Euro or in equal value of any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on the exchange rate of Telegraphic Transfer on CBI's ETS website, www.fxmarketrate.cbi.ir, on 15/11/2025 in bank guarantee.
- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial.
- After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as the bid bond.

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

Public Relations and International Affairs of Agricultural Support Services Company

Road project to boost tourism in Sistan and Baluchestan



Tamandan village
● chtn.ir



Tamin village
● IRNA

Iranica Desk

Tourism, one of the world’s key employment-generating industries, has become a cornerstone of economic growth and regional development in recent decades. Sistan and Baluchestan Province, with its diverse climate, rich cultural and historical heritage, and pristine natural landscapes, holds significant potential to become a leading tourism destination in Iran. In this context, connecting two tourism villages — Tamandan on the southern slopes of Taftan Mountain in Taftan, and Tamin on the northern slopes in Mir-

javeh — could mark a turning point in regional development. Currently, these villages are accessible only via a difficult and unsafe 10-kilometer mountain route, chtn.ir wrote. The existing dirt track, lacking safety measures, severely limits access for both ordinary tourists and local residents, and is navigable only by locals with specialized vehicles. Officials say upgrading, securing, and asphaltting this route would create a direct physical link between these two key tourism centers of Taftan Mountain and establish a strategic connection between Taftan, Khash, and the border town of

Mirjaveh. Acting as a secondary tourism corridor, the road would ease access to natural and cultural attractions, reduce traffic on main routes, and help distribute visitors more evenly across the province. The project is expected to bring substantial economic and social benefits, including increased tourist arrivals, longer stays, development of local businesses, improved livelihoods, and lower transportation costs. Morteza Tamandani, a local cultural activist, emphasized that the tourism potential of Taftan Mountain and the opportunity to connect these villages have long been overlooked. He said,

“This 10-kilometer route is a hidden treasure. With modest investment and a strategic vision, it can become an economic lifeline for the region. Neglecting this infrastructure has deprived the province of countless opportunities.” The Head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Taftan highlighted the technical aspects of the project, noting that upgrading the route requires detailed geological, hydrological, and road engineering studies. Proper implementation, respecting both technical and environmental standards, would not only improve access to Taftan Mountain

and surrounding pristine areas but also open a new gateway to cross-border and international tourism through Mirjaveh. Younes Mirbalochzahi added that realizing this project requires close cooperation among executive agencies and the allocation of national and provincial funding to fully harness the area’s untapped potential. He underlined that linking Tamandan and Tamin represents not only a critical step in developing the province’s tourism industry but also a unique opportunity to create sustainable employment and improve local livelihoods. The project has been prioritized in the prov-

ince’s infrastructure development plans, with full efforts underway to secure funding and accelerate implementation, aiming for transformative impact. Given the economic, social, and tourism potential of the region, upgrading and asphaltting the Tamandan-Tamin route is a strategic necessity. This initiative, envisioned as a “golden corridor,” could ensure balanced and sustainable development in eastern Sistan and Baluchestan. Expediting feasibility studies and securing the necessary funding is considered vital, requiring strong support from provincial and national authorities.

Men, women practice centuries-old oil-making in Saqi village

Iranica Desk

Not so long ago, with the first cool waves of autumn sweeping down from the surrounding plains toward Saqi Village at the foot of the southern mountains of Gonabad, the unspoken calendar of village life quietly ushered in a new season. This was the season of preparation for the harsh winter ahead, and one of the most important symbols of this readiness was the “Autumn Oil-Making” ceremony. Rooted in the subsistence economy and traditional family structures, this ritual was far more than a simple culinary activity — it was a full-fledged cultural manifesto. The tradition was closely tied to the departure of the village men. The cold autumn and winter in Saqi compelled men to travel to the regional economic hub of Mashhad. These journeys were not merely for gathering the year’s essential provisions; they also served as an opportunity for social exchange and news from the outside world. The primary commodity sought was the fresh, white tail fat of sheep. These tail fats were regarded as the village’s “autumn capital.” When the men returned laden with this vital resource, it marked the official start of the household season. This stage also reflected the traditional gender division of labor in Iranian families: men were responsi-



ble for procuring essential goods from the outside world, while women processed and transformed them within the safety of the home. Mohammad Dehqan, a researcher of folk culture, told ISNA that with the return of the men, the women’s work began. The tail fats were spread out on a large table and carefully chopped into as small pieces as possible. These fatty pieces were then placed in a large stone cauldron. The folk culture researcher described how the melting process began over a gentle, controlled flame. The scent of the initial rendering would waft through the village like a verbal announcement, signaling to neighbors that someone’s home was busy with oil-making. As the heat continued, clear, honey-colored oil separated from the fat. What remained at the



end of the process was the delicious “Jezghaleh” — but it was not yet ready for consumption. Achieving the ideal crispness and aroma required a more precise process. Therefore, the hot Jezghaleh was gently transferred into clay containers (or Qadah) and moved to a special room.



● ISNA

Dehqan explained that this room was cool and dimly lit. The Jezghaleh would remain there for three to five days, being turned over daily to remove all moisture, eventually transforming into crispy, salty bites that were a favorite treat for children. He added that the main product

— the pure oil — was carefully stored in sealed metal containers, often made of tin. These containers became the family’s oil treasury, providing a distinct flavor and warmth to Saqi’s winter tables. After the melting and drying process, the final product was ready for storage. The oil was poured into metal vessels made from a tin and zinc alloy, sealed tightly with screw-on lids. Dehqan explained that these containers were considered the best storage solution because they were impermeable and non-reactive with the oil. Each household had several containers, each dedicated to a different stored product. Sheep tail fat oil gave a distinctive flavor to Saqi dishes — a taste unlike any modern oils. He emphasized that the process represented a complete social

cycle. The autumn oil-making ritual was not just about producing oil; it was a practical school of household economy. From a young age, children learned how to manage resources and appreciate the value of every morsel, lessons that remained part of daily life in the village. He added that in folk culture, homemade oil was considered a symbol of blessing. Oil produced with effort and in the presence of the entire family was believed to bring positive energy to the household table. This was a metaphysical concept embedded in the local economy, still cherished in the memories of older generations. With changes in lifestyle and the arrival of factory-produced oils, many of these labor-intensive steps have become obsolete. The researcher explained: “Today, Saqi, like many other villages, buys its oil from stores. But the absence of that process, the missing aroma, and the long conversations around the cauldron have created a gap in the village’s collective memory.” He noted that although modern machinery has made the work faster, speed has not replaced the quality of lived experience. Back then, Jezghaleh was more than just a snack; it was a morsel whose saltiness you measured yourself and whose crispness you verified with your own hands. This authenticity is lost in industrial products.



International Day of Persons with Disabilities

President calls for citizen support, inclusivity for the disabled

Social Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian called on citizens not to divide "people into insiders and outsiders" and pledged that the government would stand "hand in hand" with persons with disabilities and the wider public to improve the country. He made the remarks at a ceremony in Tehran marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 2, president.ir reported. Pezeshkian highlighted the determination and creativity of people with disabilities, saying what he witnessed was "a lesson" and reflected the message of a book presented to him, "Bad events are a gold mine." He noted that the early days of his administration had been marked by challenges, but adversity revealed opportunities that might otherwise have been overlooked. He outlined his government's plan to mobilize citizen capacities through neighbor-

hood-based initiatives, stressing that public participation is key to solving national problems.

"If anyone thinks challenges can be overcome without the support and engagement of the people, they are mistaken," Pezeshkian said. "By relying on all citizens, regardless of gender, language or ethnicity, no problem is insurmountable." The president acknowledged the impact of uneven development and pledged that his administration would focus on balancing opportunities and resources.

He emphasized that improving conditions for people with disabilities is a priority, though the government alone cannot solve all challenges. "With citizens' participation, we can overcome any difficulty," he said. Pezeshkian also praised the involvement of citizens in advancing educational justice. He recounted moving examples, such as a mother who, despite losing her child in an accident and lacking a home, donated



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at a ceremony in Tehran marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 2, 2025.
● president.ir

compensation to build a school. "If we rely on the people, no challenge is insurmountable," he added.

Officials from the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare and the State Welfare Organization outlined ongoing programs to enhance accessibility, rehabilitation, and the social participation of persons with disabilities. Pezeshkian described these efforts as evidence of trust in the capacities of disabled citizens and their potential to drive social progress.

During the ceremony, eight individuals with disabilities and several rehabilitation professionals were honored for their contributions. Two awardees shared their experiences of overcoming personal chal-



lenges with state support. One presented Pezeshkian with the book that had inspired his earlier remarks. Pezeshkian said, "We bow be-

fore your abilities, and above all, your will and perseverance." He added that external pressures or attacks could not break a determined nation.

"With your support, we stand ready to build our country better and ensure we are never a source of shame to the people," he said.

Iran to create 3,000 new rural green stays in two years: Minister



Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian government plans to establish 3,000 new eco-tourism lodges across rural villages over the next two years, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, announced on Tuesday. That vision signals a broader push to channel tourism development firmly toward "national interest," he told representatives of the country's tourism industry at a meeting of professional trade

associations in Tehran, IRNA reported.

The project aims to stem rural depopulation, preserve cultural identity and generate new income streams.

Salehi-Amiri outlined what he called three possible scenarios for the coming period, from "status-quo" to "stability" to "renewed crisis", depending on regional dynamics.

He urged tourism associations to act as the ministry's "link to society" and its "advisory arm" in enforcing regulation, especially for lodging and hospitality services. Under the eco-tourism drive, one rural village could host at least one officially sanctioned lodge.

He called the increasing demand for five-star hotels a "vote of confidence" in tourism's revival.

He also signaled efforts to streamline exit-taxes for overseas travel and museum-ticket levies,

and to ensure that health-tourism, cultural tours and handicrafts work in tandem.

On unauthorized lodging, the ministry prefers dialogue first. But if informal "guest houses" fail to register for licenses, authorities will resort to legal enforcement.

Salehi-Amiri added that government policy going forward will prioritize upholding human dignity, highlighting commitments to improve access for staff with disabilities, including special accommodations in travel, workplace facilities and discounted rates at qualified hotels.

He described the eco-tourism plan as a bridge linking village livelihoods with cultural preservation, "Keeping villagers at home is equivalent to safeguarding the culture and art of Iran." Authorities expect the first wave of new lodges by late 2026.

Spanish one-shot festival awards 'The Scapegoat'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian actress Fate-meh Sadeghi received a diploma of merit for best actress for her performance in the short film 'The Scapegoat' at the 11th edition of One Shot Terrassa City of Film in Terrassa, near Barcelona, Spain.

The film, written and directed by Ali Fard, was also chosen as a nominee for Best Screenplay at this year's Milton Keynes Film Festival in the UK, ILNA reported.

'The Scapegoat' has already charted an impressive international festival run. It previously collected Best Director at Moon Arts Film Festival in Italy, won Best Foreign Film at Arts & Short Film Festival,



earned Best Screenplay at the US-based KIFF and a diploma of merit for directing at Italy's I Corti Dei Fabbri Festival.

The film has been submitted to a total of 29 international festivals. Among them are the Bahia Independent Film Festival in Brazil, Ocean City Film

Festival in the United States, Touchstone Independent Film Festival and the US-based BOOM! Film Festival.

Its cast includes, besides Sadeghi, actors such as Amir Shams, Nima Qasemi, Mahnaz Ansari, Mehdi Omid, Sobhan Rouhnejad and Hossein Doosti.

25 countries submit record entries to Iran's heritage festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The fourth International Multimedia Festival of Cultural Heritage in Iran has drawn submissions from 25 countries, organizers said on Tuesday, with more than 6,000 unique works now entered by domestic and international artists. Speaking at a coordination meeting at the Fajr Hall of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage,

Tourism and Handicrafts, festival secretary Mehdi Faraji said 5,900 pieces from Iranian creators have already been received, alongside 130 works from abroad.

"The trend clearly indicates a strong 'appetite' among artists for this year's festival," he added, IRNA reported.

The event has grown steadily since its debut in Yazd with 2,900 entries, followed by

3,700 in Qazvin and 4,500 in Shiraz. This year Khuzestan hosts the festival, signaling the organizers' focus on decentralizing cultural activities across the country.

Workshops led by heritage experts will run alongside the competitions, while a touring photography exhibition will reach 10 cities in Khuzestan province. A newly added section, "Future Guardians of

Heritage," targets children and adolescents and has already attracted significant interest. Faraji also said the festival will recognize prominent artists and leading media outlets covering the event.

A week-long Khuzestan cultural celebration, showcasing performances and traditions from various ethnic groups, will precede the closing ceremony.

