



# Pezeshkian prioritizes mental health amid unrest, seeks medical reassurance

## Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian underscored the critical need for comprehensive mental health support across Iranian society during a review of a health plan implementation on Wednesday, president.ir reported. The meeting, held in Tehran, assessed the program's progress, particularly in pilot regions, and highlighted the escalating mental health crisis stemming from recent unrest. Addressing the psychological, social, and mental health dimensions of our society is now the most crucial priority for the healthcare system, Pezeshkian stated. He emphasized the government's commitment to supporting this effort and urged the medical community to actively participate. "We are obligated to en-

sure the health of our people, not only physically but also psychologically and socially." The president acknowledged the significant impact of social determinants of health (SDH) on the recent incidents, citing statistics indicating a substantial portion of casualties and hospitalizations were linked to social factors. "Physicians can play a vital role here, as many of these individuals faced psychological trauma, mental health disorders, or issues related to employment and social deprivation," he explained. Pezeshkian stressed the importance of preventative interventions, stating, "If the healthcare system and medical community adopt this proactive approach, we shouldn't witness such events. Timely mental health interventions can play a decisive role in reducing tensions and controlling social consequences."

He further cautioned the system against falling prey to analyses that serve the interests of adversaries. Addressing the medical community directly, Pezeshkian urged reassurance regarding the events. "It is essential to reassure the medical community about the realities of recent events," he said. "Until you are convinced, you cannot properly fulfill your professional and ethical responsibilities towards those affected and society as a whole." The president also called for a nationwide expansion of mental health interventions, moving beyond pilot programs. "Preventing incidents is far more important to me than dealing with the aftermath of unrest," he asserted. He suggested that healthcare centers conduct thorough analyses of the recent events from a professional perspective. Pezeshkian concluded by emphasizing



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a session on mental health held in Tehran on January 21, 2026.  
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the potential of the medical community to be a powerful force for social stability. "I believe they can be more impactful than many cultural institutions," he said, referencing his previous experience in medical leadership.

## Historic Rasht bazaar suffers devastating losses, restoration unlikely



## Arts & Culture Desk

Three Qajar-era caravanserais within Rasht historic bazaar were completely destroyed by fire during recent unrest, officials confirmed Wednesday, effectively ruling out the possibility of restoration for the irreplaceable structures. The blaze, which engulfed the 24-hectare market, has been described as a "catastrophe" by cultural heritage officials. According to Alireza Izadi, Di-

rector-General of the Office of Registration of Historical Monuments and Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the damage is extensive. "The situation in Rasht historic bazaar is an absolute catastrophe," Izadi told the ILNA after a recent assessment of the damage. "Three historic caravanserais, the Small Taq (arch), the Large Taq, and the Malek Caravanserai, have been completely con-

sumed by the fire." The historic bazaar, a sprawling complex of interconnected courtyards, squares, and caravanserais dating back to the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods, is a significant tourist attraction. The Taq structures, the Moshtasham Caravanserai, the Chinese Bazaar, the Malek Caravanserai, the Golshan Caravanserai, and the Qeysariyeh Caravanserai were among the bazaar's most treasured landmarks. The Malek Caravanserai, in particular, played a vital role in the export of rice to Russia and silk to Kashan and Yazd during the Qajar era. Izadi stated that the intensity of the fire in certain sections of the bazaar rendered restoration impossible. "Unfortunately, in some parts of the historic bazaar and within the aforementioned caravanserais, the intensity of the fire was such that restoration of these complexes is not possible. These structures will need to be entirely rebuilt."

The bazaar has a history of destruction, having previously been ravaged by fire during the reigns of Karim Khan Zand and Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, as well as by earthquakes and negligence. "The bazaar has seen many incidents throughout history," Izadi noted. "It has been set ablaze by the soldiers of Karim Khan Zand and looted by the soldiers of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar. Earthquakes and carelessness have also repeatedly led to the destruction and burning of Rasht bazaar, to the point where shops, mosques, and even historic churches have been completely destroyed." The ministry is currently compiling a comprehensive report on the damage to historical sites across the country resulting from the recent unrest. "Last week, we requested all provinces to report the extent of damage to historical monuments and structures during the recent events," Izadi added.

## Veteran actor Reza Rooygari dies at 79

## Arts & Culture Desk

Reza Rooygari, a celebrated veteran actor of Iranian cinema, theater, and television, died at 79 early Wednesday in Tehran following a heart attack, according to the House of Cinema. Rooygari's extensive filmography includes iconic roles in films such as 'The Tenants' (1987), 'The Eagles' (1985), 'Boutique' (2004), and 'The Good, the Bad, the Corny' (2017). He also appeared in numerous television series, including the popular 'Mahalle Behdasht' (1984) and 'Mokhtarnam' (2010-2011). Rooygari's career began in theater in 1969, and he quickly gained recognition for his versatility and captivating performances. A pivotal moment arrived in 1979 when he was approached by composer Fereydoon Khoshnood to record a revolution-



ary anthem for the burgeoning movement, a moment he later described as "a call to action." "It was a time of great change, and I felt compelled to contribute," Rooygari once remarked. Beyond acting, Rooygari was also a talented singer, releasing albums of revolutionary songs, and a painter. In recent years, his health had been a concern, with reports of strokes and related complications surfacing since 2014.

## Iranian mountaineer lost on Makalu after winter ascent

## Social Desk

Iranian alpinist Abolfazl Gozali is missing after a successful winter ascent of Mount Makalu, the world's fifth-highest peak, officials confirmed Wednesday. Gozali, 43, disappeared during his descent somewhere between Camp IV and Camp III, following a triumphant summit bid on January 15 alongside a Nepali Sherpa team, marking the first Iranian winter ascent of the 8,485-meter (27,838-foot) peak in 17 years, IRNA reported. The body of Sherpa climber Phurba Ongel has been found at 7,500 meters. He had previously summited Manaslu and Lhotse, and held the record for the fastest acquisition of the Snow Leopard award, a prestigious recognition for climbing seven peaks over 6,000 meters. Gozali embarked on his Makalu expe-



dition with the "Sano Sherpa" team from Nepal on December 17, aiming to conquer the notoriously difficult peak during the winter season. The mountain, known locally as the "Black Devil" due to its frigid temperatures - often plummeting below -30°C (-22°F) - presents formidable conditions, including steep rock and ice faces and unpredictable weather patterns. Only one previous winter ascent of Makalu has been recorded, achieved by Polish and Italian climbers decades ago.

"The situation is incredibly complex," stated Hamid Mosaedian, head of the Iranian Mountaineering Federation's rescue committee. "One of the Sherpas fell, and several others went to assist him. Gozali descended alone, and we haven't seen him since. Rescue teams were deployed, but unfortunately, they haven't located him." Search and rescue operations, hampered by severe weather conditions, are ongoing. Teams are currently assessing the possibility of renewed efforts once wind speeds subside in the coming days. According to 8K Expeditions, four experienced Sherpa rescuers-Ashok Lama, Pasdawa Sherpa, Ang Chhiring Sherpa, and Pasang Tenji Sherpa-were deployed to Base Camp on Saturday morning in a voluntary mission to recover the deceased climber and search for the missing Iranian alpinist.

## Fresh initiatives needed ...

**What scenarios are conceivable for the future of Iran-IAEA relations? Is it possible to reach a new agreement? What prerequisites are necessary for such a deal?**

Iran's foreign policy needs new initiatives. Apart from consultations with regional players like Egypt, Qatar, and Oman, which have limited influence, Iran has not proposed any specific initiatives. Simply asserting its rights under the NPT, which grants it the right to peaceful nuclear energy and enrichment, is not enough and will not achieve anything in the current complex global situation. Relying solely on regional mediation will not solve the problem either: Iran's foreign policy toward the nuclear appears to have lacked creativity. This inertia in foreign policy, distancing from the IAEA, Washington's unilateralism, the lack of serious solutions, and the absence of regional treaties have created a deadlock that promises nothing good. Iran must tie its interests to those of regional countries and create regional security pacts and estab-

lish regional nuclear consortiums.

**If the case is referred to the UN Security Council, what possibilities and challenges lie ahead?** In this scenario, Iran might be able to count on China and Russia's veto power. However, these countries voted against Iran in the UN prior to 2015, which led to the country being brought under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. They might do so again in a larger game with the US. As the old saying goes, countries have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests, and the support of these two countries could diminish. Iran's alliance with Russia and China, despite having a strategic title, will not provide major assistance if the country is placed under Chapter VII due to the lack of military treaties and a joint defense clause. We are now facing a new US that is different from one under Obama and Biden. Today's America prioritizes unilateralism in its policies and does not even rely on the UN Security Council's final vote, making a mere consensus sufficient for it to take measures against Iran's nuclear program.