


Pezeshkian: Iran-Azerbaijan Strategic Partnership Possible
 TEHRAN -- Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian here Tuesday called for strengthening of cooperation with Azerbaijan in a meeting with the country's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev.
 "Relations with Azerbaijan are of particular importance to us, and we seek to expand relations in all fields between the two countries," Pezeshkian said.
 He pointed to agreements between the two countries in trade, energy, and transportation sectors, saying the two countries can turn into strategic partners.
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Minister: Iran Not Afraid of Trump's Sanctions
 TEHRAN -- Iran's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance says the country is not afraid of a potential new round of "maximum pressure" under U.S. President Donald Trump, saying plans are in place to cope with any eventualities.
 In an interview with national broadcaster, Abdolmohammad Hemmati said that Iran once experienced tough economic conditions and learned how to deal with it when Trump was U.S. president for a first term from 2016 to 2020.

Viewpoint
With 20 Lies on Day One, Trump Surpass Own Record of 30,573 Untruths

Qom to Host Conference on Centers of Islamic Studies



Children's Corner



Piazza: We Continue on Julio Velasco's Path



Israel's Military Chief, Gaza War Commander Resign Over 'Terrible Failure'

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- Israel's military chief Herzl Halevi on Tuesday resigned, citing failures in relation to Hamas' surprise operation on southern occupied territories on October 7, 2023. His resignation will take effect on March 6.

"The responsibility for this terrible failure stays with me every day, every hour, and will remain with me for the rest of my life," Halevi wrote in his resignation letter to war minister Israel Katz.

Halevi is the most senior Zionist figure to resign over the fiasco when thousands of Hamas-led fighters carried out a land, sea and air assault into southern Israeli occupied territories, overtaking army bases for hours.

The Israeli opposition leader, Yair Lapid, called on the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his cabinet also to resign.

"Now, it is time for them to take responsibility and resign -- the prime minister and his entire catastrophic regime," he said.

Halevi will formally step down in March as the first stage of Israel's ceasefire deal with Hamas in Gaza comes to an end.

He had been widely expected to resign. It was not immediately clear who would replace him.

Senior Israeli political figures, including Netanyahu, have resisted the establishment of a state commission of inquiry despite polling that suggests an overwhelming majority of settlers back such a move.

Maj Gen Yaron Finkelman, the head of Israel's southern command, which oversees genocide in Gaza, also tendered his resignation on Tuesday.

Israeli political analysts have long suggested that Netanyahu planned to blame Halevi for the failures of October 7. It is unclear whether Halevi will now back calls for an inquiry.

In a statement shared with media, Halevi said the failures

of October 7 would stay with him for the rest of his life.

Israel, he said, "paid a heavy and painful price" in lives lost, in captives taken, calling it a "great disaster".

"My responsibility for this terrible failure accompanies me every day, every hour and will remain with me for the rest of my life."

Underlining Halevi's unpopularity, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the extremist leader of Jewish Power, who quit as security minister over the ceasefire deal, welcomed Halevi's resignation.

About 1,200 Zionists were killed in the operation and 250 were captured. More than 90 of those taken captive are still in Gaza, about a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Halevi was seen as being in broad agreement with the former war minister Yoav Gallant, whom Netanyahu fired in November, but he appeared to be at odds with Gallant's replacement, Israel Katz, over the direction of the war.

The far-right finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, who has threatened to bring down Netanyahu's cabinet over the ceasefire deal, suggested on Monday that the military needed a new chief of staff.

"We need to occupy the strip and establish a military government there. I want a chief of staff who understands that this is his goal, stands behind it and is going to realize it," he said.

A Palestinian civilian was killed on Tuesday by Israeli forces in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, despite a ceasefire agreement having come into effect on Sunday.

Wafa news agency reported that Salem Abu Shabeika was shot dead in Tel al-Sultan refugee camp, west of Rafah city.

On Monday, Israeli gunfire killed two Palestinian children and injured several others in Rafah.

The ceasefire agreement, which took effect on Sunday, is designed to last for 42 days

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Leader Calls for Giving Scope to Private Sector



Ayatollah Khamenei listens to a manufacturer at an exhibition showcasing the capabilities and achievements of the private sector in Tehran on Tuesday.

TEHRAN -- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Tuesday paid a visit to an exhibition held here to showcase the achievements of the country's private sector.

The event, dubbed "Pioneers of Progress, a National Event of the Capabilities and Achievements of the Private Sector", began at Imam Khomeini Hussainiya on Tuesday morning.

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — A fire raged through a 12-story hotel at a popular ski resort in northwestern Turkey early Tuesday during a school holiday, killing at least 66 people — at least two of them when they jumped from the building to escape the flames, officials said.

At least 51 people also were injured in the fire at the Grand Kartal hotel in Kartalkaya, in Bolu province's Koroglu mountains, some 300 kilometers (185 miles) east of Istanbul, said Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya. The fire occurred near the start of a two-week winter break for schools, when hotels in the region are packed.

"We are in deep pain. We have unfortunately lost 66 lives in the fire that broke out at this hotel," Yerlikaya told reporters after inspecting the site.

Atakan Yelkovan, a hotel guest staying on the third

floor, told the IHA news agency there was chaos on the upper floors as other guests tried to escape the fire, including by trying to climb down from their rooms using sheets and blankets.

"People on the upper floors were screaming. They hung down sheets ... Some tried to jump," Yelkovan said.

Health Minister Kemal Memisoglu said at least one of the injured was in serious condition, while 17 other people were treated and released.

The hotel had 238 registered guests, Yerlikaya said. The fire was reported at 3:27 a.m. and the fire department began to respond at 4:15 a.m., he told reporters.

The government appointed six prosecutors to lead an investigation into the blaze, which is believed to have started in the hotel's restaurant section. Justice Minister

industry, water and electricity industries, textile industry, medical and hospital equipment, and pharmaceutical production, stem cells, agricultural and livestock products, and handicrafts and tourism.

During his tour of the exhibition, Ayatollah Khamenei said the only way for Iran to progress is to utilize the capabilities of the private sector.

Yilmaz Tunc said four people, including the hotel's owner, were detained for questioning as part of the investigation.

At least two of the victims died when they jumped from the building in panic, Gov. Abdulaziz Aydin told the state-run Anadolu Agency earlier. Those killed included Nedim Turkmen, a columnist for Sozcu newspaper, his wife and two children, the newspaper announced.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced a day of national mourning to be observed on Wednesday. All flags at government buildings and Turkish diplomatic mission abroad would be lowered to half-staff, he said.

Necmi Kepcetutan, a ski instructor at the hotel, said he was asleep when the fire erupted and he rushed out of the building. He told NTV television that he then helped

The Leader talked to a number of manufacturers and heard their views, after which he called on the administration and its officials to address their complaints.

"The progress of the country depends on giving scope to the private sector, and the only way to advance the country is to use the capacities and capabilities of the private sector," he said.

Upon hearing the minister of energy's explanations about ways to eliminate imbalances in the energy sector, Ayatollah Khamenei urged their implementation.

"The issue of imbalances and their solutions has always been on the agenda in recent years, but there is still a long way to go to reach the desired point," the Leader said.

On Wednesday, a group of private sector manufacturers will meet with Ayatollah Khamenei to share their viewpoints on ways to kickstart a leap in production through popular participation.

Ayatollah Khamenei named the Iranian calendar year of 1403, which ends on March 20, 2025, the year of "Surge in production through people's participation."

some 20 guests out of the hotel.

The hotel was engulfed in smoke, making it difficult for guests to locate the fire escape, he said.

"I cannot reach some of my students. I hope they are OK," the ski instructor told the station.

Television images showed the roof and top floors of the hotel on fire.

Witnesses and reports suggested that the hotel's fire detection system failed to operate.

"My wife smelled the burning. The alarm did not go off," said Yelkovan, the guest interviewed by IHA. "We tried to go upstairs but couldn't, there were flames. We went downstairs and came here (outside)," he said.

Yelkovan said it took about an hour for the firefighting teams to arrive.

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Fire at Ski Resort Hotel Kills Scores in Turkey