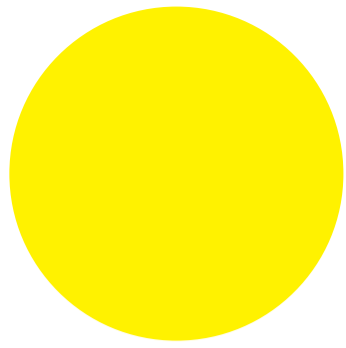


Aref: Iran's ties with world countries based on national interests, priorities

African market could become promising export destination for Iran

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Where Iran-US slugfest on JCPOA may wind up

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

By Mehdi Ebrahim
Staff writer

Running roughshod over intranational law and diplomatic principles, President Donald Trump of the United States walked out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on May 8, 2018, and reinstated draconian sanctions on the Islamic Republic as part of Washington's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign.

Following in the United States' footsteps, the European signatories to the multilateral pact which had been ratified in the form of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, levied similar sanctions and left the future of the historic agreement up in the air.

After a year of strategic patience, Iran decided to let go of some of the restrictions on its nuclear energy program, resorting to its legal rights under the JCPOA, which grants a party the right to suspend its contractual commitments in case of a non-performance by the other side.

On multiple occasions, the administration of former US president Joe Biden said it was willing to compensate for Trump's mistake and rejoin the deal, but it opted to retain the sanctions as leverage.

Now, with Trump back in office and the numerously-acknowledged failure of the maximum pressure campaign, the future of the landmark deal hangs in the balance and presents a complex web of potential scenarios for the US and Iran. Fraught with political, economic, and security considerations, the path forward is uncertain for both Tehran and Washington, with four possible scenarios coming up.

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Iran: Israeli genocide in Gaza reoccurring in West Bank

Israel detonates 23 buildings in Jenin



Smoke rises after Israeli occupation army detonated multiple buildings in the occupied West Bank's Jenin refugee camp on February 2, 2025. MAJDI MOHAMMED/AP



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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) talks with Foreign Policy Advisor to Azerbaijan President Hikmat Hajiyev in Tehran on February 3, 2025. president.ir

Aref: Iran's ties with world countries based on national interests, priorities

African market could become promising export destination for Iran

Economy Desk

During the first meeting of the "Africa Task Force" on Monday, Vice President Mohammadreza Aref emphasized the importance of Africa in the ideology of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

He stated that the current administration, aligned with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's vision, values relations with countries within Iran's civilizational sphere and African nations.

The vice president, addressing the task force, composed of members from various ministries and organizations, said, "We believe in engaging with most countries worldwide based on our national interests and the interests of our counterparts."

Aref added that the foreign policy's priority for establishing relations includes Islamic countries, neighboring nations, regional



fpresident.ir

organizations, and the African continent.

While economic benefits for both sides are crucial, the Revolution's cultural and value-based approach transcends mere economics, he stressed, noting

that Iran could achieve greater success in both cultural and economic spheres.

Th VP described Africa as a promising market with over 1.4 billion people, offering opportunities for

exports and meeting Iran's needs in essential goods and agricultural products. "Given Iran's climatic challenges and water scarcity, the continent is vital for sustainable agricultural supply chains," the top of-

ficial stated.

A task force for all of Africa

Aref told the task force that despite past difficulties, Iran has now established the Africa Task

Force. He noted that while African countries are diverse, their challenges are similar, allowing for a unified strategy for cooperation.

He acknowledged that past efforts in Africa were inconsistent, with limited progress often halted by leadership changes. Aref emphasized the need for a stronger presence, leveraging Iran's cultural, economic, and technical expertise to achieve significant outcomes.

Time for action

Aref stated that the government supports robust engagement with Africa. While cultural and economic reports appear positive, practical efforts have been lacking. Competitors have strengthened their foothold during Iran's absence, but Africa still holds significant potential for Iran.

He urged the Africa Task Force to prioritize and advance initiatives, utilizing diplomatic, scientific, and technological capabilities.

Strengthening cultural and scientific diplomacy is essential, with Iranian universities playing a key role.

Aref underscored the high educational standards of Iranian universities, noting that African students could serve as cultural ambassadors.

Placing premium on techno-engineering services

Aref emphasized the global competitiveness of Iran's technical and engineering services, noting their quality and affordability.

While opportunities in Africa were missed in the past, it is now time to make up for lost ground, he stressed.

The Africa Task Force was established during the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, former president of Iran, following his visit to Africa and the creation of the Supreme Council for Africa in the early 1990s.

Non-oil exports register 18% rise in 10 months: TPO

Economy Desk

Non-oil exports from Iran reached approximately \$48 billion in the first 10 months of the current year (March 20, 2024-January 19, 2025), marking an 18% increase compared to the same period last year, according to figures by the Trade Promotion Organization.

During this period, Iran's total foreign trade amounted to 158.18 million tons, valued at \$103.846 billion. Of this, more than 127.396 million tons, worth \$47.755 billion, were attributed to exports, reflecting a 12% increase in volume and an 18% rise in value, IRNA wrote.

China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey were the primary destinations for Iran's non-oil exports, with China importing \$12.3 billion worth of goods, followed by Iraq at \$10 billion, the UAE at \$5.9 billion, and Turkey at \$5.5 billion.

Meanwhile, Iran imported 30.783 million tons of goods valued at \$56 billion during the same period, representing a 3% decrease in volume but a 3% increase in value compared to the previous year.

Major exported goods included natural gas, liquefied propane, methanol, liquefied butane, and bitumen.

Key imports during this period included \$6.3 billion worth of gold bullion, \$2.3 billion in animal feed corn, \$1.8 billion in smartphones, and \$1.6 billion in soybean meal.

The UAE was the largest source of imports at \$17 billion, followed by China (\$14.4 billion), Turkey (\$9.9 billion), and Germany (\$1.9 billion).

Additionally, 41,297 vehicles valued at \$877 million were imported into Iran by the end of the 10th month of the year (January 19), reflecting a 709% increase in quantity and a 744% rise in value compared to the same period last year.

ICT minister in Dubai:

Iran as major AI player in Persian Gulf, ready for regional cooperation

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Information and Communication Technology Seyed Sattar Hashemi said on Monday Tehran is a key player in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Persian Gulf region and is firm in launching cooperation with the regional countries in the emerging field.

He made the remarks at the Iran Corridor 2025 conference held in Dubai that showcased the rapidly growing areas of telecommunication technology, innovation, and connectivity in Iran, wrote ict.gov.ir. In his inaugural speech, the minister stated that the Persian Gulf region has a pivotal role in the evolving AI ecosystem.

"AI is reshaping how we approach challenges and seize opportunities. It is not only a technological revolution rather a catalyst for economic growth and social transformation. This region possesses unique strengths that causes us to harness AI's potential and become a global digital leader."

Hashemi went on to say that as regional countries increasingly invest in AI infrastructure, they lay the cornerstone for innovation-driven economies that shape the future.

"The Persian Gulf region offers an unparalleled opportunity to foster AI initiatives that cater to our collective



ict.gov.ir

aspirations. By cultivating environments that encourage collaboration and investment, we can transform our region into a powerhouse of AI excellence, attracting global tech giants while strengthening intraregional partnership for shared prosperity," he noted. As a major stakeholder in the regional digital landscape, Iran brings invaluable assets to the table, the minister said, adding, "Our domestic mobile phone operator, with over 50 million users as well as thriving digital service platforms such as Snapp! and digikala, each serving more than 30 million users, provide an abundance of multifaceted data -- an essential ingredient for AI development."

"Despite facing economic sanctions, Iran has successfully developed a resilient fintech ecosystem that continues to thrive and innovate. Moreover, our country's academic

and research capabilities have propelled us to the forefront of AI advancements," Hashemi stated.

"In 2023, Iran ranked second in the region in terms of the number and quality of scientific papers in AI, demonstrating our commitment to cutting-edge research and development. Moreover, Iran holds the second position in the region for AI developers, highlighting the depth of our skilled workforce and stands fourth in the region in terms of the number of AI firms, showcasing our dynamic and rapidly growing ecosystem." The minister said our human capital, available at competitive costs is a strategic advantage that positions Iran as a valuable partner in regional AI initiatives.

"This combination of talent, data, and innovation makes Iran a key player in the regional AI value chain, capable

of driving meaningful cooperation and development. Looking ahead, Iran is committed to fostering regional cooperation and building a future where AI promotes prosperity and unity."

He went on to say, "We propose a strategic framework for collaboration that leverages our collective strengths, combining Iran's skilled human capital and its infrastructure with the investment capabilities and infrastructure of our neighboring countries. By establishing AI acceleration hubs, facilitating joint investment in free zones, and enhancing academic collaboration and elite exchange programs, we can unlock new opportunities for innovation and economic growth."

The usability of regional processing capacity by Iranian companies, along with the creation of shared ecosystems, will enhance our collective competitiveness on the global stage, Hashemi noted, adding that, "We envision a future where the Persian Gulf region emerges as a leading force in AI development, driving solutions that address our shared challenges and propel us toward a prosperous future."

He concluded his speech by saying, "Together, let us act boldly, invest wisely, and transform our shared vision into a reality because the future of AI belongs to us. The time to act is now."

Hemmati stresses significance of Iran's oil sanctions removal



SHANA

The Iranian economy minister wrote on the X social media platform that lifting Iran's oil sanctions at present holds greater economic importance than ever before.

"The share of the US dollar in global reserves has decreased from 65% in 2016 to 58%. Even before his election, Trump attributed the dollar's weakness to flawed US policies in sanctioning countries," Abdolnaser Hemmati said in a Persian-language post. "The US government's focus on trade tariffs is another indication of the failure of its sanction policies and the futility of maintaining maximum pressure against Iran," he added.

Hemmati argued that, "With Canada threatening to halt oil sales to the US due to a 25% tariff imposed on Canadian goods, lifting Iran's oil sanctions now carries more economic significance than ever."

Transformations of Qaem Shahr's architectural landmark



Iranica Desk

The old Municipality Building in Qaem Shahr, Mazandaran Province, was constructed in 1926 and features a basement, ground floor, and an upper floor. It was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 1977.

With nearly nine decades of history, the structure is located in the city center near Talaqani Square and is regarded as a magnificent example of the architectural style of its era. Initially, the building served as the residence for the Pahlavi family, who ruled Iran for approximately 53 years between 1925 and 1979, during

their visits to northern Iran. It later transformed into a hospital; however, following the construction of the current Razi Hospital near the shrine of Imamzadeh Yusuf Reza (PBUH) and the subsequent transfer of medical staff, the building changed roles several times. Ultimately, it became an administrative center for the governorate, municipality, and Islamic City Council of Qaem Shahr, IRNA wrote.

For many years, the building housed the mayor's office and municipal staff, making it one of the city's key administrative structures. During this time, enthusiasts of ancient and historical sites frequently

expressed concern about the potential destruction of the edifice.

Following a decision by the city's Islamic City Council and an agreement with Mazandaran Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, the construction of a museum began in 2012 within the building. According to the agreements made at that time, the municipality was responsible for restoring and preparing the space, while the provincial Cultural Heritage Organization was tasked with providing the necessary museum equipment.

However, by 2016, the museum had not yet become

operational. The then director general of the provincial Cultural Heritage Organization identified the municipality's failure to fulfill its commitments as the primary reason for this delay.

In 2018, delays in the restoration process resulted in the building being transferred back to the municipality. This cycle of setbacks regarding the museum's opening persisted until May 2022, when the restoration project was relaunched in the presence of the then head of the Mazandaran Province Cultural Heritage Organization. It was announced that the museum would officially open

once the restoration and equipping efforts were completed.

Unfortunately, the situation regarding the museum has evolved over the years, despite senior officials acknowledging the necessity for its establishment in light of the city's rich history. The presence of this unfinished structure in the center of Qaem Shahr is unacceptable to citizens and cultural heritage enthusiasts, who continue to await officials' fulfillment of promises to open the museum.

During a recent visit by the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism, Reza Sale-

hi Amiri, the mayor of Qaem Shahr, Kazem Alipour, stated that in 2021, an agreement was made with the Mazandaran Province Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization to convert this building into a museum for public use, to be jointly managed by the municipality and the Cultural Heritage Organization.

Alipour explained that the Qaem Shahr Municipality has met its commitments regarding the restoration and equipping of the building; however, the selected consultant still needs to obtain permits from the Cultural Heritage Organization, a process that has

not yet been finalized or communicated.

During his visit, Salehi Amiri referred to the previous agreement between the municipality and the provincial Cultural Heritage Organization, noting that a meeting will be held soon with provincial cultural heritage officials and the Qaem Shahr Municipality to update and revise this agreement. He emphasized the importance of establishing a precise timeline for completing the museum project, which will also require approval from the provincial governorate, with the goal of officially inaugurating the museum by the end of September 2025.



Iranica Desk

The dossier for registration of Firuzabad, a city in Fars Province, as the World City of Loom Woven Textile has been prepared, said director general of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

Mohammad Sabet Eghlidi stated that Firuzabad has extraordinary potentials in the field of handicraft production, especially loom woven textiles, and this capability has created job opportunities for thousands of people in Iran. He noted that one of the characteristics of weaving carpets and other textiles in the city

is the mental weaving involved in designing and implementing the patterns. He added that another advantage of Firuzabad's textiles is the use of natural dyes and self-sufficiency in producing raw materials.

Sabet Eghlidi remarked that a combination of innovation, creativity, and ingenuity has made Firuzabad's woven textiles renowned at both national and international levels, IRNA wrote. He stated, "In order to secure the registration of Firuzabad as a world craft city, we have conducted brainstorming and discussion sessions with experts, specialists, the municipality, and the Islamic Council of Firuzabad.

Following the agreements and resolutions from these sessions, the secretariat for the world craft city will soon commence its operations at the Firuzabad Municipality."

Sabet Eghlidi stated, "To complete the proposed dossier, documentation and film preparation, installation of urban elements related to handicrafts, and preparation and completion of documents are necessary, which will be done in cooperation with the municipality and the Islamic Council of Firuzabad."

He reminded that currently, Shiraz is registered as a World City of Khatam-Kari (inlaid work), and Abadeh is recognized as a World City of Monabat (wood carving). Firuzabad is located 112 kilometers southeast of Shiraz and has previously been awarded the title of National Craft City.

In addition to its rich handicraft heritage, Firuzabad is home to several historical and cultural attractions, including the remains of the Sassanid city of Gur and the Qal'eh Dokhtar Fortress, which offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape. The city is also known for its beautiful gardens and traditional architecture, making it a captivating destination for visitors interested in history and culture.

Firuzabad's journey to becoming a world city of loom woven textiles



Art of forcing a deal

By Amir Mollaee Mozaffari
Staff writer

OPINION

Politicians are inclined to portray themselves as dealmakers, especially on the campaign trails. However, what makes someone a dealmaker? Or, should we first ask, what is a deal?

The essential elements of a deal (or a contract) are the following: Offer, acceptance, awareness, consideration, intention to create legal relations, and capacity to contract. These are the elements most commonly cited in legal textbooks. We would, for the most part, discuss the first two as the existence of other elements is usually assumed implicitly in any definition of the word; This is not a court and we are not lawyers trying to weasel out of a deal by claiming that one of the above elements was not fulfilled in a particular contract.

So, quintessentially, there has to be an offer first. Albeit uncommon, that offer may be accepted immediately, which would propel the two or more sides of the deal toward writing a draft and making it legal. More frequently, some or all parts of the offer seem unfair or disadvantageous to the receiving side. At this point, if the intention to make a deal is still there, the receiving side would make a counter-offer of its own, basically starting this process anew until a resolution is reached.

So far, this is all common sense. A dealmaker would then be someone who is more adept than normal at bridging the gap between the sides of the negotiation, more receptive to hearing the other side, and more successful in making preferably win-win deals for all sides involved.

Since something must be lost for something to be gained, a compromise is at the heart of most deals. "Most" deals. But what if you, as a party to a deal, believe that you do not have to compromise at all, not even to reach what would be the second-best deal for you? If you get your wish and force that deal, that would be an appeasement, an internationally infamous concept. Appeasement is what the UK, France, and Italy did for Hitler's Nazi Germany in 1938, and appeasement is what the Colombian president just did for Donald Trump in 2025.

Now, since the appeasement of the Nazis at the 1938 Munich Agreement possibly changed history for what is generally considered to be the worst, crying the words "appeasement" and the "Munich Agreement" has become a bit too overused. We can surely distinguish between a large-scale high-impact appeasement and a small-scale low-impact one. What the US and Colombian presidents did days ago can hardly be imagined to make a comparably negative impact on the world — or, at least, we hope so. What we are arguing here, instead, is that both cases cannot be, in good faith, called "dealmaking". Something is missing.

First, we should recap what happened over the span of a few hours in Trump's first week as the 47th president of the United States in office.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro took a bold stance against the US by turning back two military flights carrying deportees with bound hands. He announced on social media that he would not allow Colombians to be treated this way, directing his criticism at US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. "We are not anyone's colony," Petro said on January 26, calling for the "dignified return of nationals".

The Colombian president's move was initially supported by some regional leaders, such as his Cuban counterpart, Miguel Diaz-Canel. However, Petro's attempts to trade insults with the US president ultimately backfired. The Trump administration responded with severe economic sanctions, including tariffs, travel bans, and visa revocations, forcing Petro to retreat from his position and ac-



WION WIDEANGLE/YOUTUBE

cept migrants — including those arriving on US military aircraft — "without limitation or delay". There are sound-enough arguments for and against what Trump and Petro said and did in that story. They are "sound enough" not because we approve of them, but because they are justified from different perspectives within different theories of international interaction. I would go out on a limb and say that what the Colombian president asked for was morally and politically right and definitely not too much; rather, it probably was not enough, but every president has their reservations and people and interests to look out for. However, since he did, in fact, take those steps, we can

safely say that he, as a president who is surely privy to all of his nation's interests and capabilities, did not take a step too far. In all probability, he simply did not think Trump would refrain from meeting such a small demand that is clearly made to save a fellow president's face who's got the raw end of the deal, and he was right in his initial assessment. Trump has his reasons for overreacting, too. Petro's ask was small, but his words were sharp — he even referred to Trump as a "white slaver" on X. Trump, being the kind of person he generally is, obviously could not let that fly — in fact, I think no one in his position would. What Trump did that no other past US

president in recent history did and what no future US president may do is that he escalated the war of words between allies to a war of severe threats. We say, "Recent history," and we mean it; this is the kind of behavior we expect from those who Petro aptly cited: colonizers. What made colonizers characteristically prone to escalating every war of words to a war of threats and actions? It was almost always an imbalance in perceived power levels, and usually an extreme imbalance at that. Now, granted, being equal in power and dependency levels is something that happens only in textbooks and thought experiments. However, countries, especially allies, have long been



To be sure, when the US's first offer — which wasn't really an offer — got rejected, Washington provided something to smoothen the deal, but it wasn't a carrot, it was a hefty stick. No common ground was reached; the US interests were secured, and Colombia got nothing out of it, not even a trivial win over the dignity of Colombians.

able to account for a discrepancy in power levels and still make deals better than this. This was not a deal; it was a bad deal and a bad look for Colombia but it still went through because Colombia cannot realistically go toe to toe with the US in making economic threats. This is why we say President Petro appeased Trump to escape his wrath.

What is missing in appeasement is not any of the six elements mentioned at the beginning of this piece; it's the "counter-offer" element, which is quite common but not required if perchance the original offer is accepted. To be sure, when the US's first offer — which wasn't really an offer — got rejected, Washington provided something to smoothen the deal, but it wasn't a carrot, it was a hefty stick. No common ground was reached; the US interests were secured, and Colombia got nothing out of it, not even a trivial win over the dignity of Colombians.

"He went after a state that he knows he could push a little bit," said Inu Manak, a trade policy fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, to Politico. "So, it's sort of a setting example with a weaker target, and then claim victory really quickly to show how tough he can be as a negotiator. But I wouldn't imagine Canada and Mexico are going to fold that fast."

Manak was right in his early assessment. While Mexico has vowed a direct response to the 25% tariff imposed by the US on Canadian and Mexican imports without providing details, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has already launched a counterattack in a growing trade dispute with the US, imposing tariffs on \$106.6 billion worth of American products. The Canadian tariffs, also set at 25%, will affect a wide range of goods. Trudeau stated that he will continue to defend Canadian interests, but acknowledged that the trade war will have negative consequences for people on both sides of the border. "We don't want to be here, we didn't ask for this," he said at a news conference late on Saturday.

One should pay attention that Donald Trump has not exhausted every other option in dealing with the United States' two largest neighbors. How could he in such a short time after being in office? Emboldened by the stunt played at Petro's expense, Trump has moved to take advantage of another discrepancy in power levels, but this time, the discrepancy is not so huge. Trump will soon learn that not every deal can be forced as not every country can and will bow down and back out.



Trump's Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt posted this picture of people in handcuffs being deported to Colombia on January 24, 2025.

Trump making economic threats against everyone

What is POTUS after?

International Desk
PERSPECTIVE Perhaps for many international analysts and observers, hearing the news of Donald Trump imposing new tariffs on the United States' neighbors is not surprising, as he had repeatedly emphasized that he would during his election campaigns and even right before his inauguration on January 20.

Now, in any case, his desired strategy has been put into action. The 47th president of the United States announced on the last day of January that, starting from Saturday, a 25% tariff would be imposed on imports from Canada and Mexico, and a 10% tariff on Chinese goods. Reuters reported that Trump emphasized that no action from these countries can forestall the implementation of these tariffs, but the oil tariff rate will be 10% versus the 25% planned for other goods from the United States' northern neighbor.



● FINANCIAL TIMES



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (front) arrives on Parliament Hill to give his statement after US President Donald Trump ordered 25% tariffs on Canadian imports, in Ottawa, Canada, on February 1, 2025. "We're certainly not looking to escalate, but we will stand up for Canada, for Canadians, for Canadian jobs," Trudeau said.
● PATRICK DOYLE/REUTERS

Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, announced that "Starting [Saturday], those tariffs will be in place, and these are promises made and promises kept by the president." Leavitt also said that Trump rejects the idea that his threat to impose tariffs is a negotiating tactic and believes that the US has a large trade deficit with all three countries, which must be addressed. On the other hand, Trump announced that his administration will likely impose tariffs on oil and gas from February 18. So far, however, it seems that he will impose a mere 10% tariff on Canadian oil. Trump stated that these tariffs are primarily aimed at ensuring greater cooperation from the aforementioned countries to prevent illegal immigration and the smuggling of fentanyl-producing materials into the US, but he also considered another aspect of imposing these tariffs to be strengthening domestic production and increasing federal government revenue.

According to Euronews, Canada and Mexico are the largest oil exporters to the United States, and according to the US Energy Information Administration, the country imported approximately 4.6 million barrels of oil from Canada and 563,000 barrels from Mexico in October, which is a significant figure.

Canada's tough days

Without a doubt, Canada, as the United States' ally and northern neighbor, will be severely harmed by Trump's action, and this can be explicitly seen in the words of Justin Trudeau, the prime minister of Canada. In his speech at the Council on Canada-US Relations,

Trudeau stated that his country is at a critical moment, and "we're ready with a response (to the tariffs) — a purposeful, forceful but reasonable, immediate response." He emphasized that Ontario does not want this situation, but if these tariffs are implemented, it will take action and take reciprocal measures. Trudeau stated that Canadian citizens may face tough days and weeks ahead and may be worried and anxious, but "I want them to know the federal government, and indeed, all orders of government, have their backs."

Against Europe

A more important issue is that Trump, in his announcement of imposing tariffs on Canada, China, and Mexico, also made a reference to Europe. It is clear that he wants to put his European partners under the strain of tariffs as well. He explicitly told journalists that more tariffs, including those on European goods, steel, aluminum, copper, medicines, and semiconductors, are on the way, although imposing tariffs on copper will take a bit longer.

Trump said in another part of his speech that he will undoubtedly impose tariffs on imported goods from the European Union and claimed that Europeans have behaved very badly towards the US, which must be rectified.

Targeting BRICS

It should be noted that he has not spared BRICS from tariff threats either. He announced on his social media platform, Truth Social, that "we are going to require a commitment from these seemingly hostile countries that

they will neither create a new BRICS currency, nor back any other currency to replace the mighty US dollar or, they will face 100 per cent tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy."

Clash with China

Undoubtedly, what can be highly significant regarding the announcement of tariffs by the United States is whether it will impose them on Beijing, too. We recall that a series of tariffs during Trump's first presidency led to a trade war between the two economic giants, and now, after six years, Chinese businesses are preparing for the challeng-

es ahead as he takes the full rein of the White House. BBC Global reported: "Trump may have pressed pause on the looming battle with Beijing. But many believe it's still coming. It's hard to find an exact figure on how many businesses are fleeing China, but major firms such as Nike, Adidas, and Puma have already relocated to Vietnam. Chinese businesses too have been moving, reshaping supply chains, although Beijing remains a key player. Already business sentiment is nervous: an annual survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China showed just over half of them were concerned about the US-China relationship deteriorating further."

Concerns about domestic implications

Another point that should be considered is the impact of Trump's tariffs on European partners, China, neighbors, and even some other countries that can be his target on the US economy. Trump claimed to journalists that the tariffs may cause short-term disruptions for American consumers but will have long-term benefits for the US manufacturing industry. He stated, "Tariffs don't cause inflation, they cause success." In his opinion, tariffs may cause some temporary and short-term disruptions, and people will understand this, but they can help improve the US economy. According to a study by the Tax, Trump's proposed 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico, as well as 10% tariffs on Chinese goods, would shrink economic output by 0.4 percent and increase taxes by \$1.2 trillion between 2025 and 2034. The results of

this study indicate that tariffs will threaten the US household economy more than previously thought. This is while Trump repeatedly criticized the Biden administration's policies during his election campaigns and promised to control inflation, the future of which is now unclear.

Rubio's attack on foreign countries

Simultaneous with Trump's actions, Marco Rubio, the US secretary of state, spoke out. He supported Trump's order to suspend billions of dollars in foreign aid, stating that the US government is not a charity. Newsweek wrote: "His remarks signal a tougher stance on international assistance under the Trump administration, as policymakers reassess America's financial commitments abroad. The move reflects growing skepticism among conservatives about unchecked overseas spending and could reshape America's role on the global stage."

The final point to note about the foreign policy of Trump's team is that they are drawing new lines in their neighborhood. According to a statement by the US State Department, Marco Rubio's first destination will be Latin America, starting with a visit to Panama on February 1 and continuing until February 6 with visits to El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. This action can be seen as a change in the US partnerships with its southern neighbors, but overall, we are witnessing Trump encircling the world.

The article first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper Saazandegi.



Without a doubt, Canada, as the United States' ally and northern neighbor, will be severely harmed by Trump's action, and this can be explicitly seen in the words of Justin Trudeau, the prime minister of Canada.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (c) boards a plane on February 1, 2025, at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland en route to Panama, after Trump charged that China has unfair influence over the canal and vowed that the United States would be "taking it back".
● MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AFP

UWW Ranking Series:

Young guns to spearhead Iranian freestyle squad in Zagreb Open

Sports Desk

The Iranian freestyle wrestling team will feature some promising young talent at the Zagreb Open, kicking off in the Croatian capital on Wednesday.

Superheavyweight prodigy Amirreza Ma'soumi will headline the Iranian 16-man squad in the World Ranking Series season opener.

The 20-year-old Iranian – the reigning world junior and under-23 champion – is the clear favorite in the 125kg weight class, though he could still face competition from Georgian Solomon Manashvili, and American duo Hayden Zillmer and Mason Parris for the ultimate prize.

Ahoura Khateri will be looking to build on his world under-17 title in 2023 when making his senior debut in the 57kg contests, where all eyes will be on American Spencer Lee and India's Aman Sehrawat – Olympic silver and bronze medalists in Paris last August. Former world junior bronze winner Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan will be joined by fellow-Iranians Ebrahim Khari – world U23 bronze medalist last year – and Reza Mo'meni in the 61kg event, with world U20 champion Ali Korramdel, Abbas Ebrahimzadeh – also a bronze medalist in last year's U23 Worlds – and Yasin Rezei vying for success in the 65kg class.

Former world and Asian under-17 champion Sina Khalili will be the Iranian prodigy to watch in the 70kg event. The 18-year-old wrestler stole the headlines in December's Iranian Premier League final by outclassing two-time world silver winner Amir-Mohammad Yazdani 14-5, and will be eager to continue his impressive form of late



Iranian wrestler Sina Khalili (blue singlet), pictured in a training session in Tehran, will represent the country in the freestyle 70kg contests at the Zagreb Open.
● IAWF

in Zagreb, where he will be joined by compatriot Ebrahim Elahi – also an ex-gold winner in the U17 Worlds – in the weight class.

Ali Rezaei (74kg) and Mahdi Yousefi (79kg) won the world U20 and U23 titles re-

spectively last year and will be looking to keep up the momentum at their senior level, while world U20 bronze medalist Abolfazl Rahmani will compete in the 86kg competitions.

High-profile wrestlers will be lined up

for the 92kg glory in Zagreb, including American Aaron Brooks – an 86kg bronze winner at the Paris Olympics – and Georgian world silver medalist Miriani Maisuradze, with Iranian duo Amirhossein Firouzpour – gold med-

alist in the 2024 Asian Championships – and former world U20 champion Mohammad-Mobin Azimi also in the fray.

Asian under-20 champion Abolfazl Babalou will represent the country in the 97kg event, which will also see American great Kyle Snyder return to Zagreb after being stunned by Iranian Amir-Ali Azarpira in last year's final.

Geraei with a point to prove

The freestyle event will be followed by the women's contests, before the Greco-Roman competitions get underway on Friday.

Tokyo Olympic champion Mohammadreza Geraei will be desperate to make up for his first-round setback in last year's World Championships, when taking part in the 72kg contests alongside domestic rivals Danial Sohrabi and Iman Mohammadi.

Mahdi Ahadi (55kg), Pouya Nasserpour (60kg), Mohammad Keshkar and world under-23 bronze medalist Erfan Jarkani (63kg), Mohammadreza Gholami and world U20 champion Ahmadreza Mohsennejad (67kg), Amin Kavianinejad, Amir Abdi, and Ali Oskou (77kg), Gholamreza Farrokhi (82kg), four-time Asian gold medalist Nasser Alizadeh (87kg), Hamidreza Badkan and Shayan Habibzare' (97kg), as well as former world champion Ali-Akbar Yousefi (130kg) complete the Iranian GR squad in Zagreb.

Ex-Spanish football chief Rubiales stands trial over World Cup kiss

REUTERS – Spanish women's World Cup winner Jenni Hermoso confronted former football federation boss Luis Rubiales at his trial on Monday, saying she did not agree to the kiss that triggered a national backlash against sexism in sport.

"I knew I was being kissed by my boss and that should not happen in any social or work environment," she said of the encounter seen live by millions around the world at the 2023 World Cup awards ceremony in Australia.

"I think it was a moment that tainted one of the happiest days of my life," added the 34-year-old forward as Rubiales sat nearby at Madrid's High Court taking notes.

Rubiales, 47, is accused of sexual assault and then attempting to coerce Hermoso – with the help of three other men – into declaring that the kiss had been consensual. Though he apologised for being over effusive in a moment of national triumph, Rubiales denies those criminal charges and has cast himself as



Luis Rubiales, the former head of the Spanish Football Federation, heads to the court for day one of his trial in Madrid, Spain, on February 3, 2025.
● CHEMA MOYA/REUTERS

the victim of a witch hunt. Asked by a prosecutor at Madrid's High Court if she had agreed to the kiss, Hermoso replied: "Never." "I didn't hear or understand anything," she added, describing the moment. "The next thing he did was to grab me by the ears and kiss me on the mouth."

Rubiales has said it was consensual and scoffed at critics in the aftermath, but Hermoso said she felt a victim of aggression and

had pressure put on her to sign a statement exonerating him, which she said she refused to do. The ensuing scandal eclipsed Spain's first women's World Cup victory and proved a tipping point for efforts by Spain's female players to expose parity with male counterparts. The trial will see several of Hermoso's teammates, including Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Pute-

llas, testify. Rubiales has asked his daughters to take the stand.

He and his co-defendants – former women's national team coach Jorge Vilda, former Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) sporting director Albert Luque and the RFEF's former head of marketing Ruben Rivera – will testify on or after Feb. 12 once the court has interviewed the rest of the witnesses.

"I trust in justice. I am calm," Vilda said as he arrived.

The prosecution is seeking 2-1/2 years' prison for Rubiales, although in Spain those handed sentences under two years can usually escape incarceration by paying damages instead if they do not have prior convictions.

The scandal sparked a strike by Hermoso's teammates and saw several heads roll at the federation, with both Rubiales and his right-hand man and successor being ousted and a woman appointed to coach the women's team for the first time.

Sinner's red-hot form gives Italian the edge in best player debate, Alcaraz says

REUTERS – Carlos Alcaraz said he has no doubt that top-ranked Jannik Sinner is the best player in the world on current form as the two young players continue to lay the foundations for an epic rivalry.

Alcaraz, the 21-year-old world number three, won the French Open and Wimbledon titles last year, splitting the four Grand Slam tournaments with 23-year-old Sinner.

The Spaniard also improved his head-to-head record with the Italian to 6-4, beating Sinner three times in as many meetings.

Sinner, meanwhile, won 73 of his 79 matches last year including the U.S. Open and the Australian Open, which he successfully defended at Melbourne Park last month. "Jannik is the best right now," Alcaraz told reporters in Rotterdam on Sunday. "He has lost only four or five matches in the past year, so it's crazy. I know people say who's better out of us. They say Jannik is better or some say me. It's all discussion. "But for me, I think for a



● HAMAD I MOHAMMED/REUTERS

tennis player, we have to face Jannik and he's winning everything. He's focused every time, so I think he's the best. Every tournament he plays, he makes the final or lifts the trophy."

Alcaraz returns to action in Rotterdam after his quarter-final loss to 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open ended his bid to become the youngest player to capture all four major titles.

"I don't feel that it was a missed opportunity against Novak," added Alcaraz, who won the U.S. Open in 2022. "I really wanted to win the tournament and felt I was able to, but Novak played an unbelievable match. Facing Novak in the quarter-finals at a Grand Slam is the worst thing. "It was a pretty good match. I've tried to take the good things about that match and will look ahead now."



Pezeshkian: Any geopolitical change in regional borders unacceptable

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian underlined that any geopolitical change in regional borders is not acceptable in any way, saying that preserving the territorial integrity of regional countries is one



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) shakes hands with Foreign Policy Advisor to Azerbaijan President Hikmat Hajiyev in Tehran on February 3, 2025.
● president.ir

of the fundamental principles of Iran's foreign policy.

Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Foreign Policy Advisor to Azerbaijan President Hikmat Hajiyev in Tehran on Monday.

Azerbaijan has had a plan to connect its exclave of Nakhchivan, bordering Turkey, to mainland Azerbaijan through the so-called Zangezur corridor which passes through Armenian's territory. Armenia opposes the plans on the grounds that it would violate its

sovereignty.

Iran has also repeatedly opposed the plan on the grounds that it would cut off the transport routes connecting its territories to Armenia.

Pezeshkian also said on Monday that the Islamic Republic is interested in strengthening the relations with Azerbaijan in economic, political, cultural, defense and security sectors, emphasizing the rapid removal of obstacles facing trade and transportation sectors. The Azeri official, for his part, said

Iran, as a friendly and brotherly country of Azerbaijan, is of great importance to Baku, saying that Azerbaijan is seeking to improve its relations with Iran.

"I can confidently say that among the countries neighboring the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the most determined countries to develop cooperation and relations with Iran." Hajiyev, who arrived in Tehran on Sunday, also held a separate meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Iran: Israeli genocide in Gaza reoccurring in West Bank

Israel detonates 23 buildings in West Bank's Jenin

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei warned on Monday that the continuation of Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip is happening in the occupied West Bank.

Speaking during his weekly press conference, Baqaei called on the international community to stop Israel from repeating its Gaza genocide against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Since a cease-fire in Gaza, the Israeli regime has intensified its attacks in the occupied West Bank and has killed dozens of Palestinians.

"Despite the cease-fire in Gaza, the [Israeli] crimes and killings continue in the West Bank. As human rights rapporteurs warned, it seems that the crime of genocide is going to be repeated in the West Bank," Baqaei said.

He called on the international community to take "a serious action" to prevent the repetition of the Gaza genocide in the West Bank.

"The international community should not allow the normalization of killing," he said. On Sunday, Israel destroyed 23 buildings in the occupied West Bank's Jenin refugee camp, hours after its forces killed a 73-year-old man, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said.

A spokesperson for the Israeli occupa-



tion army said the military has killed 50 Palestinians in the West Bank since mid-January.

Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the blasts were so powerful they were heard across the city and in the surrounding towns.

President Mahmoud Abbas requested an urgent session of the UN Security Council to stop the destruction of entire residential blocks in the Jenin and Tulkarm camps.

The Israeli military launched a major offensive in the occupied West Bank last month, dubbed "Iron Wall", focused primarily on attacking Palestinian armed groups from the Jenin area, just after it began a cease-fire with the Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza on January 19.

'Israeli leaders must be tried'

Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman also on Monday denounced the West's

support for Israel in the Gaza war through supplying lethal weapons, noting that the Israeli leaders must be tried for the crimes committed by the regime. In response to a question about US President Donald Trump's proposal to relocate Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, Baqaei said that it would amount to "ethnic cleansing."

He said the international community should help Palestinians "secure their right to self-determination... rather than pushing for other ideas that would be tantamount to ethnic cleansing."

The remarks from Baqaei come after Trump repeatedly floated an idea to "clean out" the Gaza Strip and move its population to Egypt and Jordan.

"Cleaning out Gaza... is part of colonial erasure of (the) Gaza Strip and the whole Palestine," Baqaei said, adding that "no third party" can decide on the future of the Palestinian territory.

'We should see world as opportunity, not threat,' Zarif says



Mohammad Javad Zarif
● IRNA

"First of all, we must consider the people and Iranians abroad as an opportunity, not threat. We must also see cyberspace as an opportunity, not threat. In the field of artificial intelligence, we have the best elites working in the United States, and many of the programmers in the world in the field of artificial intelligence are Iranians. We must see youth, technology, and neighbors as opportunities to achieve economic cooperation and interaction with our neighbors. We should see the world as an opportunity, not a threat, and of course, we should not ignore threats," Zarif said.

National Desk

Iran's Vice President for Strategic Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif referred to the youth, technology and neighboring countries as opportunities for Iran's progress, saying that, "We should see the world as an opportunity, not a threat."

Addressing a ceremony held in Tehran to unveil the government's charter on 'Political Strategy to Ensure National Security', Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "We must strengthen the foundations of national security through economy, technology, diplomacy, and other things."

Iran's vice president for strategic affairs also said that he believes Iran should negotiate with everyone except Israel. However, he said that before negotiations with the US, "We should have a good understanding of the US."

Officials in Iran's new administration have repeatedly announced the government's readiness to promote Iran's relations with the world, especially the neighboring countries.

The government has also expressed its readiness to hold new negotiations with the Western countries to resolve tensions over Iran's nuclear program.

Where Iran-US ...

Scenario 1: Full re-implementation of JCPOA

This scenario represents a return to the original 2015 deal, under which the US and Iran would agree to mutually restore compliance with all JCPOA provisions through rigorous negotiations.

Iran is required to dismantle advanced centrifuges, limit uranium enrichment, and allow enhanced international inspections. In turn, the US will lift sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, providing Iran access to global markets and frozen assets.

Sanctions relief, as one of its potential outcomes, could help stabilize Iran's economy, reduce the tensions, and signal the US's commitment to diplomacy and multilateralism.

However, years of animosity and mistrust between the US and Iran make reaching

a consensus difficult as both countries face internal opposition to the deal, with hardliners in Iran seeing the JCPOA as a betrayal of their revolutionary ideals and American critics viewing it as insufficient to constrain Iran's nuclear "ambitions" and regional activities.

Scenario 2: An interim deal

This scenario envisions a partial agreement that falls short of a full JCPOA restoration as Tehran and Washington negotiate a limited deal under which Iran takes some initial steps to curb its nuclear program and the US provides limited sanctions relief.

The interim deal might include a freeze on certain enrichment activities or the release of some Iranian assets.

The deal could also serve as a stopgap measure that prevents an immediate crisis and allows time for more com-

prehensive negotiations.

Despite establishing a foundation for trust and paving the way for a possible full restoration in the future, this type of agreement could cause both sides to view it differently, which leads to disputes and misunderstandings.

Although the interim deal could offer some much-needed economic relief to Iran, Tehran may have little incentive to fulfill its end of the bargain as the illegal Western-led sanctions have taken a heavy toll on the country's oil-dependent economy.

Scenario 3: Failure of diplomacy, escalation

In the most dangerous scenario, diplomatic efforts collapse and neither side is willing to compromise, with Iran further expanding its nuclear program, potentially approaching weapons capability, and

the US imposing more stringent sanctions or taking military action.

In this case, the risk of military confrontation, either directly between Iran and the US or through their allies in the region, runs significantly high and the Western narrative of Iran developing what is claimed to be "nuclear weapons" would raise the prospect of a regional arms race.

The impact of regional conflict and increased geopolitical tensions would likely have far-reaching consequences and the Iran-US escalation, in particular, could quickly spiral out of control.

Scenario 4: Focus on other issues, de-emphasizing JCPOA

This option sees both sides step back from the highly contentious nuclear issue and focus on alternative avenues.

In this scenario, the US and Iran decide to

temporarily de-prioritize the JCPOA with the aim of addressing other issues like regional security, human rights, or economic cooperation, which may involve backdoor negotiations and a tacit agreement to avoid a direct confrontation.

In addition to offering breathing room from the high-stakes nuclear issue, this approach can foster bilateral cooperation on regional security issues and lower tensions.

The fourth scenario, however, fails to resolve the nuclear program's risks and the threat of escalation could quickly return if the underlying tensions are not addressed.

To put it in a nutshell, the path forward regarding the JCPOA is highly uncertain as it is a function of domestic politics, regional tensions, and the choices made by the top echelons in Tehran and Washington.

Deputy minister: Education key to developing modern tourism industry

Arts & Culture Desk

Education serves as the driving force behind national development and has the potential to be a game-changer in the evolution of modern tourism, according to Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey, Deputy of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. Speaking at the second annual celebration of International Day of Education on February 2—held under the theme Artificial Intelligence and Education in Tourism—Mohseni-Bandpey underscored the invaluable role of education in fostering innovation and dynamism in the tourism sector. He extended his appreciation to veteran educators, tourism professionals, and industry institutions present at the event before exploring the symbiotic relationship between education and tourism, ISNA reported. “The impact of tourism, as a

modern industry, extends far beyond economic growth—it plays a crucial role in shaping political, social, and cultural landscapes, while also contributing to the psychological well-being of societies,” he stated. Calling it an identity-forming industry, he emphasized that tourism can be a powerful tool in countering Iranophobia. Mohseni-Bandpey further stressed that soft diplomacy and the presence of international tourists could act as effective measures in mitigating negative narratives against Iran. Turning his attention to local tourism enterprises, he pointed to the significant contributions of ecotourism ventures in empowering communities, citing them as prime examples of how tourism can drive socio-economic development. Describing education as the catalyst for transformation, he noted, “When education aligns with the tourism industry through an in-

novation-driven and wealth-generating approach, it fosters the birth of ideas and creativity.” He also discussed the importance of knowledge-based and ethics-oriented training programs, which he believes are fundamental in enhancing the expertise of industry professionals. In a forward-looking perspective, the deputy minister underscored the game-changing role of artificial intelligence in tourism education, stating that AI-driven advancements could streamline services and significantly enhance the industry’s capacities and capabilities. Addressing the importance of setting higher standards in tourism services, Mohseni-Bandpey reiterated that effective education has always been the backbone of progress in standardization and quality enhancement, reaffirming the ministry’s commitment to this principle. Concluding his remarks, he



Deputy of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey speaks at the second annual celebration of International Day of Education on February 2, 2025. IRNA

called upon industry experts and educators, stating, “We rely on your invaluable knowledge and experiences to further elevate the capacities and potentials of this sector.”

Envoy: Rudaki, poet who restored Persian literary greatness

Arts & Culture Desk

The Ambassador of Tajikistan to Iran, Nizomiddin Zohidi, highlighted the key role of Rudaki in reestablishing Persian as the language of poetry after two centuries of Arabic dominance. Speaking at a literary symposium on Rudaki’s legacy, organized by the Association for Iranian Studies and the Institute for Iran-Eurasia Studies, commonly known as IRAS at the National Library and Archives of Iran, Zohidi emphasized that while Rudaki was not the first Persian-language poet, he was the one who firmly established its prestige in the realm of poetry, IRNA reported. Zohidi pointed out that poets in the Tahirid and Saffarid eras had

already composed Persian poetry, with some, even having their own divans. However, Rudaki’s distinction lies in the fact that he showcased the power of Persian as a poetic language in an era when Arabic dominated the literary and cultural landscape of the Islamic Caliphate. “Before Rudaki, Arabic was the language of literature and scholarship in the lands under the Caliphate’s rule, including Iran. But he boldly reasserted Persian’s literary sovereignty,” he stated. The envoy elaborated on Rudaki’s stylistic versatility, noting that he composed in various poetic forms, including ballad, sonnet, and quatrain. His mastery over poetic meters and literary embellishments paved the way for generations of Persian poets



to follow. Touching upon the broader revival of Persian heritage during the Islamic era, Zohidi explained that in the first and second centuries A.H., Middle Iranian languages such as Pahlavi, Khwarazmian, Sogdian, and Bactrian gradually faded into histo-

ry. However, Iranian scholars and scribes of the second and third centuries A.H. achieved literary excellence in Arabic while integrating pre-Islamic Iranian traditions into their works. This, he argued, ensured the continuation of Persian cultural identity within an Arabic framework. A parallel effort, he noted, was led by Ibn al-Muqaffa and his contemporaries, who translated classical Iranian texts directly into Arabic prose. Some poets, including Aban al-Lahiqi, went a step further by rendering legendary Persian works. Zohidi described the second and third centuries A.H. as a period of Persian intellectual resurgence in Arabic. However, he stressed that the full revival of Persian as a literary language began in the

fourth century A.H. under the Samanids, to whom Rudaki belonged. “During this era, Persian literature was no longer just an intellectual undercurrent within Arabic—it reclaimed its position as the language of Iranian identity,” he added. Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi, President of the Association for Iranian Studies, credited Rudaki with several crucial contributions to Persian poetry, including the invention of the quatrain, the integration of epic and mythological themes, and the development of the Khorasani style. Jaafari-Dehaghi, also underscored Rudaki’s role in refining Persian poetic meters, noting that while Pahlavi poetry followed a syllabic pattern, Arabic prosody later influenced Persian verse. However, Rudaki played a crucial role in adapting and

‘Persianizing’ these metrical structures, ensuring that Persian poetry maintained its unique rhythm and cadence. Philosopher and literary scholar Asghar Dadbeh argued that despite the Arab conquest, Iran’s cultural continuity remained unbroken. “Even in the first and second centuries A.H., texts were written in Pahlavi, demonstrating that Iran’s intellectual tradition persisted,” he noted. Rudaki, flourishing in the third century A.H., benefited from the accumulated knowledge of the preceding generations. Dadbeh likened cultural identity to a triangle, with national language and literature, history and mythology, and philosophical wisdom forming its three sides—of which language and literature hold the greatest significance.

 **Mohammad Ali Rajabi**
Cartoonist



Iran’s ‘sun is coming?’ at three international festivals

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran’s short screenplay ‘sun is coming?’, penned by Atefeh Salehi and Saeid Ghasemi, received an honorary distinction in the Southern California Screenplay Competition. Also, it has made its way to the semifinals of two other American festivals—the New York New Stories Screenplay Contest and the SF Indie Fest Screenplay Competition. The Southern California Screenplay Competition, established in 2017, aims to champion emerging writers by spotlighting innovative and impactful storytelling. Attracting numerous submissions from across the globe each year, the competition provides a platform for screenwriters who craft profound, human-centered narratives. The latest edition took place on December 23, 2024.

Meanwhile, the New York New Stories Screenplay Contest, founded in 2019, has rapidly gained credibility as a prominent platform for independent and creative screenplays. By bringing together writers, filmmakers, and producers, the festival fosters professional networking and collaboration. The final results were announced on January 1, 2025. On the West Coast, the SF Indie Fest Screenplay Competition, running since 2000, stands as one of America’s longest-standing festivals dedicated to independent films and screenplays. Known for recognizing groundbreaking works and giving a voice to unconventional storytellers, the festival will take place in San Francisco from February 6 to 16, 2025. Set in a refugee camp in Dubai, ‘sun is coming?’ follows an Afghan father’s relentless struggle to rescue his



children, who remain trapped under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Salehi, an accomplished filmmaker, has previously directed four short films and written multiple screenplays. Ghasemi, who has garnered international recognition with his debut short film, is currently preparing for his second directorial venture.