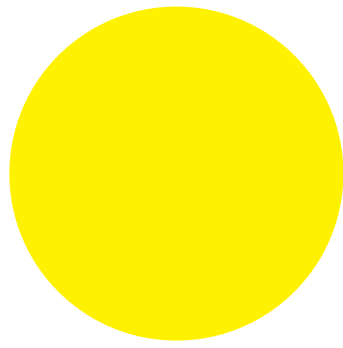


Aref urges concerted efforts to restore Iranian textiles to top standing

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## Pezeshkian: OPEC members unity to offset US sanctions on oil producers

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) shakes hands with OPEC's Secretary-General Haitham al-Ghais in Tehran on February 5, 2025. [president.ir](http://president.ir)

## Iran FM: Trump's maximum pressure 'failed' experience

Araghchi says 'not much of a problem' to verify Iran not seeking nukes

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US President Donald Trump signs an executive order to reimpose maximum pressure on Iran in the White House in Washington, DC on February 04, 2025. [ANNA.MONEYMAKER/APP](http://ANNA.MONEYMAKER/APP)

## Reading between the lines of Trump's memo



By Heshamatollah Falahatpisheh  
International affairs expert

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

US President Donald Trump has taken a far more aggressive stance against Iran in his new term compared to his previous tenure. Although he has tried to signal that he is "unhappy" after signing the memo to reinstate maximum pressure on Iran, the fine print of the document makes it clear—his administration is set on backing Iran into a corner, put it in a position of weakness and pave the way for the use of all available tools against the country. Trump is not genuinely interested in resolving issues with Iran; rather, he prefers them to remain "an open wound"—a source of persistent instability. His administration's strategy revolves around stirring up unrest within Iran and driving a wedge between the government and the people. The explicit goal of driving Iran's oil exports down to zero is a move to deprive the government of vital revenues, making it increasingly difficult to manage the country's affairs. Trump is looking to rally all factors, both domestically and internationally, to pile pressure on Iran. What has transpired in practice is the signing of an anti-Iranian memorandum, despite his public rhetoric about seeking negotiations and a deal with the Iranian government. The reality of Trump today is that he wants to double down on anti-Iranian policies with renewed maximum pressure, not to reach a deal. His latest memo lays out clear objectives that, in effect, leave no room for diplomacy. While he tells reporters that his only concern is Iran developing a nuclear bomb, his document takes aim at Iran's other strate-

gic capabilities, including its ballistic missile program, proving that pressure—not diplomacy—is his real agenda. Iran, however, has made its stance clear that it is only willing to negotiate on its nuclear program, not its missile capabilities or regional influence. If Trump's sole concern were truly nuclear weapons, then the JCPOA (Iran nuclear deal) would have been the best mechanism to prevent Iran from obtaining them. Yet, it was Trump himself who tore up the deal and walked away from it. His real motivation appears to be keeping uranium enrichment technology under the tight grip of the nuclear powers club. One of the key points in the memorandum is to bring Iran's oil exports to zero. I believe this will not come to pass; however, the cost of selling oil for Iran will rise significantly and the Iranian government will have to offer even bigger discounts to incentivize buyers to continue importing crude from Iran. But the most dangerous aspect of Trump's memo is its directive to the US Attorney General to impound tankers carrying Iranian oil in the high seas. If such an act were carried out, Iran would hit back in kind by seizing US vessels in international waters, triggering an escalation that would send tensions through the roof. Far from paving the way for diplomacy, Trump's policies are laying the groundwork for greater confrontation. His administration aims to choke off Iran's revenues, deprive it of its capabilities and undermine its influence abroad, all in an attempt to render the Iranian government ineffective domestically and put it in a position of weakness internationally. The government of President Masoud Pezeshkian should build a sincere and stronger relationship with the Iranian people, as Trump aims to turn up the heat on Iran to fuel despair among the public.

## Ups and downs of wood products sector in Iran

**EXCLUSIVE** References to the wood products industry in Iran can be traced as far back as 4200 B.C. in the writings of historians such as Herodotus, Xenophon, and Quinte-Curce. In the period, native people of Iran used wood for wheels, carts, and agricultural tools. Later, in the Achaemenid dynasty, Xenophon describes wood used for battle weapons, buildings, ships, and bridges. Modern industrial use of wood in Iran emerged with the establishment of sawmills and match factories in the early 1900s and the manufacturing of plywood, fiberboard, particleboard, and furniture in the 1950s. [See page 4-5 >](#)



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# Iran FM: Trump's maximum pressure 'failed' experience

Araghchi says 'not much of a problem' to verify Iran not seeking nukes

Iran's VP: No meeting between Trump, Pezeshkian on agenda

## International Desk

Talks on Iran's nuclear program seem to be returning on the right track after Iranian and American officials expressed readiness for resolving the issue through diplomatic negotiations.

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday, ahead of a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran over allegations that the country is seeking a nuclear weapons capability.

But Trump also suggested a willingness to work out a deal.

"We don't want to be tough on Iran. We don't want to be tough on anybody," Trump said. "But they just can't have a nuclear bomb."

As he signed the presidential memorandum, Trump described it as tough and said he was "torn" on whether to make the move. He said he was open to a deal with Iran and expressed a willingness to talk to the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

"I want Iran to be a great and successful Country, but one that cannot have a Nuclear Weapon," he said early Wednesday in a post on his Truth Social platform.

"I would much prefer a Verified Nuclear Peace Agreement, which will let Iran peacefully grow and prosper."

Several Iranian officials reacted to the Trump's remarks and restoration of his "maximum pressure" campaign.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Trump's reimposition of "maximum pressure" against Iran will end in "failure" as it did during his first term.

"I believe that maximum pressure is a failed experience and trying it again will turn into another failure," Araghchi told reporters following a cabinet meeting, adding that Tehran was not pursuing nuclear weapons.

"If the main issue is that Iran does not pursue nuclear weapons, it is achievable and is not much of a problem," Araghchi added.

"Iran is a committed member of the NPT and its positions on this matter are quite clear," he said, adding that the fatwa of Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei against the possession and use of nuclear weapons also makes it crystal clear to everyone that Tehran is not seeking them.

During his first term that ended in 2021, Trump pursued the policy of "maximum pressure" against Iran, withdrawing the United States from a landmark nuclear deal between Iran and major powers, and reimposing biting sanctions.

The deal - known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

Tehran adhered to the deal until a year after Washington pulled out, but then began rolling back its commitments after the other sides, especially the European countries, failed to fulfill their commitments. Efforts to revive the 2015 deal have since fal-



US President Donald Trump speaks with reporters in the White House on February 04, 2025 in Washington, DC after he signed an executive order to reimpose maximum pressure on Iran.  
● ANNA MONEYMAKER/AFP

tered.

While Araghchi hinted at the possibility of talks with Washington, Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref was more cautious on Wednesday.

Aref said a meeting between Trump and Iranian president was not at all on the agenda.

He highlighted that Iran has a clear stance on nuclear weap-

ons, underscored by a religious decree by the Iranian Leader that prohibits the development of nuclear weapons.

He noted that if Trump believes Iran should not pursue nuclear weapons, he can rest assured as Iran's longstanding policy and religious decree firmly support this stance.

On Wednesday, Iran's nuclear

agency chief Mohammad Esلمي also insisted that the Islamic Republic remains committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, saying, "Iran does not have, and will not have a nuclear weapons program."

Iran has denied it is pursuing a nuclear weapons program, saying that its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

## Trump's Gaza proposal battered by international backlash

Many global leaders expressed opposition Wednesday after US President Donald Trump said he wanted to take control of the Gaza strip and "permanently" resettle Palestinians in other countries.

Trump's shock proposal to rebuild Gaza and turn it into "the Riviera of the Middle East" triggered a flurry of condemnations in the Middle East and deep reservations among US allies, AFP reported.

Hamas resistance group said that Trump's proposal "will only put oil on the fire". The group stressed in a statement, "Our Palestinian people ... will not allow any state in the world to occupy our land or impose guardianship on our great Palestinian people who have offered rivers of blood to liberate our land from occupation and to establish our state with Jerusalem as its capital."

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas hit back at Trump's proposal.

Abbas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership "expressed their strong rejection of calls to seize the Gaza Strip and displace Palestinians outside their homeland," Abbas's office said in a statement, adding that, "legitimate Palestinian rights are not negotiable."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who stood next to Trump as he unveiled his surprise plan, said it was "worth paying attention to this" idea and that US control of the Gaza Strip "could change history."

Far-right Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich later vowed to "definitively bury... the dangerous idea of a Palestinian state."

The head of the UN refugee agency called Trump's statement "very surprising." Filippo Grandi,



the United Nations' high commissioner for refugees, told AFP it was not "clear" what the idea entailed, which made it difficult to comment on such a "sensitive issue."

UN rights chief Volker Turk later insisted that deporting people from occupied territory was strictly prohibited. "The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle of international law and must be protected by all states," Turk said.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Trump's idea was "something almost incomprehensible." Lula told Brazilian radio that, "What happened in Gaza was genocide, and honestly, I don't know if the United States, which is involved in all this (in terms of support for Israel) would be the best placed to take care of Gaza."

China said it opposed the "forced transfer" of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. Asked about Trump's statement at a press conference, foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said, "China has always maintained that Palestinian rule over Palestinians is the basic principle of the post-war governance of Gaza."

The French Foreign Ministry said Gaza should not be controlled by "a third party". "France will continue to campaign for the implementation of the two-state solution, the only one that can

guarantee long-term peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike," the ministry said.

Turkey lashed out at Trump's proposal, calling it an "unacceptable issue." Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told the official news agency Anadolu that relocating Palestinians from Gaza was something "neither we nor the region can accept." He added it was "wrong to even bring it up for discussion."

Egypt gave strong support to Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas, calling for the authority to govern the Gaza Strip. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty called for the swift reconstruction of Gaza, without the displacement of Palestinians.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Palestinians "must be allowed home" in Gaza, reinforcing his backing of a two-state solution. Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said, "It is clear that Gaza - like the West Bank and east Jerusalem - belongs to the Palestinians. They form the basis for a future Palestinian state."

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his country's long-standing support for a two-state solution in the Middle East had not changed. "Australia's position is the same as it was this morning, as it was last year, and it was 10 years ago," he said.

## Ayatollah Khamenei names Hezbollah leader as Lebanon representative

### International Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei named Hezbollah leader Sheikh Naim Qassem as his "representative" in Lebanon.

"The leader of the revolution in a decree introduced Sheikh Naim Qassem, secretary general of Hezbollah, as his representative in Lebanon," Tasnim news agency reported. Tasnim carried a copy of the official decree which said Sheikh Naim Qassem will represent Khamenei in handling financial matters, receiving and distributing religious funds and managing religious affairs. Previously, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah - who was assassinated in an Israeli airstrike on



southern Beirut in September 27 last year - had been vested with the designation.

On October 29, Hezbollah's Shura Council, the group's central decision-making body, elected Sheikh Qassem as the new chief of the Lebanese resistance movement.

## Pezeshkian: Iran seeks end to all conflicts in world

### International Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran seeks establishment of peace and an end to all conflicts across the world, adding that problems can be solved through negotiation and dialogue.

President Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with the new Swedish ambassador in Tehran Mathias Otterstedt on Wednesday. Referring to the long history of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Iranian president said, "I hope that during

your mission, relations between the two countries will be strengthened in all fields." The President also met with Vitezslav Grepl, the new ambassador of the Czech Republic. During the meeting Pezeshkian said that bilateral relations between the countries can resolve many differences and tensions and provide a better world for people to live together.

Both ambassadors emphasized the importance of relations with Iran and the will of their countries to expand relations and economic exchanges with Iran.

## Leader pardons 3,000 convicts on eve of Revolution anniversary

### International Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei agreed to grant amnesty, reduce, or commute the sentences of over 3,000 convicts on the 46th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

A statement by the Leader's website said Ayatollah Khamenei agreed to the request by Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei on the issue. Ayatollah Khamenei regularly grants am-

nesty or reduces sentences for prisoners during major religious and national celebrations, a gesture that aligns with the values of mercy and reflection prevalent during these times.

However, the clemency does not apply to all types of prisoners, including those sentenced for their role in armed struggles against Iran, armed or organized drug trafficking, rape, armed robbery, arms smuggling, abduction, bribery, and embezzlement.



# Pezeshkian: OPEC members unity to offset US sanctions on oil producers

## Iran's oil exports hit record high in decade, minister says

### Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday called for unity among OPEC member states to foil attempts by the United States to impose sanctions on oil producers.

"I believe that if OPEC members stand united and act cohesively, the US will not be able to sanction or pressure any single member," Pezeshkian told Haitham al-Ghais, the secretary-general of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, in Tehran, according to IRNA. "Keeping OPEC out of political games is a key principle," he added. The president urged OPEC members to "operate in a way that their actions do not harm one another."

Ghais hailed Iran's "positive role" in the organization as one of the founding members of OPEC.

"I have tried to steer OPEC toward securing the interests of all members while ensuring market stability and sustainability," he said.

"We have worked to strengthen cooperation among member countries, treating one another like a family in the pursuit of collective interests," the OPEC chief added. Ghais noted that improved relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as two key OPEC members, enabled the organization to play a more powerful role in the market than ever before.

### Unilateral sanctions destabilize oil markets

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad also held talks with Ghais during which he warned that "unilateral sanctions" against major oil producers would threaten global energy market stability and harm consumers worldwide.

Paknejad stated that depoliticizing the oil market is critical for energy security, particularly for the oil market and its stakeholders.

He argued that imposing unilateral sanctions on major oil producers and pressuring OPEC directly undermines the stability of oil and energy markets, ultimately hurting consumers globally.

During the meeting, Paknejad highlighted the historical role of OPEC+ member countries in ensuring market stability and supporting global economic growth.

He praised the OPEC for fostering solidarity among OPEC+ producers and promoting constructive engagement with energy consumers worldwide.

The minister stressed the importance of continuing this collaborative approach, noting that the OPEC and non-OPEC cooperation framework, built on fundamental principles, has created a model for sustainable and stable relations among member countries.

This cooperation, he said, has been instrumental in supporting and maintaining long-term stability in the global oil

market.

Paknejad, who will chair the OPEC Conference in 2025, reiterated that depoliticizing the oil market is essential for energy security.

He warned that unilateral sanctions and pressure on OPEC destabilize oil and energy markets, harming consumers across the globe.

The minister also pointed to the challenges facing the global oil industry, particularly the need for investment in upstream and downstream sectors to ensure energy security in both supply and demand.

Paknejad attributed concerns among major energy consumers about market stability and supply security to political decisions aimed at pressuring OPEC+ and imposing regulatory restrictions on new investments in the oil industry's upstream sector.

As one of OPEC's founding members, Iran remains committed to supporting the organization's decisions to achieve sustainable market stability, Paknejad said.

In his role as OPEC Conference President in 2025, he pledged to strengthen unity among member countries and enhance cooperation with non-OPEC allies to benefit oil producers' interests.

### Iran breaks 10-year oil export record

On the sidelines of a cabinet meeting Wednesday Paknejad announced that

Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (R) meets with Haitham al-Ghais, the secretary-general of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), in the capital Tehran on February 5, 2025. **SHANA**



Iran broke a 10-year record in oil exports last month, attributing the achievement to the efforts of oil industry workers and strong will.

Paknejad said that the milestone was reached in January despite ongoing sanctions.

"I am pleased to share this good news with the people of Iran," Paknejad said. "With the hard work of our oil industry employees, the 10-year oil export record was broken this January."

He also revealed that one of the largest contracts in the history of Iran's oil indus-

try will soon be signed in the presence of the president.

The details of the contract, which addresses a key demand of both the public and officials, will be disclosed to the people after its signing.

Regarding the ministry's plans to counter sanctions, Paknejad emphasized that Iran is prepared to achieve its goals under any circumstances, whether sanctions remain in place or are lifted.

"Necessary measures have been taken to address maximum pressure, and this strategy has failed," he said.

## Aref urges concerted efforts to restore Iranian textiles to top standing



### Economy Desk

In a meeting with the board of directors of the Iran Textile Industries Association, Vice President Mohammadreza Aref emphasized the need to restore Iran's textile industry to its former position as a leading exporter of high-quality goods in the international market.

This meeting marked the first in a series of engagements with the industry leaders and private sector representatives aimed at supporting and revitalizing this key sector.

Aref described the textile industry as one of Iran's oldest and most traditional industries, noting that despite its significant potential for job creation and contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), it has been neglected in recent years. He announced plans to modernize and rebuild the industry with the help of stakeholders.

Reflecting on privatization efforts in the early 2000s, Aref acknowledged that mutual commitments between the government and the textile industry were not fully realized, leading to Iran falling behind global and regional competitors. He stressed that the government is now seriously committed to reviving the industry and ensuring it regains its competitive edge.

"The textile industry must be revitalized, and the government will actively support this sector," Aref said. "Countries that entered the textile indus-

try after Iran have surpassed us. We must fulfill past commitments and restore Iran's textiles to their former status as a top exporter of premium goods."

Aref highlighted the cultural significance of the textile industry, stating that it should not be replaced but rather prioritized. He also pointed to the promising export market in the Eurasian region, emphasizing the need for Iran to remain competitive in a globalized economy.

"Neighboring countries operate in a competitive environment, and imposing import restrictions is unsustainable. We must prepare to meet domestic and regional demands," he said.

The veep called for regulated fabric imports, particularly in free trade zones, and stressed the importance of providing foreign currency for the import of new machinery to modernize the industry. He also emphasized the need to revise tariffs and import duties to support the sector.

Aref reiterated the government's commitment to improving quality, marketing, and self-sufficiency in the textile industry. He expressed optimism about the industry's recovery, noting that Iranian clothing has gained a strong foothold in domestic and regional markets.

"If the government deems import restrictions necessary, it will take appropriate measures to support the industry," he added.

During the meeting, members of the Textile Industries Association outlined challenges related to currency policies, import restrictions, supply chain issues, raw material shortages, and customs and tariff problems. They also presented proposals to address such issues.

This meeting was part of a broader initiative to support the private sector in line with the directives of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, following his visit to the Pioneers of Progress Exhibition.

### Visiting Defense Ministry exhibition

On Wednesday, Aref visited the Defense Ministry's exhibition on national defense development cooperation.

He was briefed on the ministry's latest achievements in oil, gas, petrochemicals, health, medical equipment, transportation, electricity, clean energy, storage, construction, mining, information technology, artificial intelligence, and food security.

Aref praised the ministry for organizing the exhibition, calling it an opportunity to showcase progress in national self-reliance and food security. He highlighted the ministry's accomplishments in industrial sectors, communications, artificial intelligence, and food security, particularly in reducing dependence on imported oil.

"We are pursuing self-sufficiency in all sectors, especially defense, but we are not seeking war. We will defend our country and provide the necessary equipment," Aref said. On Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, Aref emphasized that the country is committed to using nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in line with a religious decree prohibiting

the development of nuclear weapons. He reiterated that Iran's strategy in this area is clear and consistent.

Regarding a potential meeting between the presidents of Iran and the United States, Aref stated that while such a meeting is not impossible, it is not currently on Iran's agenda. Aref also addressed economic reforms, highlighting the government's focus on resolving livelihood issues through structural reforms and short-term measures, such as livelihood packages for vulnerable groups. He noted progress in reducing inflation and achieving economic growth.

On currency exchange rates, Aref explained that the government's strategy is to unify exchange rates, which has led to a more balanced market. He expressed confidence that stability in the currency market would eventually influence the free market.

The VP also discussed Iran's international trade strategy, emphasizing the importance of strengthening ties with neighboring countries, Muslim nations, and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) members. He expressed hope for Iran's permanent membership in the EAEU and the implementation of a free trade agreement with the union.

Aref highlighted infrastructure projects, such as the North-South and East-West transport corridors, and the development of railway lines like Basra-Shalamcheh and Chabahar-Zahedan, as key to enhancing regional trade and cooperation.

On privatization, Aref affirmed that it is a government strategy and a legal obligation but stressed that it must be carried out in a way that preserves jobs and boosts production.

## How smart technology transformed Iran's postal industry

### Economy Desk

In recent years, Iran's postal industry has undergone significant changes due to a focus on smart technology, including the introduction of robots, smart mailboxes, and mobile postal kiosks. These advancements have improved service quality and expanded the company's offerings.

According to ISNA, the push to modernize government services through smart technology has been a key priority for officials in recent years, leading to notable progress in this area.

One of the main advantages of smart technology is its ability to reduce reliance on human labor, ultimately driving digital transformation. For example, to enhance postal services, several smart parcel sorting lines were launched with the help of knowledge-based companies, increasing the speed and accuracy of mail delivery.

As part of the postal industry's modernization, new smart parcel sorting lines were established in collaboration with knowledge-based companies to improve delivery efficiency. Additionally, Iran has joined the small group of countries producing smart postal sorting robots. Mohammad Ahmadi, CEO of Iran's National Post Company, explained that smart robots are being developed to handle sorting and processing tasks.

These robots will support the growth of automated sorting systems, as intelligent analysis of parcel data can be implemented through this mechanization. These smart analyses enhance quality and productivity. For instance, during the Ten-Day Fajr celebrations, AI-driven address-reading mechanisms and distribution route analyses were unveiled.

This marks a shift from city-level sorting to address-level sorting



by smart robots, creating more opportunities for AI integration in internal processes and driving organizational transformation.

The launch of smart mailboxes is another initiative by the National Post Company. These secure, intelligent metal mailboxes have been installed in 140 locations across the country, including Tehran and cities like Kish Island and Khuzestan.

Mobile postal kiosks have also been introduced to address the lack of new post offices in growing urban areas. Many existing post offices date back 50 years or more.

The mobile kiosks, equipped with smart technology, are stationed throughout cities at scheduled times, allowing citizens to locate them via mobile apps and access services conveniently.

The postal industry's progress extends beyond smart technology. Recently, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) released its 2024 Integrated Postal Development (2IPD) report, ranking Iran 37th—a jump of 14 places, reflecting a 28% growth.

This achievement places Iran ahead of several regional postal operators, including India, Russia, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

This progress highlights ongoing efforts and strategic planning to improve service quality, expand access, and increase customer satisfaction.



# Ups and downs of **wood** products sector in Iran



By Reza  
Abesh Ahmadlou  
Staff writer

References to the wood products industry in Iran can be traced as far back as 4200 B.C. in the writings of historians such as Herodotus, Xenophon, and Quinte-Curce. In the period, native people of Iran used wood for wheels, carts, and agricultural tools. Later, in the Achaemenid dynasty, Xenophon describes wood used for battle weapons, buildings, ships, and bridges. Modern industrial use of wood in Iran emerged with the establishment of sawmills and match factories in the early 1900s and the manufacturing of plywood, fiberboard, particleboard, and furniture in the 1950s.

Iranian forest products industry is fragmented and faces a number of challenges that hinder success in domestic and export markets. The production and trade trends are evaluated here for each product, including different types of wood-based panels and furniture and the patterns are extracted.

## Forest resources

Iran has a total land area of over 164.8 million hectares, of which 80 percent (131.5 million hectares) are designated as natural resources, according to Iran's Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization. Natural resources are defined as any biological, mineral, or aesthetic asset afforded by nature without human intervention that can be used for some form of benefit, whether material or immaterial.

Examples of natural resource assets include forests, surface water, groundwater, and fertile lands or the soil and minerals within them.

Forests comprise about 8% of the country's total area and are one of Iran's most important natural resources. They are dense in the north, with the most valuable forests found in Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan provinces. Forests are divided into two groups: forests in the north and forests outside the north. In addition to the forests of the north, sparse and scattered forests are found in the west, southwest and northeast regions of the country.

In terms of climate, forests are designated by five zones according to the Iran Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization. Zagros forests have the largest share with 4.68 million hectares, and Arasbaran forests in northwestern province of East Azarbaijan have the smallest share with 132,398 hectares of forest area compared to the total forests of Iran. This classification of Iranian forests is based on climate of each type, but the species of the trees and their productivity are different. The only productive and industrially harvestable forest of Iran is Hyrcanian forest in the north.

## Wood supply

Wood supply from natural forests was about 1.5 million cubic meters in 1995 and decreased to 0.87 million cubic meters in 2004. The Iranian government banned harvesting natural forests in 2017 for a minimum period of 10 years. As such, the wood supply from natural forests is near zero except for small volumes from illegal harvesting.

Currently, plantations are the main source of wood raw material for industry as they are not included in natural forests. Annual wood supply from this source is about 6 million cubic meters, including poplar, eucalyptus and wood from fruit gardens.

This is planned to double in volume by 2027, according a plan by Iran's Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization. The investment for doing this plan will be covered by the government directly. Besides this, the government plans to promote plantations and support the private sector to develop plantations.

All these are planned to increase the wood supply for the Iranian wood industry. Another source of raw material for Iranian particleboard and medium density fiberboard (MDF) industries is sugarcane bagasse, which provides feedstock for the country's two particleboard plants, one MDF plant, and one paper plant in southern Iran.

Total wood imports to Iran are generally increasing and include mainly sawn wood (90%) and other forms of raw wood like roundwood, sleepers, and wood chips (10%).

The sawn wood imports to Iran are for the furniture and construction sectors. Total wood imports during the period of 2013–2022 showed 220% growth compared to the period of 1995–2004. The main source of wood imports to Iran is Russia, supplying more than 90% of total imports.

Imports of wood raw materials for wood-based panels and pulp industries are essentially non-existent due to Iranian Plant Protection Organization regulations and a lack of logistics infrastructure. Because of the shortage of wood sources in Iran, the country does not export raw wood.

## Wood product sectors

Due to long-term sanctions against Iran, access to new technologies is limited, and wood industry owners do not have easy and fast access to updated machinery and know-how to upgrade their production lines.

This is not limited to panel producers only. As a result, the industry faces problems in production quality control and management. Conversely, these sanctions limit the Iranian wood industries' access to the international markets due to many challenges in transferring money and trading with foreign countries.

## Particle board

The country's particleboard consumption decreased by 42% two years ago compared to 2013, concurrent with a 24% decrease in particleboard production in this period. Stagnation in the country's construction sector combined with MDF substituting for particleboard and increased competition for limited raw materials are the main reasons for the decrease in the production and consumption of particleboard.

However, during the years 2013 to 2022, exports have been increasing, but imports have been decreasing since 2013. During the years 2013 to 2022, the import of particleboard to the country has decreased by more than 83%.

## Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF)

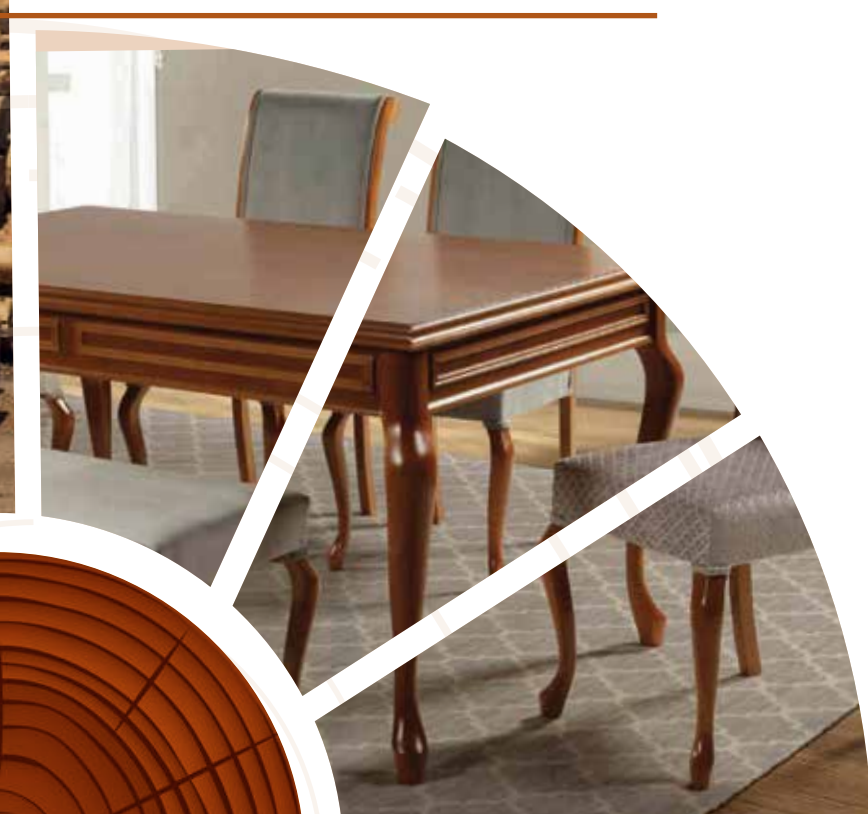
Production and consumption of MDF from 2013 to 2022 are shown in Figure 7. With the increase in domestic production of MDF, the gap between the country's consumption and production has decreased significantly. In 2013, 33% of consumption was supplied by domestic production. Before 2004, all MDF consumed in the country was imported, and in 2005, only 13% of MDF consumption was produced domestically.

This trend can also be seen in imports and exports. Exports have been increasing, and imports have been decreasing. The high import tax for importing wood-based panels, including 10% for unfinished and 20% for worked or surfaced products, respectively, together with an unfavorable exchange rate and the increase in domestic production capacity are the main reasons for the decrease in imports in this period.

However, imports still play a significant role in supplying the country's MDF consumption. Efforts have been made to increase the production capacity of MDF with governmental support and investment.

Traditionally, the plants were located in northern Iran near natural forest resources and plantations, which are the main sources of raw material. Production facilities in the south of Iran use bagasse as raw material. More than 90% of Iranian wood-based panel enterprises are owned by private sector entities.

Most wood-based panels, both unfinished and surfaced panels in Iran are consumed by the furniture industry. Surfacing material shares of the total market are veneer (4%), high-pressure laminate (2%), PVC foil (10%), paper foil (4%), melamine paper (70%), printing (5%), and no additional surface material (5%).







Iran has become self-sufficient in the wooden furniture industry, and with an increasing exchange rate, it has adopted a policy of expanding exports.

Both hardboard production plants in Iran closed by 2005 due to weak market demand. From 1996 to 2005, total annual production was an estimated 22,000 cubic meters. Over the past decade, hardboard imports (including dry process high-density fiberboard) rose to 130,000 cubic meters and then fell precipitously for the remaining five years. Also, about the Oriented Strand Board (OSB), according to the Iran Wood Industry Employers Association, there is no domestic production of OSB; the country's needs are met through imports.

Hardboard

The oldest form of furniture discovered in Iran are four-legged pottery chairs made about 8,000 years ago. Unique motifs and designs originating from thousands of years ago can be found in modern day wood furniture and crafts. The growth and development of the modern furniture industry in Iran began in the 1970s and large factories were active in the years before 1980. After that, and after the beginning of the Iran - Iraq war in 1980, the growth of the furniture industry, like other industries in the country, was interrupted. After a break in the development of the furniture industry, in 2001, the imports of new machinery and raw materials accelerated sector development.

Tehran, the capital of Iran, is the largest hub of the furniture trade. In addition to Tehran, the furniture industry has grown significantly in other cities such as Qom, Isfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Tabriz and Malayer.

Except for a few large producers, the furniture manufacturing sector is characterized by small and/or family-owned shops. Rough estimates from 2017 pegged the industry at about 65,000 enterprises of all sizes. For the same year, total sector revenue was estimated to be \$1.5 billion (Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade 2019). Another source, the Union of Furniture Manufacturers and Exporters (2022), estimates that the furniture industry accounted for 8% of the country's employment in 2022.

According to the Iranian Wood Industries Employers Association in 2023, the value of imported wooden furniture has been decreasing during the period 2013-2022. One of the reasons for this decrease is the increase in domestic production, while a second reason is the increase in the import tax of these products. The import tax and fee are doubled during this period. Iranian imports in 2013 were less than 1,000 tons, with a value of \$1.7 million, a decline from an estimated value of \$6.5 million in 2004.

In the same time, exports have been increasing. Iran has become self-sufficient in the wooden furniture industry, and with an increasing exchange rate, it has adopted a policy of expanding exports. Furniture exports have grown since 2016, reaching nearly 16,000 tons with a value of \$45 million in 2022.

Furniture

Iran's most important export markets were analyzed for each product during the past 10 years as 59% of Iran's imported particleboard came from Turkey, with China in second place with 12% share. Turkmenistan, the most significant export destination for Iran's particleboard products, accounted for

60% of total particleboard exports for the same period, followed by Iraq and Afghanistan.

Turkey is the top exporter of MDF to Iran. This country is the source of 30% of Iran's imports. Thailand with 23%, China with 22% and the UAE with 15%, are in successive positions. Afghanistan accounts for 48%, and Iraq, with a share of 43% are Iran's main exports destinations for MDF.

From 2013 to 2022, the import of wood-based panels to Iran decreased while production and export capacity of these products increased. This is mainly because of increased MDF production in the country. MDF has the largest share of consumption within wood-based panels in Iran. However, Iran's share in the world trade of these products is negligible, accounting for 0.01% of the world trade.

According to statistics, China with 42%, and Turkey with 38% are the largest furniture import partners, while Afghanistan with 46% and Iraq with 28% are the largest export markets.

As mentioned, Iran's furniture industry has a share of less than one percent of the world markets. This amount shows many missed opportunities in this field. With proper investment and management, export destinations can be increased and by producing quality products, the industry can gain a suitable place in the world trade of furniture.

The Iranian furniture industry also exports some wooden furniture to high-income countries like Canada, Italy, and Germany. There is potential to increase the amount of exports to these countries and also add other high-income countries to the list of export markets. This needs more market study and promotional activities in these target markets.

The wood industry has been essential to Iran's economy and traditions going back thousands of years. If barriers to growth can be eased, it is believed that the sector could develop stronger competitive positions in domestic production, opening and expanding export markets, reducing reliance on product imports, and generally returning to a sector of strength.

Trade partners





## AFC Champions League Elite:

Persepolis well beaten by Al Hilal,  
drops out of top eight

## Sports Desk

Persepolis was dealt a major blow in its quest to progress to the AFC Champions League Elite last-16 after a 4-1 defeat against Saudi heavyweight Al Hilal in Riyadh on Tuesday.

Brazilian Malcom put the home side in front with 10 minutes into the game at the jam-packed Kingdom Arena, picking the ball up from just inside his own half and surging unchallenged into the box before his dink went past the advancing goalkeeper Alexis Guendouz.

The Algerian keeper then failed to deal with a low effort from Joao Cancelo from the edge of the box, as the Portuguese full-back doubled Al Hilal's lead in the 25th minute.

Malcom slipped Salem Al Dawsari through with the skipper evading Guendouz to tuck away from a tight angle in the 39th minute, before the Saudi international got his second of the night with a stunning strike from outside the box in the first-half added time, delivering a damning verdict of the widening gap between the two nations' club football.

Turkish head coach Ismail Kartal, who was in charge of the Tehran Reds' bench for only a second game, made three half-time changes to his surprising starting XI, bringing in Giorgio Gvelesiani, Saied Mehri and Farshad Ahmadzadeh for Mohammad Khodabandelou, Masoud



Persepolis defender Farshad Faraji is frustrated as Al Hilal players celebrate their first goal in a 4-1 win in the AFC Champions League Elite at the Kingdom Arena, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Feb. 4, 2025.  
● AFP

Rigi, and Yassin Salmani, though it did little to change his side's fortune around.

The home side took its foot off the gas in the second half, while the visitors kept fighting for their reputation and managed to reduce the damage through Gvelesiani's consolation goal from the spot in the 90th minute.

A sixth win in seven games helped Al Hilal move back atop the West Zone's 12-team table with 19 points, with Persepolis dropping to ninth place on six points, trailing city rival Esteghlal on goal difference ahead of the final round of the league phase fixtures.

Kartal went on to admit after the game that his team strug-

gled against Al Hilal's quality, especially in the first half.

"In the first half, we couldn't play as we wanted. Every ball that came into our area was dangerous, and we conceded goals. The team dropped mentally, and we had three, four players injured.

"We made some changes and altered the system in the sec-

ond half. The players played with more confidence, and we didn't make as many individual mistakes," added the former Fenerbahce coach.

Al Hilal boss Jorge Jesus, meanwhile, was all smiles after his team's first-half masterclass, saying: "After leading by four goals, we started playing at a lower pace in the second half,

and there is no team that plays 90 minutes at a high pace except on the PlayStation."

"I remember that since I joined the team, we have only lost three matches. All the players are equally important to me," said the Portuguese.

Earlier in the day, a first-half strike by Ferjani Sassi was enough to see Al Gharafa hand Pakhtakor a 1-0 defeat in Doha and move up to seventh in the table with seven points.

With Saudi trio Al Hilal, Al Ahli, and Al Nassr, plus Al Sadd of Qatar and Emirati outfit Al Wasl having secured their place in the next round, the battle for the remaining three knockout spots in the West will go down to the wire between Al Rayyan (eight points), Al Gharafa (seven points), Esteghlal (six points), Persepolis (six points), and Pakhtakor (four points) in two weeks' time. Persepolis will be looking to bounce back from Tuesday's humiliation when welcoming Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr to the Azadi Stadium on February 17.

Pakhtakor will face Al Sadd in Tashkent on the same day, with Al Gharafa visiting Jeddah to take on Al Ahli.

Esteghlal, which was held to a 1-1 draw against Al Shorta at home on Monday, will visit Al Rayyan on February 18, with even a single point – if other results on the preceding night go its way – likely to be enough to send the Tehran Blues through.

## Doncic shocked by trade to Lakers but excited for new journey

REUTERS – Luka Doncic said on Tuesday he was as shocked as anyone by the blockbuster trade over the weekend that brought him to the Los Angeles Lakers but is excited to join forces with LeBron James in a move that could shape the franchise for years to come.

The 25-year-old Slovenian guard and perennial MVP contender admitted he figured he would spend his entire NBA career with the Dallas Mavericks, which made the news of his trade late on Saturday all the more surprising.

"I was almost asleep when I got the call, I had to check (if) it was April 1st. I didn't really

believe it at first. It was a big shock. It was hard a moment for me," said Doncic.

"(Dallas) was home so it was a really hard moment for me, especially the first day, but as I said I get to play in the greatest club in the world and I am excited about this new journey."

Doncic, who has not played since Christmas Day, opens new tab because of a calf strain but is considered close to returning, had been with Dallas ever since a draft-night trade with the Atlanta Hawks, who took him with the third overall pick in 2018.

Last year, the five-times All-

Star reached the NBA Finals for the first time in his career but the Mavericks lost 4-1 to the Boston Celtics in the best-of-seven championship series. Now Doncic, who was wildly popular in Dallas, will chase a title alongside the NBA's all-time top scorer in James, who he said was quick to reach out when the trade was announced.

"He called me right away," Doncic said of his new teammate. "We didn't talk much because he said I understand what you are feeling, but that was really nice of him just to call me right away and welcome me to LA."

During his press conference, Doncic recounted a memorable encounter he had in 2019 when Lakers great Kobe Bryant, who was sitting courtside with his daughter Gianna for a game in Los Angeles, playfully heckled him in Slovenian.

"Well, first of all, I remember the exact moment that happened. It will always stay, you know, in my mind. It was an amazing moment," said Doncic.

"Just for Kobe to know my name was amazing for me. You know, I just wish Kobe and (his daughter Gianna nicknamed) Gigi were here to see this moment. And, you know, I'm ex-



cited about this new journey and happy to be here."

Bryant, an 18-times All Star and five-times NBA champi-

on, died in a January 2020 helicopter crash that also killed his daughter and seven others.



● ALEX NICODIM/REUTERS

## Former world No. 1 Halep announces retirement

THE GUARDIAN – Former world No 1 Simona Halep has announced her retirement from tennis after enduring a resounding defeat in her first match of 2025.

Halep belatedly got her season under way in her home event, the Transylvania Open, in Romania on Tuesday, after being handed a wildcard. But the two-time grand slam title winner secured just two games as Italy's Lucia Bronzetti powered to a 6-1, 6-1 victory in just 59 minutes.

Speaking in an emotional on-

court interview, Halep said: "Tonight, I don't know if it's with joy or sadness, I think both feelings are trying me but I'm making this decision with my soul.

"I've always been realistic with myself and with my body. Where I probably was, it's very hard to get there and I know what it means to get there. That's why I wanted to come here today in Cluj to play in front of you and say goodbye.

"Even though my performance wasn't very good it was still my soul and I'm very glad you

came, and I'll wonder if I'll come back again. But for now it's the last time I've played here and I don't want to cry.

"It's a beautiful thing. I became world No 1, I won grand slams, it's all I wanted. Life goes on, there is life after tennis and I hope that we will see each other again. I'll come to the tennis here as often as I can and of course I will continue to play – but to be competitive it requires much more and at this moment it is no longer."

Halep, who was given a four-year doping ban that was re-

duced to nine months due to a contaminated supplement, last competed on the WTA Tour in October in Hong Kong. The 33-year-old also played in an exhibition event in Abu Dhabi in December, but subsequently pulled out of qualifying for the Australian Open, citing pain in her knee and shoulder.

This week Halep admitted that retiring "goes through my mind very often". She told the Romanian website Golazo.ro: "I am old, I have injuries that I can't recover from. My knee is not recovering."



# Amir Kabir and the enigma of Fin



## Iranica Desk

Amir Kabir, also known as Mirza Mohammad Taqi Khan Farahani, was the first Prime Minister of Nasereddin Shah and the king's brother-in-law. During his tenure, he made significant contributions, some of which garnered opposition and created enemies within the royal court.

## Key contributions

Among the most important actions he undertook during his three years in office were the establishment of the Dar al-Funun School and the publication of the *Vaqaye-e Ettefaqiyyeh* newspaper.

## Educational reforms

Upon assuming office, Amir

Kabir recognized the deficiencies in cultural and scientific institutions and believed that Iran was lacking in modern sciences and civilization. He felt that to bring about meaningful change in the country, Iranian youth needed to acquire knowledge of various civilizations and sciences, *chtn.ir* wrote.

The Dar al-Funun School, established during Amir Kabir's tenure, was Iran's first modern educational institution, opening with seven branches. The Qajar princes were among the first students at Dar al-Funun, where they learned new scientific principles alongside disciplines such as engineering, medicine, pharmacy, mining, and technical skills, with many teachers hailing from Europe.

## Vaqaye-e Ettefaqiyyeh Newspaper

The *Vaqaye-e Ettefaqiyyeh* was the third printed newspaper in Iran, established by Amir Kabir. The first issue was published on February 7, 1851, during the third year of Nasereddin Shah Qajar's reign. Under Amir Kabir's directive, subscription to this newspaper was mandatory for anyone in the government earning more than 200 tomans. The newspaper included domestic news related to the royal court, appointments and dismissals, grants of ranks, medals, and privileges. Some issues also featured news from various cities in Iran. The foreign news section covered updates concerning European countries, and there was also a

section for incidents. Less than a year after the first issue was published, issue 49 contained a distorted report about Amir Kabir's death.

## Additional policies

Other actions he undertook during his tenure included addressing financial conditions, abolishing titles and honors, reforming treatment of courtiers, implementing social reforms, establishing a guard house, improving the state postal service, promoting agriculture and land cultivation, combating torture, reorganizing the military, enacting religious reforms.

## Fin Garden

The Fin Garden, one of the largest in Kashan, is home to a bath-

house famously known as the site of Amir Kabir's murder. The garden was registered as a national heritage site in 1935. After several years of effort, UNESCO added the garden to its list of World Heritage Sites in 2011. In the southern part of the Fin Garden, there are two bathhouses: one small and one large. The small bathhouse dates back to the Safavid era and was built alongside the original structure of the Fin Garden, while the large bathhouse was constructed during the Qajar period on the orders of Fat'hali Shah. High-ranking officials used the large bathhouse, while servants utilized the small one. The various sections of the bathhouses include an entrance, hot room, water feature, bathing pool, cleaning area, and changing

room (*sarbineh*).

## Assassination of Amir Kabir

On November 10, 1851, precisely two months before Amir Kabir's assassination, Nasereddin Shah sent a handwritten note dismissing him from the premiership. Amir Kabir was killed on the orders of Nasereddin Shah in the hot room of a small bathhouse next to the marble pond.

The day after his assassination, his body was buried in Kashan. However, a few months later, at the insistence of his wife, Malekzadeh Ezzatodoleh, his remains were transferred to Karbala, where he was buried in the shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH), the third Imam of Shia Muslims.

## Iranica Desk

On the southern banks of the Ghezel Ozan River, which flows from the heights of Chehel Cheshmeh in Kurdistan Province to the Caspian Sea, lies Mahneshan, a city in Zanjan Province, once inhabited by the Medes.

The origin of the name Mahneshan is believed to be connected to the Medes, supported by nearby Madabad village, which carries historical significance.

Behestan Castle is located alongside the Ghezel Ozan River, near the village of Behestan, ten kilometers southeast of Mahneshan and one hundred kilometers west of the provincial capital city of Zanjan. The historic site boasts stunning scenery, nestled in a region rich with natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Dating back to ancient Iran, Behestan Castle served as a habitation from 1300 BCE to 500 years ago. The site features manmade structures carved into the mountainside, including corridors, staircases, vaults, and shelves.

Evidence suggests the castle had multiple stories, with a distinctive zigzag staircase and gradually added rooms. A notable feature in the upper section is a pool

## Behestan Castle; a timeless guardian of Medes heritage



constructed from stone and saroj — a specific type of water-resistant mortar—measuring seven meters tall and three meters wide, fed by clay pipes.

Moreover, two megaliths crafted from sandstone stand about one hundred meters apart in the region, at an elevation of two thousand five hundred meters above sea level. Over the millennia, the relentless forces of rain, wind, and temperature fluctuations have eroded these ancient structures. Locally known as Dudkesh-e Jen and Takht-e Div, these remnants attract historians and tourists alike.

The mountain that shelters Behestan Castle is made up of marble, conglomerate, sandstone, clay, marl, mica, and schist, with its geological formation dating back to the Miocene and Pliocene epochs, approximately twenty million years ago

## Attractions

Visitors to the region can also explore other remarkable attractions in the region. The Zanjan Bazaar, a traditional marketplace, offers a glimpse into the local culture, with shops selling handicrafts, spices, and regional delicacies. Another notable site is the Soltaniyeh Dome, a UNESCO World Heritage site featuring one of the largest brick domes in the world, which dates

back to the 14th century. Additionally, a fire temple, which is a remnant of the Zoroastrian faith, attracts those interested in ancient Persian religion and architecture.

Together, these sites create a rich tapestry of history that complements the allure of Behestan Castle, making the area around Zanjan a fascinating destination for history enthusiasts and tourists alike.



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# Tehran Auction's listed on three art market platforms

Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran Auction's data has been registered on three prominent platforms: Artprice, Artnet, and Artsy. This milestone follows a decade of consistent efforts to enhance the visibility of Iranian art and establish a balance in the pricing of works by prominent Iranian artists on the global stage, IRNA wrote. With an objective to showcase Iranian artists to collectors worldwide, Tehran Auction has finally achieved its goal. The auction's data, now accessible on these major platforms, allows global art collectors to view economic transactions and sales records of Iranian artworks, previous-

ly confined to local markets. The sale prices of these works are available in US dollars, making it easier for international buyers to evaluate their investments. Artprice, Artnet, and Artsy are recognized as the foremost sources of art market information, compiling critical data from major art auctions and sales records. While these platforms primarily focus on international auction data, Tehran Auction stands out as one of the few regional events to successfully integrate its information into these global databases. As the largest contemporary art auction in the Middle East, Tehran Auction has recorded sales ranging from one to seven million dollars across

its 21 events, establishing itself as a key indicator for evaluating investments in Iranian art on the world stage. Previously, the auction aimed to invigorate the domestic art market and create parity in the pricing of established Iranian artists. Now, it has broadened its scope to promote the global exchange of Iranian artworks, further enhancing the appeal for both buyers and sellers within the country. Over the past decade, Tehran Auction has not only elevated the status of art collecting in Iran but has also significantly contributed to the growth of the country's art economy, attracting increased participation from local art enthusiasts.



## Iranian artist's exhibition gets kudos in Ankara

Arts & Culture Desk

The art exhibition titled 'Nostalgic Iranian Family' by Iranian artist Ali Miri has been warmly welcomed in Turkey, showcasing a rich blend of tradition and modernity. The event, organized by the Iranian Cultural Center in Ankara in collaboration with the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, opened in a bustling metro station, offering a unique platform to introduce contemporary Iranian art to Turkish viewers, IRNA reported. The exhibition was inaugurated in the early days of the cultural year for Iran and Turkey, attended by prominent figures including Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi; Iranian Ambassador to Turkey, Mohammad Hassan Habibollah Zadeh; and Iranian Cultural Attaché in Turkey Qasem Nazemi. The exhibition will run through February 13. Miri's works, a harmonious fusion of digital painting and traditional themes, resonate deeply with both Iranian and Turkish audiences. Many Turkish visitors expressed



astonishment at the memories evoked by the artwork, stating that despite the pieces being crafted by an Iranian artist, they reflect shared experiences that transcend national boundaries. "These images encapsulate moments I have lived through, detailed in a way that feels very familiar," said one viewer. The exhibition features 50 digital artworks displayed prominently in the central Ankara metro gallery, with a focus on family and daily life. Visitors have not only praised the aesthetic appeal of the pieces but have also underscored the significance of hosting such cultural events, which promote understanding and appreciation between neighboring nations.

## Deputy minister calls for tourism sector as driving force for economic growth

Arts & Culture Desk

In an effort to establish tourism as a pivotal industry, Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey, Deputy of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, emphasized the urgent need for a paradigm shift during a recent event focused on culinary, child, and creative tourism. Speaking at the 'Pioneers of Culinary, Child, and Creativity Tourism' event held on February 5 at the Espinas Palace Hotel, he added, "We have no option but to institutionalize tourism as a leading industry." Mohseni-Bandpey highlighted the potential of tourism to drive economic development and foster cultural exchange, ISNA reported. He said that today's meeting can significantly contribute to the enhancement of tourism, particularly through the lens of food and creativity. "Growth and evolution must encompass all areas; children's minds should not be limited to theoretical knowledge," he added, noting that such initiatives

play a key role in developing children's social skills. The deputy minister elaborated on the importance of food tourism, asserting that the flavors and aromas of local cuisine reflect the community's capabilities in food production, thereby propelling tourism growth. He recognized the private sector's vital role in the tourism industry, noting that many operators are driven by passion and minimal resources, resulting in high efficacy and appeal. Looking ahead, Mohseni-Bandpey announced that the upcoming tourism exhibition, scheduled for February 11-14 at the Tehran International Exhibition Center, will dedicate two halls to the theme of food. This initiative shows the significance of nutrition during travel. He also pointed out that children possess immense creativity and can encourage families to get on journeys, enhancing their cognitive development. In anticipation of the Nowruz celebrations, a special booth will be set up at the exhibition to motivate families to travel.



Mostafa Fatemi, Director of Domestic Tourism Development at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, said on the newfound visibility of boutique restaurants, stating, "We are witnessing the emergence of specialized news agencies focusing on children and food, which will enhance global tourism." He reiterated that this year's exhibition will concentrate on specialized sectors of food and child tourism, emphasizing the role of children as enthusiastic advocates for travel. Mohsen Emami, CEO of the Iran Tourism Experts Association, highlighted the

global trend of food tourism, noting that many travelers seek culinary experiences worldwide. He urged the promotion of Iran's diverse culinary heritage, stating, "Our food reflects the rich traditions of our regions, while modern trends have unfortunately led to a rise in fast food culture." Emami expressed hope that such events would continue, allowing traditional cuisines to gain recognition and appreciation across cultures. He concluded, "Food tourism is not just an industry; it is a crucial element that supports agriculture and hospitality, creating a broader service ecosystem."

## Kashmir Solidarity Day observed in Tehran

International Desk

The embassy of Pakistan in Tehran observed Kashmir Solidarity Day on Wednesday to express unity with the Kashmiri people who have long been living under restrictions in the Indian-controlled region. During the ceremony, the messages of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif were read out by Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu to the audience comprising

Iranian scholars, academicians, intellectuals, media figures, members of the Pakistani community, as well as Pakistani and Iranian university students. Pakistan observes the day every year on February 5. The country's people held nationwide marches on Friday to express solidarity with Kashmiris. Pakistan's foreign minister led the rally in Islamabad and urged the international community to play a role in ending the suffering of the people of Kashmir.



Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu addresses the ceremony held to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day in Tehran, on February 5, 2025. IRAN DAILY

Pakistan and India have competing claims on the long-standing Jammu and Kashmir issue. Both claim the region in full but rule on parts of it.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

