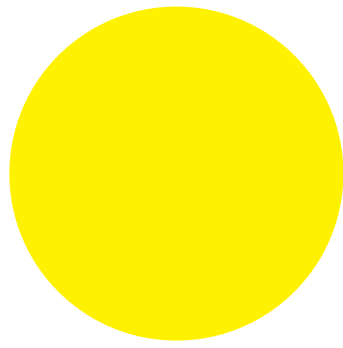


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Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei meets with a group of university students in Tehran, Iran on March 12, 2025. [khamenei.ir](#)



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Surge of terrorism in Syria will come back to haunt West

By Ali Khezrian
Iranian lawmaker

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

The fall of Bashar al-Assad and the rise of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Syria have plunged the country into a precarious and deeply troubling situation. A considerable number of HTS militants do not even hold Syrian citizenship, effectively turning them into occupiers rather than legitimate rulers. Moreover, an in-depth examination of the group's history, ideology, and approach makes it abundantly clear that it lacks both the capacity and the legitimacy to establish full control over Syria's diverse factions. HTS simply does not have what it takes to create a

stable and secure environment conducive to economic growth or to foster a thriving social landscape. Unfortunately, Western nations—along with certain regional states—have meddled in Syria's affairs, either directly or indirectly, propping up this group and paving its way to power. They have tried to paint its rule as a natural and logical outcome. But time has made one thing clear: HTS is neither capable of restoring stability nor of preserving Syria's national sovereignty. It has failed to unify the country's different political and social groups under its rule or to provide a free, equitable, and secure space for political, religious, and cultural activities. These concerns have only deepened in recent weeks as HTS has unleashed a brutal wave of violence against Syria's Alawite population. The alarm bells are

ringing for those who placed their trust in this group and effectively handed over Syria's sovereignty to a terrorist organization. The reign of HTS is not just a looming disaster for Syria—it also poses a direct threat to neighboring countries. A group that carries out mass killings of its own people will have no qualms about exporting violence and chaos beyond Syria's borders. Given the gravity of the situation, an emergency meeting of foreign ministers from Syria's neighbors and other West Asian countries must be convened as soon as possible. Lawmakers have already pressed the Iranian Foreign Ministry to initiate such a gathering so that decisive action can be taken before the crisis spirals even further out of control. At this point, Western countries must be called to account. In the early days of

HTS's takeover, their officials rushed to Syria to meet with the group's leaders. Now, they must be asked: What do they have to say about the atrocities and blatant human rights violations taking place on their watch? Are they willing to stand idly by as Syria follows in the tragic footsteps of Gaza and Lebanon, adding yet another chapter to their dark human rights record? Will they continue to turn a blind eye to HTS's crimes and extend their support, or will they finally acknowledge the threat they have helped unleash? If not for the efforts of nations like the Islamic Republic of Iran in combating extremist terrorism, would Europe and the West not already be grappling with the consequences of their own misguided policies? They would be gravely mistaken to think that they can open the door to an anti-security force in the region and

somehow contain the fallout. If anything, empowering such groups will only allow the virus of terrorism to spread like wildfire across the globe. It is only a matter of time before the consequences of this recklessness come back to bite them. Right now, the West is dealing with a terrorist entity of its own making—one that it has propped up in Syria. But rest assured, this group will eventually turn against its former backers. What is truly baffling, however, is why Western governments have not taken any steps to rein in this threat while they still have the chance. If they think this extremist movement will remain confined to West Asia, they are in for a rude awakening. Should they continue to fuel and facilitate terrorism in Syria, it will only be a matter of time before they find themselves in the crosshairs.

Leader: Iran standing stronger despite loss of resistance figures

International Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the Islamic Republic is more powerful than the last year despite the loss of leaders of the resistance front.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with a group of Iranian university students in Tehran on Wednesday.

"Since last year, when this meeting was held, until this year, various events have occurred. Last year, we had a different situation. Last year, when we had a meeting with you students, Martyr Raisi was alive, Martyr Sayyed

Hassan Nasrallah, may God be pleased with him, was with us, Martyr Hanieh, Martyr Safi al-Din, Martyr Sinwar, Martyr Dhaif, and several other prominent revolutionary figures were among us or with us, but they are not here this year," the Leader said.

He referred to the assassination of the valuable leaders of the resistance movements by the Israeli regime and the death of the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May as a great loss for the Islamic Republic.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that enemies and rivals of the Islamic Republic had wrong perception of

the events, but this year the Islamic Republic is stronger than last year in some issues.

The Leader said that the events that occurred in the West Asia region are painful. But, the Islamic Republic is continuing its growth and progress.

During Israel's brutal war on the Gaza Strip and Lebanon since October 2023, the regime has assassinated a number of the leaders and top commanders of the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance groups. Western countries consider the assassinations as a decisive blow to the 'Axis of Resistance' which the Islamic Republic supports it.



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with a group of Iranian university students in Tehran on March 12, 2025. khamenei.ir

Yemen resumes shipping attacks over Gaza aid cutoff by Israel

International Desk

The Yemeni Armed Forces in a statement on Wednesday announced that they will resume attacks on Israeli-bound ships after their deadline for Israel to allow the resumption of aid deliveries into Gaza passed. The Armed Forces said late on Tuesday that it was "resuming the ban on the passage of all Israeli ships" in the Red Sea because Israel had failed to honor the deadline it announced on Friday.

Yemen said the ban would take effect immediately, adding that, "Any Israeli ship attempting to violate this ban shall be targeted in the declared zone of operations."

The "ban" also covers the Arabian Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden, Yemen said.

"This prohibition will remain until the crossings into the Gaza Strip are reopened and humanitarian aid, including essential food and medicine, is permitted entry," the statement read. Israel has shut down Ga-



za's border crossings as a means of trying to force the Gaza-based resistance movement Hamas into releasing the rest of the Israeli captives that it holds in the coastal sliver.

The shutdown is also meant to mount immense pressure on the Palestinians in Gaza, who have already been suffering under a 15-month-plus war of genocide by Tel Aviv.

"With mediators failing to achieve these objectives (having the regime reopen the terminals and let in aid supplies), Yemen has escalated its stance in support of the Palestinian people," the Armed Forces' statement

noted.

The Yemeni military began taking Israeli ships and the vessels carrying supplies to the occupied Palestinian territories via the waters off the Arab Peninsula country under missile and drone strikes after October 7, 2023, when the regime launched the war on Gaza. The operations took serious toll on the Israeli economy, contributing to meaningful price increases across commodities consumed by the regime's illegal settlers.

Yemen halted its drone and missile attacks when the Gaza cease-fire was declared in January.

Iran to hold nuclear talks with China, Russia on Friday

Trump's letter delivered to Iranian FM by UAE official

International Desk

Iran confirmed Wednesday that it would sit down for talks with China and Russia in the Chinese capital Beijing on its nuclear program.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement that the three-way talks would focus on "developments related to the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions."

Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi also said the trio would also discuss and exchange views on other issues, including those related to cooperation within the framework of BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

China's Foreign Ministry earlier announced that Beijing would host the trilateral talks.

The meeting will be attended by China's Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and Gharibabadi.

In recent months, Tehran and Washington have expressed their interests in new negotiations to resolve the standoff over Tehran's nuclear program. However, Iranian officials be-

came skeptical after US President Donald Trump imposed fresh sanctions.

Trump has repeatedly said he wants to negotiate a new deal with Iran while also threatening military action if an agreement is not reached.

The US president recently said he has sent a letter to Iran's leader.

Trump's letter

The letter was delivered to Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday by Anwar Gargash, a diplomatic adviser to the president of the United Arab Emirates, IRNA reported.

Iranian officials say Iran will not enter any negotiations with the US so long as the US continues its "maximum pressure" policy.

Under the policy, Trump pulled out of Iran's nuclear deal in 2018 and reinstated and reinforced sweeping sanctions on Tehran.

In February, Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei urged the government not to negotiate with the US, citing Washington's withdrawal from the nuclear deal.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (l) welcomes Anwar Gargash, a diplomatic adviser to the president of the United Arab Emirates, in Tehran on March 12, 2025. ISNA

'Iran is not Ukraine'

On Tuesday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also sharply rebuked the Trump administration's maximalist approach toward Iran, declaring that Iran is not Ukraine and it will not negotiate with the US under threats or coercion.

"We must maintain relationship with the world. We do not want to be estranged or quarrel with anyone, but that does not mean we will bow in humiliation before anyone," Pezeshkian stated during a meeting of the Iran Entrepreneurs Forum in Tehran on Tuesday.

"We may die with honor, but we will never live in disgrace."

Ukraine showed readiness for cease-fire, Russia must now respond: Zelensky

Ukraine has shown it is willing to adopt a cease-fire and now Russia must respond, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Wednesday, a day after US and Ukrainian officials agreed to put a truce proposal to Moscow.

"Everything depends on whether Russia wants a cease-fire and silence, or it wants to continue killing people," Zelensky said at a press conference in Kiev, adding: "Ukraine has demonstrated its position... and today Russia has to respond to this," AFP reported.

The Kremlin says Russia is "studying" the statements following the talks in Jeddah, adds it is waiting for a briefing from US on the proposal that calls for a halt to all the fighting on land, sea and in the air.

The proposal to pause fighting between Russia and Ukraine after more than three years of brutal warfare came after intensive talks between Ukrainian and US officials in Saudi Arabia.

It also follows an explosive spat between Zelensky and US President Donald Trump, who lifted a freeze on military

aid to Ukraine after Kiev accepted the truce plan -- the latest in a rapid-fire series of developments on the conflict. Zelensky told reporters in Kiev that the United States would pile pressure on Moscow if it did not accept a halt to fighting that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

"I understand that we can count on strong steps. I don't know the details yet but we are talking about sanctions and strengthening Ukraine," Zelensky told reporters. "Everything depends on whether Russia wants a cease-fire and silence, or it wants to continue killing people," the Ukrainian leader added.

The truce offer comes at a difficult moment on the battlefield for Ukraine which is losing ground in the east and south of the country where officials said eight people were killed on Wednesday.

And even if Russia agrees to a cease-fire, much remains uncertain in negotiations. Ukraine has pressed for security guarantees, but Trump has ruled out NATO membership.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran-Tajikistan annual trade targeted at \$1b: *Lawmaker*

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The head of the Iran-Tajikistan Parliamentary Friendship Group stated that the current trade level between the two countries stands at approximately \$350 million, emphasizing that the short-term goal is to increase bilateral trade to \$1 billion.

Talking to Iran Daily, Fat'hollah Tavassoli noted that, given the development of bilateral relations and the current trajectory, this target is expected to be achieved within the next one to two years.

The MP highlighted the upward trend in trade between the two nations, stating that in the Iranian calendar year 1400 (2021-2022), the trade volume was around \$140 million. This figure rose to \$240 million in 1401 (2022-2023) and reached approximately \$350 million in the current Iranian year of 1403 (2024-2025).

Tavassoli emphasized that Tajikistan is one of the countries with-

in the Great Persia civilization sphere, sharing deep cultural, historical, and civilizational ties with Iran.

He pointed out that the Tajik people's affinity for Iranian culture is evident across the country, particularly in markets such as those in Dushanbe, the capital and largest city of Tajikistan, where there is a strong demand for Iranian goods. This cultural connection is also reflected in the statements of Tajik officials. He added that the music, art, history, and identity of the Iranian and Tajik people are closely intertwined, creating significant potential for collaboration between the two countries. Tavassoli asserted that such a level of cooperative potential is rare among other nations.

Tavassoli noted that both countries possess unique capacities and opportunities that can be leveraged to meet each other's needs and further strengthen bilateral relations. While the target for increasing trade has been set at \$1 billion, he believes this figure is modest and that achieving a \$5 billion trade volume within four to five years is entirely fea-

sible.

He described the recent visit of Iran's Vice President Masoud Pezeshkian to Tajikistan as a significant milestone in relations between the two Persian-speaking nations, highlighting that the trip bolstered economic, political, and cultural ties.

Tavassoli acknowledged that while trade has been on an upward trend in recent years, there is still considerable progress to be made to reach the desired level of cooperation. He stressed that visits by the president and other high-ranking officials can accelerate this process.

The lawmaker revealed that over the past few years, more than 50 cooperation agreements have been signed between Iran and Tajikistan in areas such as technical and engineering services, tech-based industries, dam construction, and hospital development. He also addressed past misunderstandings between the two countries, stating that these issues have been resolved and that relations are now in a positive state.

"During a recent visit to Tajikistan with Parliament Speaker



IRNA

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Tajik officials expressed strong interest in expanding ties with Iran," Tavassoli said, emphasizing the need to establish structured programs to further develop political, social, cultural, and economic relations.

Regarding economic cooperation, Tavassoli highlighted Tajikistan's abundant water resources and ongoing negotiations to transfer some of the

water to Iran for various uses.

He also noted that Iran has been involved in dam construction in Tajikistan, having already built two major dams in the country.

However, he mentioned that Iran has outstanding claims with Tajikistan for these projects, which have yet to be settled. He expressed hope that these debts, primarily owed to Iran's private sector, would be paid soon to enable Iranian companies to

undertake new projects in Tajikistan. Additionally, he pointed out Tajikistan's potential in grains production, which Iran could utilize.

Tavassoli also stated that Iran has significant capabilities in new technologies, technical and engineering services, healthcare, mining, and agriculture, which can address Tajikistan's needs in these sectors and foster further collaboration.

Ambassador announces \$7b increase in Iran-Turkey trade



Iranian and Turkish trade delegations reviewed the details of implementing a memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation as well as the mechanisms for achieving a \$30 billion trade target on March 12, 2025.

IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Ambassador to Turkey Mohammad-Hossein Habibollahzadeh, highlighted the growth in bilateral trade between Tehran and Ankara, stating that trade between the two countries reached \$11.8 billion in the last Iranian calendar year and has surpassed \$17.5 billion as of the eleventh Iranian month (ended Feb. 18).

The envoy projected that the figure could rise to \$19 billion by the end of the year (March 20).

Speaking at a virtual meeting of the Iran-Turkey Joint Transportation Committee, Habibollahzadeh emphasized the importance of developing transit infrastructure, noting that transit and transportation volumes between the two countries have increased by \$7 billion this year.

However, he stressed the need for significant infrastructure improvements in rail, air, maritime, and port sectors.

Expansion of border crossings, increased flights

Habibollahzadeh cited statistics showing that 6 million passengers and approximately 330,000 trucks traveled

between Iran and Turkey last Iranian year, reflecting the high volume of bilateral trade and the extensive transportation responsibilities of both countries.

To accommodate this growth, the number of border crossings will increase from three to five. Additionally, plans are underway to expand rail lines and increase flights.

The ambassador expressed satisfaction with the swift organization of the meeting following a recent gathering of the two countries' transportation ministers, which voiced their commitment to enhancing transportation and logistics cooperation. He expressed hope for significant decisions to be made regarding the development of relations between Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and Turkey's Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure.

Habibollahzadeh highlighted the role of Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd as the head of the Iran-Turkey Economic Commission, calling it a significant advantage. He emphasized that such cooperation could greatly impact the economic relations between the two countries.

Transit as key focus of Iran-Turkey cooperation

In the meeting with, Saeid Rasouli, deputy minister of roads and urban development, emphasized the strategic positions of Iran and Turkey in the southern Caspian Sea corridor, which connects China to Europe.

He stressed the importance of transit in bilateral cooperation, noting that it will be a central topic in future ministerial discussions.

Durmush Unvar, Deputy Minister of Transport and Infrastructure of Turkey, expressed his country's readiness to develop transportation and transit cooperation. He underscored the need for modern infrastructure and necessary investments, particularly in the rail connection project between the two countries at the Cheshmeh Soraya-Dilucu border and the development of transit between Iran and Turkey.

Key discussion points

The meeting focused on maximizing transportation development in road, rail, port, and air sectors, as well as enhancing transit and addressing obstacles in bilateral transportation cooperation.

Topics included facilitating procedures, addressing restrictions, fees, and taxes for Iranian and Turkish fleets in both countries, resolving limitations on taking in Iranian fleets at shared borders, and fuel pricing for Turkish fleets in Iran.

The two sides also discussed the launch of the Tehran-Van passenger train, the possibility of extending the route to Ankara and Istanbul, improving rail freight operations, increasing rail transport volume, and addressing the issue of empty wagons.

Other items on the agenda included the progress of the Iran-Turkey rail connection at Cheshmeh Soraya-Dilucu, the reconstruction of the Bazargan-Gürbulak border terminal, roads leading to Turkish borders, and the establishment of a new border crossing at Kuzerash.

The development of aviation relations and increased flights, as well as port and maritime cooperation and port investments, were also discussed.

It was agreed that an in-person meeting of the Iran-Turkey Transportation Committee will be held after the holy fasting month of Ramadan in either Tehran or Ankara.

Emphasis on joint investment in free zones

In a separate meeting, Reza Masrou, secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free Trade-Industrial and Special Economic Zones, met with Turkey's Minister of Trade, Mustafa Tuzcu, to discuss strengthening economic relations through free zones.

Masrou, who was invited to Turkey by the Turkish Ministry of Trade, emphasized the implementation of a memorandum of understanding signed during the 8th meeting of the Turkey-Iran High Council of Cooperation and the creation of joint mechanisms within free and special economic zones.

Delegations from both countries evaluated potential cooperation in free and special economic zones and discussed joint projects and mechanisms to increase trade and investment. The Turkish Ministry of Trade issued a statement reaffirming the commitment of Iran and Turkey to develop economic relations through trade and investment.

5m tons of int'l cargo transported via Iranian railways: *CEO*

The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways announced that five million tons of international cargo were transported via the country's rail network this Iranian year (started March 20, 2024) which includes 2.4 million tons of transit cargo, 2.6 million tons of imports and exports.

Jabbar-Ali Zakeri, during a visit to the Torbat-e Heydarieh railway station on Wednesday, stated that the development of rail-based transit is a top priority for the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways.

He highlighted that this initiative has been advanced through programs aimed at expanding and utilizing the capacity of key cargo hubs, including Sarakhs, Incheh Borun, Amir Abad Port, and Caspian Port.

Zakeri added that plans and targets have been set to transport 8 million tons of international cargo next year (to start March 21), with the goal of increasing the total volume of domestic and international freight from 40 million tons to 54 million tons.

To achieve this, he emphasized the need to enhance loading and unloading capacities at ports and their connecting rail lines, as well as to increase the volume of cargo transported from CIS countries, such as Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, to southern Iran.

The CEO noted that, based on current assessments, 15 to 20 million tons of cargo can be transported using existing rail capacities. However, he acknowledged existing challenges and shortages that must be addressed to improve the current infrastructure.

Zakeri reported that last year's record for mineral cargo transport, both by road and rail, was approximately 15 million tons. He stated that rail transport efficiency could be improved to



IRNA

increase the volume.

He further noted that the current road infrastructure, due to safety concerns, cannot handle increased mineral cargo transport. Adding more trucks and trailers to the roads would lead to higher road fatalities and casualties.

According to the planned program, mineral cargo transport is expected to increase to 22.5 million tons, requiring an additional 7.5 million tons of capacity. Achieving this goal depends on addressing existing challenges. Zakeri said 70% of the country's domestic cargo passes through railway regions such as Khorasan, Isfahan, Yazd, and Hormuzgan, underscoring the critical importance of such areas. He added that the issues in these regions are being closely monitored.

One of the objectives of the Seventh Development Plan (2024-28), he said, is to increase the share of rail transport in ports to 25%. Currently, the share of rail transport in some ports is less than 3%. To meet this target, greater coordination among relevant agencies is required. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Ports and Maritime Organization to minimize inter-organizational challenges.

Zakeri also mentioned that unloading of wagons at the 17-hectare Shahid Rajaei Port, which was previously delayed, has improved significantly. Through enhanced coordination and measures, the daily unloading rate has increased from 60-70 wagons to 150 wagons.

Iran sees US actions not rhetoric as key to new talks

Washington terminated Iraq's sanctions waiver for purchasing electricity from Iran

ANALYSIS

Iran underscores that the criterion determining Tehran's path in reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and lifting sanctions will be the actions of the United States, rather than its seemingly conciliatory rhetoric. The recent US decision not to renew Iraq's sanctions waiver is perceived within Iran as another hostile act aimed solely at intensifying "maximum pressure" on Iran's economy.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has initiated stricter enforcement of sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Last Wednesday, hours before meeting Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of the Israeli regime, in Washington, Trump signed an executive order directing government agencies to escalate the "maximum pressure" policy against Iran. During the signing, Trump expressed hope that using these sanctions would prove unnecessary and that both sides could reach an agreement.

Nearly a month after issuing the order, Trump continues to take contradictory stances towards Iran — fluctuating between expressing a willingness to negotiate and claiming to have sent a letter to Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei while simultaneously intensifying maximum pressure. A US State Department spokesperson has stated that the Trump administration terminated Iraq's waiver to purchase electricity from Iran. The waiver, part of the "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran, had allowed Iraq to procure a portion of its electricity from Iran. According to Reuters, the US official asserted that the Trump administration's policy is to deny Iran any degree of economic relief. The official claimed the goal of strict enforcement is to end Iran's alleged "nuclear threat," curb its ballistic missile program, and alter its regional policies.

Trump appears intent on achieving

results through "maximum pressure" during his second term — a policy he initially pursued by withdrawing from the nuclear deal, called the JCPOA. Tensions between the two sides have significantly worsened since Trump unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018. Following the withdrawal, the Trump administration launched a "maximum pressure" campaign aimed at crippling Iran's economy through severe sanctions targeting its oil exports, banking sector, and other critical industries. US officials openly admitted that the policy was designed to weaken Iran economically and politically. Trump's advisors argue that the first-term pressure strategy lacked sufficient time to yield outcomes. As Iran, in response to the US pressure policy, progressively reduced its compliance with JCPOA commitments while maintaining that its nuclear program remains peaceful, many officials from the previous Biden administration — contrary to his supporters — contend that US pressure failed to diminish Iran's nuclear capabilities and even enhanced their scope and sophistication. However, Trump's approach towards Iran has seen little substantive change over four years, with only minor stylistic adjustments. The new US administration aims to coerce Iran into negotiations using tools such as "imposing economic isolation, reducing Iran's oil exports to zero, and effectively blocking Iran's economic and trade relations with other countries."

Though Trump has repeatedly cited preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons as his red line, his executive order signals openness to negotiating with Tehran on both nuclear and non-nuclear issues.

Many experts monitoring US-Iran relations remain uncertain about what alternative to a negotiated agreement Trump envisions. However, during a recent Fox Business interview, Trump hinted at his administration's roadmap: Iran must either agree to terms or face a "different alternative" — a statement some interpreted as an implicit threat of military action.

Hours after Trump's remarks, which included claims of having written to Iran's leaders and readiness for a deal, a White House National Security Council spokesperson echoed the adversarial tone, stating, As President Trump has made clear, Iran can be dealt with militarily or through agreement.

Domino effect of terminating waivers

The expiration of Iraq's energy waiver on March 8, marked another step in the US pressure campaign. The waiver, first granted in 2018 under Trump and extended under Biden, allowed Iraq to import Iranian energy while both administrations urged Baghdad to reduce reliance on Iran. A State Department spokesperson reiterated this demand, urging Iraq "to eliminate its dependence on Iranian sources of energy as

soon as possible" and labeling Iran an "unreliable energy supplier." Tommy Bruce, the spokesperson, added that the administration is reviewing all existing sanctions exemptions related to Iran.

Informed sources told Reuters that the US leveraged the waiver review to pressure Iraq into permitting Kurdish crude oil exports via Turkey — a move aimed at boosting global supply, stabilizing prices, and creating more space to curb Iranian oil exports. However, Iraq's negotiations with the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region over resuming oil exports remain fraught.

The 2011 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) imposed sanctions on Iran's Central Bank, though exemptions were granted to countries significantly reducing Iranian oil imports or when US national security interests prevailed. Iraq has long been vulnerable to disruptions in electricity imports from Iran (approximately 1.2 gigawatts) and gas imports enabling an additional 8.8 gigawatts of domestic power generation. When Trump reluctantly granted Iraq sanctions waivers during his first term, these imports accounted for 40% of Iraq's peak electricity production.

Just days before the revocation of Iraq's sanctions waiver, the Washington Institute published a report stating that Trump's recently signed executive order explicitly mandates that "the Secretary of State shall amend or revoke sanctions waivers, particularly those



A 3D-printed miniature model of US President Donald Trump and the Iran flag are seen in this illustration.

REUTERS



Trump's return to the White House, coupled with stricter enforcement of maximum pressure — despite his occasional conciliatory rhetoric — has elicited a firm response from Iran. Tehran insists that US actions, not words, will dictate its approach to reviving the JCPOA and sanctions relief.



The sun sets behind the transmission lines of electric power from Iran to Iraq in Basra, Iraq, on July 29, 2021.

NABIL AL-JURANI/AP



An Iraq flag close to an oil refinery near Basra in southern Iraq.

AFP

providing any degree of economic or financial relief to Iran.'

The author of the report argued that revoking Iraq's sanctions waiver should be seen as part of Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran, claiming that the move aims to push Iraq toward energy independence and away from reliance on Iran. The analysis further asserted that the threat of ending Iraq's waiver now forces Baghdad, for the first time, to urgently seek alternatives to Iranian energy and accelerate its plans to import electricity from Saudi Arabia.

The decision was "regrettable," Farhad Alaaldin, foreign affairs advisor to Iraq's Prime Minister, said Sunday. "As a strategic partner, Iraq expected the US authorities to recognize this partnership, particularly since Iraq's elec-

tricity transactions have always been transparent and fully compliant with sanctions regulations." "Anticipating this outcome, the Iraqi government pro-actively implemented alternative measures to ensure stable electricity supply and minimize potential disruptions," Alaaldin said, citing intensified maintenance of existing power stations and accelerated renewable energy projects. The chairman of the Iraqi parliament's finance committee warned that any move by Washington to restrict power imports from Iran would cause Iraq's electrical grid to collapse. Iraq currently relies on natural gas for approximately 80% of its electricity generation, leaving its power grid deeply dependent on Iranian energy imports. This dependency was formalized in July 2022 when the two nations signed

a five-year bilateral agreement, under which Iraq secured 400 megawatts of electricity daily from Iran. Building on this energy partnership, a March 2024 deal expanded Iranian gas imports to 50 million cubic meters per day — a volume estimated at \$6 billion annually — to address Iraq's chronic power shortages. Meanwhile, Iran slammed the US move as extremely deplorable." Foreign Minister Abbas said that the US administration has decided to target the innocent people of Iraq "by attempting to deprive them of access to basic services such as electricity, especially ahead of the coming hot months of the year."

Tehran's response

The return of Trump to the White House, marked by a strict enforcement

of the "maximum pressure" policy, has elicited a reciprocal reaction from Iran — despite his altered tone expressing willingness to negotiate and reach an agreement with Tehran. Iran emphasizes that the trajectory of its actions regarding the revival of the nuclear deal and sanctions relief will be determined by the conduct of the United States, not its seemingly eloquent rhetoric. The deal, reached in 2015, required Iran to implement confidence-building measures to limit its nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. In the latest development, the US decision not to extend Iraq's sanction waivers has been interpreted within Iran as another hostile move with a singular aim: intensifying pressure on Iran's economy. While the Trump administration appears to be considering intermediaries

like Russia to break the current deadlock in negotiations with Tehran, these mediation efforts will lead nowhere. This is due to the White House's daily escalation of pressure — adding new layers to the "domino effect" against Iran — and its continuous reinforcement of the wall of distrust between Tehran and Washington. Currently, Iran's stance, both in official statements and in discussions with representatives of countries expressing interest in mediating between Tehran and Washington, remains unambiguous: Tehran will not yield to direct negotiations under maximum pressure with a government that insists on a language of coercion and imposing its will.

The full article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Iran's clear policy toward Trump: No negotiations under threat

INTERVIEW

In analyzing Tehran's approach to Washington, the geopolitical expert states, First, Iran must understand the White House's demands and whether its media threats will persist in closed-door negotiations.

US President Donald Trump claimed in an interview with Fox last Wednesday that he had sent a letter to Iran's Leader ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei reiterating his priority to negotiate and reach a deal with Iran on its nuclear program. This comes despite his recent executive order doubling down on the "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran, including refusing to extend Iraq's sanctions waiver for electricity imports from Iran. In response to the US president's contradictory rhetoric, the Islamic Republic has declared it will not engage in direct talks while Washington combines maximum pressure with a coercive facade of diplomacy.



Abdolreza Faraji-Rad

Abdolreza Faraji-Rad, a former diplomat and geopolitical analyst, in an interview with IRNA, addressed Trump's claims of sending a letter to Iran's leadership and whether this indicates a shift in US policy. He elaborated on Trump's statements and actions since returning to the White House, stating: Trump is in a hurry to advance his agenda, which extends beyond Iran—Ukraine, Middle East issues, strategic matters like the Panama Canal and Greenland, and economic policies such as tariffs all demand his urgent attention. Regarding Iran, after a brief lull following his executive order, Trump revived the topic in his Business Fox interview. Despite no direct question about Iran, he emphasized his desire

for a deal and mentioned the letter to Iran's Leader.

In the interview with Fox host Maria Bartiromo for "Sunday Morning Futures," Trump said, "I've written them a letter saying, 'I hope you're going to negotiate because if we have to go in militarily, it's going to be a terrible thing'".

The White House confirmed that Trump's letter to Iran's leaders is seeking to negotiate a nuclear deal. The president's comments in the Oval Office echoed his sentiments from the interview, in which he said the letter had been sent Wednesday.

"I would rather negotiate a deal. I'm not sure that everybody agrees with me, but we can make a deal that would

be just as good as if you won militarily," Trump said in the interview. "But the time is happening now. The time is coming up. Something's going to happen one way or the other."

Trump likely assumes the Ukraine issue is "on track," freeing him to focus on Iran. A letter may have been sent through diplomatic channels. While Trump claims dialogue is his priority, he has also threatened military action if Iran refuses to negotiate. However, I believe his letter or negotiation terms would be milder than his public threats, as he tends to project strength publicly.

The letter's content must be scrutinized, but Iran's response will remain firm: no talks under threat. Iranian



The content of Trump letter must be scrutinized, but Iran's response will remain firm: no talks under threat. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi recently reiterated that Tehran will not engage unless Trump suspends his maximum pressure policy — a step he has yet to take.

US President Donald Trump speaks before signing executive orders in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on March 06, 2025.

GETTY IMAGES

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On whether a post-October 2025 agreement could prevent the snap-back mechanism's activation without US involvement: Negotiating with the remaining Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (parties 1+4) could yield solutions, such as Iran reducing enrichment levels or uranium stockpiles. The core issue remains US unilateral sanctions, which severely strain Iran's economy. Without resolving this, Trump's renewed pressure policy will persist. Tighter sanctions will further slash the country's oil exports, especially if tankers are blocked.

Effective sanctions relief requires dialogue — even indirect — with the US. A trial dialogue would be more productive than media exchanges. Talks with China, Russia, or European JCPOA members alone cannot resolve the country's economic challenges.

Regarding Russia-mediated talks, Iran has a history of successful dialogue with the US, resulting in the JCPOA. Channels like Oman and Switzerland previously facilitated communication. Crucially, Iran must first discern the White House's true intentions: Are its public threats mere posturing, or will they resurface behind closed doors? Many internationally argue that direct, high-level engagement is the only way to secure concessions from Trump.

The full article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



An Iranian flag at the Bushehr nuclear power plant during an official ceremony to kick-start work on a second reactor at the facility on Nov. 10, 2019.

ATTA KENARE/AFP

AFC Champions League Two: Shootout defeat shatters Tractor's Asian dream



Sports Desk

Tractor's bid for a maiden Asian crown ended in vain after the Persian Gulf Pro League club suffered a 4-2 shootout defeat against Saudi side Al Taawoun in the AFC Champions League Two quarterfinals on Tuesday.

With the tie finely balanced after a first-leg goalless stalemate in Tabriz last week, Tractor drew first blood through Brazilian Ricardo Alves from the spot in the 50th minute, only to see Musa Barrow restore parity four minutes later to force the game into extra time at Buraidah's Wolves Park. Substitute Sultan Mandash gave the home side the lead right at the start of extra time, when he latched onto a free-kick from Aschraf El Mahdioui, went past the goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand and slammed the ball into the back of the net. The visitors equalized in the 105th minute via Domagoj Drozdek, who headed in from close range off a cross by Danial Esmaeilifar.

The shootout drama mirrored numerous Iran-Saudi encounters throughout the years.

Tractor's Mahdi Shiri sent his effort over the bar and Sajjad Ashouri was denied by goalkeeper Abdulquddus Atiay, while Al Taawoun penalty takers sent Beiranvand the wrong way on four occasions to convert all their attempts.

Tractor head coach Dragan Skocic felt his side deserved to go through but admitted

their failure to finish chances in the first leg cost them.

"Our home match is the reason we are eliminated, as we had six chances but failed to score," said Skocic.

"This match was even, with both teams exchanging scoring opportunities, and there were good moments for each team throughout the match."

Skocic's opposite number Mohammed Al Abdali, meanwhile, applauded his players incredible fitness and vigor throughout the 120 minutes of action.

"Everything that happened to us had a positive impact. Maybe Tractor having the weekend off to prepare for this game affected them negatively.

"We worked hard to prepare all the players to avoid fatigue. We made sure that they were ready for every match, and this helped us a lot."

Tuesday's setback wrapped up a dreadful campaign for the Iranian top-flight sides on the continental stage.

Persepolis crashed out of the league stage of the ACL Elite, before Esteghlal suffered a 3-0 aggregate loss to Saudi heavyweight Al Nassr in the round of 16, while Sepahan failed to progress beyond the group phase of the Asian second-tier competition.

Tractor center-back Shoja Khalilzadeh (R) challenges Al Taawoun's Roger Martínez for a header during an AFC Champions League Two quarterfinal second leg in Buraidah, Saudi Arabia, on March 11, 2025.

● IRNA

Luis Enrique hails PSG character at Anfield

REUTERS – Paris St Germain boss Luis Enrique said both his team and Liverpool deserved a berth in the Champions League quarter-finals, such as the terrific, nail-biting battle between the two sides in the competition's last-16.

The Spaniard beamed with pride about how his squad rallied from being a goal down after last week's first leg to dispatch Premier League-leading Liverpool 4-1 in a penalty shootout at Anfield on Tuesday.

"Both of the teams deserved to go to the next phase, they play better than us here, but I think my team at Anfield, in a special stadium, showed great personality and character," he said.

"We tried to play our best, but it was difficult as they're so intense. Both teams deserved to qualify. The character and personality, even when we shoot at the penalty shootout they showed great character. I think it shows clearly the team we are."

Ligue 1 leaders PSG have never won the Champions League, losing to Bayern Munich in the 2020 final, while 2019 winners Liverpool were considered the favourites to advance after topping the table through the eight-game league phase.

"When the draw told us about the match against Liverpool and PSG, both managers thought the same -- one of the best matches you can watch in Europe," Luis Enrique said.

"I think both teams were great.

"We are happy and confident to go to the next phase."

PSG earned huge praise from pundits for their hard-fought victory.

"You've seen four perfect penalties under extreme pressure, you've got to give PSG big credit," former England striker Alan Shearer said on the Amazon Prime broadcast.

"The disappointment of losing that first game and playing really, really well and coming back to Anfield and soaking up pressure and then taking it to extra time and penalties and seeing those four perfect penalties, they've really put in a magnificent effort over the two games and they'll say they deserve to go through."



● RPSL

Hamilton to make Ferrari debut at Australian GP



Lewis Hamilton will launch his bid to win the drivers' championship at a third Formula One team when he makes his much-anticipated debut for Ferrari in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on Sunday.

Formula One's most successful team have not won a championship since the 2008 constructors' title and Hamilton, moving from Mercedes to Maranello, arrives chasing a record eighth.

Hamilton's switch has already sent fans into a frenzy in Italy and Melbourne's big Italian community will be out in force at Albert Park as the lakeside circuit hosts the opener for the first time since 2019.

Ferrari, runners-up to McLaren in the 2024 constructors' championship, celebrated a 1-2 in Melbourne last year when Carlos Sainz, who has since moved to Williams, won the race ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc. McLaren, however, may be set to

steal Hamilton's thunder after encouraging performances in winter testing with F1 data showing they were quickest on low fuel in Bahrain and had an advantage over Ferrari on race pace.

That would have been music to the ears of Australian fans cheering for McLaren's Oscar Piastri as he looks to become the first home driver to win the race since it was added to the F1 world championship calendar in 1985.

The Melbourne native finished fourth last year at Albert Park behind third-placed teammate Lando Norris. Briton Norris, the bookmakers' pre-season favourite for the championship, may well be Piastri's biggest obstacle to a drought-breaking win for Australia.

Though Hamilton's Ferrari debut and McLaren's pre-season form have dominated the buildup, Red Bull's defending champion Max Verstappen will

launch his bid to become the second man to win five drivers' titles in a row following Michael Schumacher.

Red Bull finished only third in the constructors' championship last season and after doing the least amount of laps at winter testing the pace of the car remains to be seen.

"We learnt a lot from testing but there is still a lot more work to be done," Verstappen said in a race preview issued by Red Bull on Tuesday.

"We have ideas about what we can do and how we can take on what we learnt at testing, so we will see how we go when we start driving on the track."

Verstappen has a new teammate in New Zealander Liam Lawson, who Red Bull hope will offer better support for the Dutch driver than the discarded Sergio Perez.

Lawson is among six drivers at Albert Park who will race in an F1 season-opener for the first time.

● CLAUDIA GRECO/REUTERS

Unveiling secrets of Behnam House in Tabriz



● karnaval.ir



The Maqsudiyeh neighborhood, nestled in Tabriz, East Azarbaijan Province, is celebrated for its rich historical tapestry and numerous ancient sites. Among these landmarks stands the venerable Behnam House, a historical edifice named in honor of its proprietor, Behnam Ganjei. Beyond Behnam House, the Maqsudiyeh neighborhood is also home to other notable residences, each bearing its own unique story, including the Ganjei-Zadeh Mansion, Salmasi House, and Shahrari's House, contributing to the area's dis-

tinctive historical ambiance.

History

Behnam House is believed to have originated towards the end of the Zand dynasty and the inception of the Qajar era, around the late 18th century. It is well-documented that the house underwent significant restoration during the reign of Nasereddin Shah Qajar in the latter half of the 19th century. The architectural structure visible today largely reflects this period of renovation, with its ornate decorations and diverse

paintings dating back to this time.

Behnam House, along with four other historical houses in its vicinity, now forms an integral part of the Tabriz University of Art, adding to its cultural and educational significance.

Architecture and features

Spanning approximately 900 square meters, Behnam House exemplifies traditional Iranian mansion architecture, featuring distinct internal and external sections. Designed with both summer and winter living quarters, the house strategically allocates more space to the summer area to accommodate Tabriz's extended cold season.

The building's facade captivates observers with its remarkable brickwork and exquisitely designed doors and windows.

Upon entering, a vestibule connects the house's entrance to a courtyard adorned with a beautifully arranged flowerbed. The windows, embellished with colorful panes, frame picturesque views visible from the courtyard, oriented towards the north and south.

The southern part of the summer residence boasts a tall, pillared porch that matches the height of the residence itself.

Rooms flank both sides of this residential area.

A notable feature of Behnam House is its interior decoration, highlighted by an array of paintings. During a restoration, several Iranian fresco paintings were uncovered, reminiscent of those used extensively during the Renaissance period. The presence of these paintings suggests that the house's original owners and designers were keen on incorporating European-style interior decorations. The summer residence's walls and ceilings also showcase stunning paintings. In the southern part of the house, a summer terrace is supported by columns crowned with plaster capitals. Beneath the summer residence lies a pond sheltered by a dome-shaped roof. The basement of this section is notably spacious, showcasing an admirable alignment of architectural proportions through its arches and domes.

The inner section of the house, positioned on the northernmost side, features rooms on its east and west sides that overlook the courtyard. This area, designed to capture maximum sunlight, served as the primary residential space



during the colder months. Behnam House was officially recognized as a site of national significance in 1997 when it was inscribed on Iran's List of National Heritage.

A must-visit destination

Tabriz boasts a history that dates back over a millennia, making it one of the key cities in Iran's cultural and historical landscape. Once the capital of

the Ilkhanate and an essential city in the Safavid dynasty, Tabriz has witnessed the rise and fall of empires. Its influence in trade, especially during the Silk Road era, brought prosperity and attracted travelers and merchants from far and wide.

The city stands as a city where history, culture, and modernity converge, making it a must-visit destination for anyone interested in Iran's diverse heritage.

Atashgah Waterfall; nature's symphony in southwestern Iran



● karnaval.ir



● karnaval.ir



● pingard.ir

Atashgah Waterfall is one of the most stunning natural attractions in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, located about 40 kilometers from Lordegan. This magnificent waterfall, often referred to as the Miniature Waterfall due to its unique landscape, is a must-visit destination for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike. Its roaring cascade and picturesque surroundings make it one of the most popular attractions in the southwestern Iran. The Atashgah area features a collection of several waterfalls, which is why they share the same name. These small waterfalls flow along a three-kilo-

meter stretch, earning them the title of one of the longest waterfall systems in Iran. The number of waterfalls can vary significantly throughout the year, depending on seasonal changes in water volume; at times, visitors may witness as many as seven to ten distinct waterfalls cascading down the rocky terrain.

The source of these waterfalls is the Dena Mountains, located in the central Zagros range, which lies south of Isfahan and north of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. The waters eventually feed into the Khorasan River and, after navigating various valleys and elevations, contribute to one of the

main tributaries of the Karoun River, ultimately flowing into the Karoun Dam.

The proximity of Khuzestan Province influences the region's climate, resulting in warm weather that makes it an appealing destination for travelers year-round. Visitors to Atashgah Waterfall can enjoy well-maintained facilities, including an asphalt road, resting areas, and canopies, ensuring a comfortable experience amidst nature.

In addition to the breathtaking waterfalls, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province boasts vast valleys and lush meadows, providing ample opportunities

for hiking and exploration. The region's geological features, characterized by stunning limestone and gypsum formations, enhance its natural beauty, creating a unique backdrop for photography and outdoor activities.

To reach the Atashgah Waterfall, travelers must cover a distance of approximately 40 kilometers from Lordegan to the nearby villages of Milas and Sardasht. From the nearest village, a short hike is required to access the waterfall itself. For those traveling from Shahr-e Kord, the capital city of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, the journey spans about 200 kilometers,

making it a rewarding adventure for those willing to explore this enchanting region.

Lordegan and beyond

Lordegan, the gateway to Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, is surrounded by a wealth of attractions that highlight the region's natural and cultural heritage. The city itself offers a glimpse into the rich traditions of the Bakhtiari people, known for their nomadic lifestyle and vibrant handicrafts.

Visitors to Lordegan can explore local markets filled with traditional goods, such as woven rugs and handcrafted pot-

tery. The city's strategic location also makes it an ideal base for day trips to nearby attractions, including the stunning Zardkuh Mountain, which offers breathtaking views and a chance to experience the region's diverse flora and fauna.

Overall, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, with its enchanting waterfalls, captivating landscapes, and rich cultural experiences, is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered by adventurous travelers. Whether you're seeking tranquility in nature or a deeper understanding of local traditions, this province has something to offer everyone.

Pezeshkian: Nezami Ganjavi's poetry inspires global message of peace, justice



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian praised the renowned 12th-century Persian poet as a beacon of Persian literature, whose works offer timeless lessons of peace, justice, and humanity. He delivered the message on the occasion of the Fourth Nezami Ganjavi Commemoration Day, which falls on March 12, president.ir reported. "Nezami Ganjavi is a shining gem in the world of Persian literature, leaving a legacy that transcends time and borders. His poetry continues to reso-

nate deeply, with a message of love and wisdom that speaks to the human soul today," Pezeshkian wrote in his message, which was read by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi. The president highlighted Ganjavi's contributions not only to Persian culture but to global civilization. "Nezami Ganjavi stands as one of the greatest embodiments of this nation's culture and civilization. His blending of love and wisdom in his poetry guides the world towards peace and justice. He taught us that true humanity lies beyond geographi-

cal and ethnic boundaries and is the foundation for coexistence and progress," Pezeshkian added. In his address, Pezeshkian also emphasized the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding in today's world, echoing Ganjavi's message of unity. "We believe that the future belongs to culture, wisdom, and dialogue. In these values, we see the path to a world filled with peace, justice, and brotherhood," the president said. The event, which celebrated the lasting influence of Nezami Ganjavi's work, underscored Iran's commitment to promot-

ing cultural exchange and solidarity among nations. Pezeshkian concluded his message with gratitude for those involved in organizing the commemoration, expressing sincere appreciation for their efforts in preserving and honoring Ganjavi's monumental legacy. Nezami Ganjavi, born in the 12th century, is widely regarded as one of the greatest romantic epic poets in Persian literature, with works that have influenced generations across the world. His message of justice and the pursuit of human dignity continues to inspire people today.

'Alone Together' from Iran awarded at Poland's ZOOM festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'Alone Together', directed by Omid Mirzaei, won the Special Jury Award at the 28th International Film Festival ZOOM, aka ZBLIŻENI, in Poland. The film, which explores tense moments at a remote border checkpoint, triumphed at one of the country's premier independent film festivals, ILNA reported. Held from March 3 to 9, 2025, the ZOOM Festival is one of Poland's most significant platforms for showcasing independent cinema. The award adds to the film's already impressive recognition on the international festival circuit. Earlier, 'Alone Together' received the honorary award at the 47th LUCAS International Festival for

Young Film Lovers in Germany and won Best Editing at the 41st Tehran International Short Film Festival. It also claimed Best Short Film at the 23rd Hafez Awards and garnered multiple honors, including Best Directing and Editing at the 70th Reggio Film Festival in Italy. Set against the backdrop of a chilling winter night, 'Alone Together' takes place at a remote checkpoint, where officers begin to suspect a bus full of passengers. Among the passengers is a young boy traveling alone, whose presence sparks tension and unravels long-held secrets, drawing attention from police, the driver, and fellow travelers. The film has also been featured in major international festivals, such as the 23rd Reggio Film Festival in Italy, the



20th Vues d'Afrique International Film Festival in Canada, and Germany's prestigious Oldenburg International Film Festival. With its unique narrative and emotional depth, 'Alone Together' continues to resonate with audiences worldwide, cementing its place as a standout piece in contemporary short cinema.

Iranian animator Abedi to showcase 'Holy Heaviness' at Swiss Freiburg festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short animation 'Holy Heaviness', directed by Farnoosh Abedi, and produced by the Documentary, Experimental and Animation Film Center (DEFC), will screen in the competition section of the 39th Fribourg International Film Festival from March 21 to 30. Formerly titled 'Embrace,' the eight-minute film explores the tumultuous relationship between a father and son as the son grapples

with his troubled past, leading to profound challenges for both characters, Mehr News Agency reported. The Fribourg International Film Festival is renowned for its focus on outstanding films from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, highlighting diverse storytelling and cultural narratives. Abedi, one of Iran's most celebrated animation directors, is known for her acclaimed short films, including 'Malakout,' 'The Sprayer,' 'The Servant,' and 'The Old Tree.'

Iranian artists shine at Qatar's auction

Arts & Culture Desk

The inaugural international auction of modern and contemporary Iranian art, titled "Naqsh-e Jahan," took place at the Albahie Auction House in the cultural district of Katara, showcasing the works of two pioneers in the field of calligraphic painting in Iran, Sadegh Tabrizi and Mohammad Ehsai. On February 25, the Albahie Auction House hosted a remarkable event where 36 artworks by Iranian artists were put up for bidding. Among the highlights were pieces by Tabrizi and Ehsai, which garnered the highest initial estimates, selling for \$30,000 and \$32,000, respectively, ILNA reported. Tabrizi's piece, an untitled calligraphic painting created using a mixed-media technique on canvas measuring 190 by 160 centimeters, featured the artist's signature in the lower right corner. This work, dating back to the 1960s, was presented with the highest initial estimate of the auction, ranging from \$40,000 to \$60,000, ultimately selling for \$30,000.

Ehsai's contribution, an oil painting on canvas from the series 'Nods' measuring 105 by 160 centimeters and dated 2022, was also signed and dated by the artist in the lower right corner. This piece had an initial price estimate of \$35,000 to \$55,000, and it sold for \$32,000. Mehrdad Fallah, a painter and representative of Tabrizi's family, emphasized the auction's strength in presenting traditional Iranian-Islamic calligraphy in a modern and non-classical format. He noted the significance of regional events like this, stating, "Currently, major auction houses such as Christie's, Sotheby's, and Bonhams do not have a significant presence in the Middle East, making the establishment of regional and local auctions like Albahie in Qatar, as well as Tehran's auction house, a very important development. The organization of such regional auctions could potentially enhance competition among buyers and collectors for notable artworks." He further elaborated on the importance of Tabrizi's painting at this auction, remarking, "This

painting is a prime example of Tabrizi's work, with its composition holding significant value. The diagonal lines in the background evoke a sense of dynamism and movement, while the arrangement of the calligraphy on either side creates a form of invisible symmetry that maintains visual balance. The bold red background conveys excitement and power, while the golden letters in contrast create a spiritual effect. The use of Thuluth or Diwani script, with its intertwined structure, adds layers of complexity both in meaning and visually, while the extension and merging of certain letters produce a fluid flow within the image." Despite the crippling sanctions of recent years, Fallah underscored the importance of Iranian art's presence in the global art market, stating, "I have always said that supporting the art economy requires innovative thinking. We must utilize the potential of Iranian art in global markets more effectively, especially considering the decline in the value of the rial domestically. Therefore, we need

to strengthen the selling opportunities for our artists' works in foreign auctions to continue witnessing this relative boom." According to the report, a calligraphic painting by Ahmad Mirza, executed in oil and gold leaf on canvas measuring 130 by 130 centimeters and dated 2019, had an estimated price of \$3,000 to \$5,000, ultimately selling for \$1,800. A painting measuring 200 by 200 centimeters by Ozra Aghighi-Bakhshayeshi, estimated at \$12,000 to \$16,000, sold for \$11,000. Other notable sales included an acrylic painting by Farnaz Rezaei, estimated at \$1,000 to \$2,000, which sold for \$800, and a piece by Shahla Moazzazi, estimated at \$3,000 to \$5,000, which fetched \$2,000. Mohammad Saeed Naghashian also participated in the auction with a 150 by 150 centimeter piece from 2024, estimated at \$3,000 to \$5,000, which sold for \$10,000. Additionally, a Tabrizi oil painting on canvas, estimated at \$3,000 to \$5,000, sold for \$2,000, while a work by Ali Shirazi, measuring 180 by 145 centimeters and created using



a mixed-media technique in 2011, was sold for \$5,000, having been estimated at \$8,000 to \$12,000. The auction also featured a calligraphic piece by Mehrdad Shoghi, measuring 100 by 150 centimeters, which sold for \$10,000, and an oil painting by Soodeh Davood, estimated at \$4,000 to \$6,000, which fetched \$3,600. Kiarash Yaqoubi presented an untitled acrylic work on canvas measuring 100 by 100 centimeters, with an initial estimate of \$4,000 to \$6,000,

which sold for \$2,600. Behruz Zindashti's work titled 'Sacred Numbers,' executed in acrylic on canvas measuring 220 by 170 centimeters, had an estimated price of \$2,000 to \$4,000 and sold for \$2,400. Afghan artist Ali Rahimi offered an oil painting on canvas measuring 120 by 130 centimeters, estimated at \$1,500 to \$2,500, which sold for \$1,200. Additionally, a black and white calligraphy piece by Hossein Bahrami, estimated at \$800 to \$1,200, sold for \$500.