



Iran jabs at Trump ‘Cyrus’ comparison

‘Defender of Gaza massacre, not defender of human rights’

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran’s Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, took a swipe at those who liken US president Donald Trump to Cyrus the Great during a ceremony in Moscow on October 14, 2025, marking the 2,550th anniversary of the world’s first human rights charter.

Speaking at an event hosted by the Russian State University of Cinematography (VGK), Jalali said the Persian charter, issued by Cyrus in the 6th century BC, enshrined values of “freedom, tolerance and human dignity” long before the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, IRNA reported.

He said it was “absurd” to associate such principles with anyone backing mass civilian deaths, referring to the

ongoing conflict in Gaza.

“One cannot call someone who supports the killing of tens of thousands in a small land like Gaza a defender of human rights or liken him to Cyrus the Great,” Jalali said.

The envoy urged a “return to civilizational traditions” to confront modern challenges such as extremism and inequality, adding that Eastern cultures had long championed coexistence among faiths. He cited Iran’s and Russia’s examples of interfaith harmony. Among the speakers was Davlatshoh Gulmahmadzoda, Tajikistan’s ambassador to Moscow, who called the Cyrus Charter “a symbol of respect for humanity and justice.”

He said Cyrus had united peoples across Asia, Africa and Europe, noting



Iran’s Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, speaks at a ceremony at the Russian State University of Cinematography (VGK) in Moscow on October 14, marking the 2,550th anniversary of the world’s first human rights charter.

● IRNA

that ‘Herodotus’ recorded more than 70 nations under his rule.

The ceremony featured Persian poetry readings, traditional music, and the opening of a joint Iran-Tajikistan cultural exhibition, displaying handicrafts, rare books and images of Iran’s ancient monuments, including scenes from the ‘Shahnameh’. Earlier in the day, Jalali met Malyshev Vladimir Sergeevich, VGK’s president, to discuss expanding Iran-Russia film cooperation. Malyshev, who also heads



the BRICS Association of Film Universities, welcomed Iran’s growing role

in Russian film festivals and pledged stronger academic ties.

Iranian short film ‘The Diving’ wins top award at Toronto’s TINF



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Iranian short film ‘The Diving,’ written and directed by Mohammad Tanabandeh and produced by Amir Seydabadi, won the Best Short Film award at the 9th Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival (TINF), which ran in Toronto.

The festival, often dubbed the “Canadian Oscars” for

its high-profile international line-up, recognized ‘The Diving’ as one of the year’s most outstanding short dramas. The jury praised it as “a standout in originality,” honoring Seydabadi during the closing gala for his production work.

‘The Diving’ features a strong Iranian cast, including Hossein Mehri, Atefeh Akbari,

Mohammad Sadegh Mir-mohammadi, Mahkameh Zarrineh, Ali Asghar Noei, Fariborz Shahkarami, Nasser Jazandari, Arvin Zand and Mahan Derakhshan.

Centered on the character Azar, the film explores the struggles of a woman confronting deep personal dilemmas. Its opening line — “The last thing on my mind is having a child” — sets the tone for a raw and introspective story of choice and identity.

Held annually in Toronto, TINF is one of Canada’s most prominent independent film festivals, spotlighting global voices across short and feature films. The 2025 edition screened works from over 50 countries, with The Diving standing out among the top international entries.

Nasser Taghvai leaves his story in every frame

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The Iranian film community mourns the passing of Nasser Taghvai, whose artistic vision left an indelible mark on cinema and culture. His death coincides poignantly with the anniversary of Dariush Mehrjui, marking the loss of two pillars of modern Iranian filmmaking.

Ali Nassirian, who worked closely with Taghvai, described them as “legends who pioneered change in the late 1960s. Taghvai first with ‘Tranquility in the Presence of Others’ (1969) and then Mehrjui with ‘The Cow,’ both announcing a fresh perspective on Iranian cinema and culture.”

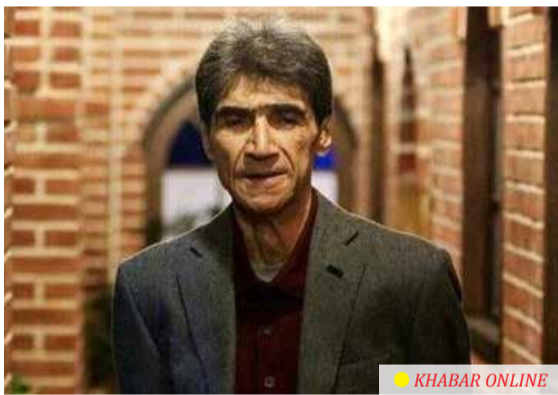
For Nassirian, Taghvai was “himself, honest and without pretense.” Reflecting on their collaboration in ‘Captain Khorshid,’ he recalled how a small detail — a golden tooth — became the key to his character, “Some think actors are just tools for the director, but the director gives the clues, and it’s the actor who breathes life into the role. That’s what I did in ‘Captain Khorshid,’” he said.

Nassirian added that the director’s meticulousness, sometimes frustrating, ultimately elevated the work.

Taghvai’s films were nourished by literature, drawing inspiration from both Iranian and Western texts. In ‘Captain Khorshid,’ he adapted Hemingway’s ‘To Have and Have Not’ into a story steeped in southern Iranian culture.

“Such localization is not for everyone. Taghvai knew the southern environment intimately. He could turn a foreign narrative into something unmistakably Iranian,” Nassirian explained.

Reflecting on Taghvai’s literary sensibilities, writer



● Khabar Online

Houshang Moradi-Kermani noted, “Taghvai was one of those artists who entered the arts through literature, starting with the short story collection ‘That Same Summer’. His perspective was always literary and story-driven, and this shaped every frame of his cinema.”

He added, “I never saw a bad film by Taghvai. He always preserved the soul of the story in his films. Even small changes could not diminish the essence of the work. ‘My Uncle Napoleon’ is a perfect example of his precision—humor and gravity coexisting seamlessly, with actors like Parviz Fannizadeh and Nassirian delivering their best under his direction.”

Film critic Mohsen Soleimani Fakher described Taghvai’s cinema as a mirror reflecting society itself. “Every film positions the community as the protagonist, examining how societal structures — from patriarchy to bureaucracy — seep into private lives, love, work, and even humor. Taghvai was a silent historian, a poet in the guise of a sociologist,” he said.

Alireza Pirouzan highlighted Taghvai’s role as a cultural thinker. “Through cinema, he questioned his society, preserving the memory of the south, the people, and the language. His works endure because

of their blend of intimacy, critical awareness, fidelity to reality, and imaginative daring.”

Documentary filmmaker Hadi Afarideh emphasized Taghvai’s pioneering vision in non-fiction cinema. His documentaries, from ‘Arbaeen’ to ‘Wind of Jinn,’ combined poetic storytelling with anthropological insight, portraying rituals, local beliefs, and the human confrontation with nature. “He wasn’t an outside observer; he lived with the people, crafting films that were both honest and aesthetically resonant,” Afarideh noted.

Photographer Majid Saeedi recalled that Taghvai’s early photography shaped his cinematic eye. “He captured humans within vast landscapes, balancing realism with a hidden poetic order. This ability to see through the lens first, before translating to narrative, became the hallmark of his films. His compositions spoke without dialogue; every frame was a self-contained story.”

Composer Sattar Orki remembered Taghvai as a “rare artist whose understanding of music and film intertwined. From ‘My Uncle Napoleon’ to ‘Tranquility in the Presence of Others’, every score was an extension of his vision, and he guided composers subtly to achieve the perfect match.”

Critics and collaborators alike underline his meticulous selection of actors, attention to mise-en-scène, and careful dialogue writing. Maziar Fekri Arshad wrote, “Taghvai’s work transcended social classes, from elite Tehranis to southern laborers, each portrayed with authenticity and depth. His films endure because he transformed his extensive knowledge into art.”

Despite declining to direct in later years, Taghvai’s written works, such as the recently published three-volume screenplay ‘Mirza Koochak Khan,’ and his films like ‘Unruly Paper,’ testify to a filmmaker who never compromised artistic integrity. Abolfazl Jalili observed that even unfinished projects reflect his rare intellect, meticulousness, and respect for narrative truth.

Haroun Yashaii, producer of ‘Captain Khorshid,’ said, “Taghvai demanded quality over quantity. Working with him was challenging, but every detail mattered. He knew when to step away, leaving an example of patience, dignity, and unwavering dedication to his craft.”

Funeral arrangements have been announced for October 16 at Tehran’s Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery, with family, friends, and colleagues gathering to pay their final respects. Nasser Taghvai’s legacy, from literature-inspired cinema to documentaries that elevate everyday life, secures his place as a master storyteller. In every frame, every score, and every carefully chosen word, he revealed the heartbeat of Iran. His films remain, not merely as records of a bygone era, but as living, breathing testaments to the power of art to illuminate, question, and endure.

Veteran Iranian dubber Mozaffari dies at 83

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Saeed Mozaffari, one of Iran’s most celebrated voice actors and dubbing directors, died on Tuesday in Tehran at the age of 83 after suffering cardiac complications.

Born in July 1942 in Shahrud, he began his dubbing career in 1962 and became a defining voice in Iran’s postwar cinema culture, bridging global cinema and Iranian audiences through six decades of work, IRNA reported.

Mozaffari’s commanding tone and emotional range made him the Persian voice behind dozens of Hollywood and Asian screen legends.

He dubbed Clint Eastwood in Sergio Leone’s Westerns ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’ and ‘A Fistful of

Dollars,’ and voiced Ryan O’Neal, Pierce Brosnan, Matthew McConaughey, Brad Pitt and Jackie Chan in many of their films.

His versatility and precision established him as one of the few Iranian dubbers whose voice audiences could recognize instantly. He also lent his voice to iconic television characters such as Rick Grimes in ‘The Walking Dead’ and Ragnar Lothbrok in ‘Vikings,’ roles that cemented his reputation across generations. Mozaffari often recalled his first dubbing experience — a short part in ‘The Miracle’ starring Roger Moore — as the moment that set him on a lifelong artistic path.

Beyond performance, Mozaffari became a respected dubbing director, mentoring younger artists and overseeing the translation



of global cinema into Persian. Colleagues praised his discipline and artistry, calling him “a perfectionist with a golden ear.” Farshid Shakiba, head of IRIB’s dubbing unit, said the industry had “lost one of its firm pillars.”

Funeral services are scheduled for Friday, October 17, at the Artists’ Section in Behesht-e Zahra cemetery in Tehran.