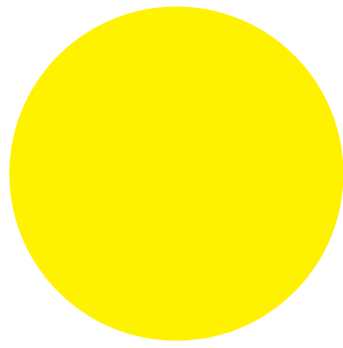


Justice in education begins with equal opportunity, Pezeshkian says

8 >



Yemeni missile attack targets Israel's key international airport

2 >



Leader: No benefit for Islamic Ummah greater than unity

First group of Iranian pilgrims will leave Tehran for Medina today

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei meets with Hajj officials in Tehran on May 4, 2025. khamenei.ir

Why the Islamic world must finally stand together

By Emad Abshenas
Middle East affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

No one with a conscience can look on and remain silent as Gaza is torn apart. The atrocities carried out by Israel have shocked people across religious and ideological lines, with Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and even secular voices speaking out. And yet, many Islamic nations stay on the sidelines, offering little more than symbolic gestures or, worse, silencing their own citizens. As Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei pointed out, had Islamic countries forged a united front long ago, the disasters in

Gaza and Yemen might never have unfolded. The silence in the face of such suffering defies both logic and morality. This is not just a failure of will; it is the legacy of colonialism. The old colonial powers—Britain, France, and others—planted the seeds of conflict before cutting loose their colonies. They stirred up ethnic, tribal, and territorial disputes that would keep Muslim nations at odds for generations. Today, a new form of colonialism—led by the United States—picks up where the old empires left off, fomenting tension and driving a wedge between Muslim nations. These external powers have been fanning the flames of division, ensuring that the Islamic world remains fragmented, distracted, and vulnerable. Muslims comprise nearly a quar-

ter of the global population and hold a significant share of the world's wealth. Individually, many Islamic nations have made tremendous strides in technology, infrastructure, and economic development. But instead of pulling together, they go it alone—and in some cases, they line up against one another, sometimes even at the prompting of Western powers. Without unity, the Islamic world cannot stand tall. The issue is not merely about mistrust; it is about deliberate, calculated sedition. Those who benefit from Muslim disunity know exactly what they're doing. They understand that a united Islamic world could emerge as a major global force—economically, politically, and scientifically.

Page 2 >



VP terms smart technologies, AI as 'absolute necessity'

3 >



FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup: Iran hits five past Paraguay to progress

6 >



Urmia Grand Mosque inviting international attention

7 >

Leader: No benefit for Islamic Ummah greater than unity

First group of Iranian pilgrims will leave Tehran for Medina today



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei meets with Hajj officials in Tehran on May 4, 2025. khamenei.ir

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said it is

imperative on Muslim countries to unite and prevent tribulations similar

to what is befalling on Gazans and the people of Yemen.

In a speech in Tehran on Sunday, Ayatollah Khamenei touched on the annual congregation of Hajj, which brings together and unites Muslims from different parts of the world irrespective of their race, color, and culture.

"The Hajj gathering is for the benefit of humanity and there is no benefit for the Islamic Ummah greater than unity," he told officials and organizers of the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, which able Muslims must make at least once in their lifetime.

"If the Islamic Ummah were united, the issues of Palestine and Gaza would not happen and Yemen would not be pressured like this," the Leader added.

Gaza is the target of a brutal campaign of aggression by Israel which has killed nearly 53,000 people in the besieged Palestinian territory since October

2023 and left it in total ruin.

US, UK and Israeli warplanes have been launching deadly attacks against Yemen since March 15, when US President Donald Trump intensified the campaign that was started by the former administration last year to stop the Arab country's operations against Israel in solidarity with Gazans.

Ayatollah Khamenei said division and discord paves the way for "the colonialists, the US, the Zionist regime, and other expansionists to impose their interests and ambitions" on other nations.

"With the unity of the Ummah, security, progress, and synergy among Islamic countries and their assistance to each other become possible," the Leader said, adding the opportunity of Hajj should be viewed in this light.

Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the political aspect which underpins the

role of Hajj, saying that "contrary to the efforts, words, and actions of some who tarnish it, the essence of Hajj is political, its form is political, and its composition is political".

"Hajj perhaps is the only obligation whose outward form and appearance and its composition are 100 percent political," the Leader said.

"Gathering people in one place, at one time, every year - everyone who can - the very essence of this gathering together is political."

The first group of Iranian pilgrims will leave Tehran for Medina in Saudi Arabia today (Monday). The Iranian airlines will transfer Iranian pilgrims until May 1.

The Hajj pilgrimage is one of the pillars of Islam; Muslims who enjoy financial self-sufficiency are religiously obliged to perform the Hajj at least once in their lifetime.

Trump open to arguments for Iran's right to pursue civilian nuclear energy

The US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he is willing to listen to arguments for allowing Iran to pursue civilian nuclear energy while ending what he called its nuclear weapons program.

He made the remarks in an interview with NBCNEWS's journalist Kristen Welker.

The US president said his goal in discussions about a deal with Iran is "total dismantlement" of that nation's nuclear program.

"I think that I would be open to hearing it, you know?" Trump said. "Civilian energy, it's called. But you know, civilian energy often leads to military wars. And we don't want to have them have a nuclear weapon. It's a very simple deal."

Iran and the United States held three rounds of nuclear talks since April 12, their highest-level contact since Washington withdrew from a landmark deal with Tehran in 2018, during Trump's first term as US president.

However, the fourth round of talks initially scheduled for Saturday has been post-



poned due to "logistical reasons".

The US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has also called on Iran to "walk away" from uranium enrichment. In a Thursday interview with Fox News Rubio claimed that "the only countries in the world that enrich uranium are the ones that have nuclear weapons."

However, Iran's top diplomat hit back at Rubio's remarks, defending the country's "right to possess the full nuclear fuel cycle".

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X that "Iran has every right to possess the full nuclear fuel cycle," citing Tehran's

long-standing membership of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Araghchi said that there are several NPT members which enrich uranium while wholly rejecting nuclear weapons. Araghchi has previously called Iran's right to enrich uranium "non-negotiable".

Iran currently enriches uranium to 60-percent purity but below the 90 percent needed for weapons-grade material.

The US and other Western countries have long accused Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons - a claim Tehran denies, insisting that its atomic program is solely for civilian purposes.

Yemeni missile attack targets Israel's key international airport

International Desk

A missile attack by Yemen's Ansarullah movement targeted Israel's main international airport on Sunday, wounding several people and causing panic among passengers.

The Yemen's Armed Forces have been striking Israel throughout the war in Gaza in solidarity with Palestinians. The attack on Ben Gurion International Airport came hours before Israeli Cabinet ministers were set to vote on whether to intensify military operations in the Gaza Strip. The army began calling up thousands of reserves in anticipation of a wider operation, officials said.

This was the first time a missile struck the airport since the war began, though fragments of missiles or interceptors have struck nearby. Israel's military said several attempts to intercept it were unsuccessful. It left a crater in the ground near the airport's access road.

An AFP photographer said the missile hit near the parking lots of Terminal 3, the airport's largest. The crater was just hundreds of meters (yards) from the tarmac.

The Israel Airports Authority said: "This is the first time a missile has fallen so close to the terminal and the runways."

Passengers were heard yelling and scrambling for cover in footage shared by Israeli media. Air raid sirens sounded in multiple parts of Israel.

Police said air, road and rail traffic were halted. Traffic resumed after about an hour, Israel Airports Authority said. Israel's paramedic service Magen David Adom said four people were lightly wounded.

Israeli media said multiple international airlines canceled flights. The Israel's war on Gaza and then Lebanon had led a wave of airlines to



Israeli security forces inspect the site where a missile fired by Yemen's Armed Forces landed in the area of Ben Gurion International Airport near Tel Aviv on May 4, 2025. AP

suspend flights to Israel, but they have since returned to prewar levels.

The spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said in a video statement that the Yemeni forces fired a hypersonic ballistic missile at the airport.

Palestinian resistance groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad and Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah hailed the attack.

Yemeni forces have been firing at Israel since the war with Gaza began on Oct. 7, 2023. The missiles have mostly been intercepted, although some have penetrated Israel's missile defense systems, causing damage.

Israel has struck back against Yemen, and the US, Israel's top ally, launched a campaign of strikes in March against them.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz vowed retribution: "Whoever harms us, we will harm them sevenfold."

Why the Islamic ...

It is not an exaggeration to say that much of what the West now takes pride in—its scientific foundations, mathematical innovations, and technological breakthroughs—originated in the Islamic world. During the Crusades and through centuries of occupation, European powers looted this knowledge. Before then, many in Europe did not even grasp the concept of zero. But through conquest, they got hold of Islamic science and mathematics—and then rewrote history to claim it as their own.

Now, many of those same powers continue to sow discord. And sadly, their efforts have been effective. Organizations meant to represent and speak up for the Muslim world have, by and large, fallen short. From the

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU), they have settled for toothless meetings and empty slogans. Rarely do they issue firm joint statements. Rarely do they act.

Adding insult to injury, some Islamic governments now cozy up to Israel, placing loyalty to geopolitical alliances above their obligations to Islam and their own people. For some, following instructions from Tel Aviv or Washington appears to carry more weight than upholding divine principles.

Yet there is hope. Recent developments suggest a turning of the tide. Countries previously divided—such as Iran and Saudi Arabia—are beginning to close ranks. The two countries, which were mostly subject to

seditionist Western attempts, are now finding common ground, working together in pursuit of Islamic unity. Others are starting to follow suit.

But make no mistake: those who profit from disunity are not backing down. The Zionist regime, the United States, and a handful of European states continue to beat the drum of sedition. Still, many leaders in the Muslim world have finally woken up to the urgent need for unity. Not all are there yet—but most are.

As the saying goes, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." The road to unity has been long, and it remains steep. But for the first time in decades, the conditions are beginning to shift. Now is the time to build momentum, set aside differences, and rise as one.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



VP terms smart technologies, AI as 'absolute necessity'

Economy Desk

Vice President Mohammadreza Aref, during a ceremony marking the centenary celebration of Bank Sepah, one of the oldest institutions in Iran's development, underscored the critical role of cutting-edge technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) in improving operational quality. Aref described the adoption of smart systems, AI, and advanced innovations as an "absolute necessity" and warned, "Today, we cannot remain passive observers of technology, as this would allow it to impose itself on us at a heavy cost, leading to dependency and subjugation," as reported by IRNA. Addressing Iran's ambition to rank among the top 15 nations in nanotechnology, the vice president reiterated the directive from Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, "The Leader of the Islamic Revolution has stressed that in artificial intelligence, we must secure

a position among the top 10 countries. This is not mere rhetoric but a strategic imperative for national development."

He expressed confidence in Iran's scientific and human capital, stating, "With our robust research capabilities and talented youth, we are poised to lead in emerging fields like AI and quantum technology — both in human resources today and in groundbreaking advancements tomorrow." Turning to the banking sector's role in national progress, Aref acknowledged past contributions but urged critical reflection, "While we must honor previous efforts, we must also evaluate how to serve more effectively and identify pathways to amplify our impact on the nation's development."

Priorities for banking system

Aref emphasized Iran's commitment to global scientific collaboration, declaring, "We have consistently stated that



Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (3rd L) is briefed during a ceremony marking the centenary celebration of Bank Sepah in the capital Tehran on May 4, 2025.

● fvpresident.ir

technological and scientific achievements should be shared freely, as knowledge belongs to humanity. Science cannot be confined to serve narrow national interests; it must advance humane causes and service to society." He outlined key priorities for the banking system, stressing the need for continued modernization, smart technology adoption, and financing domestic production. Other imperatives include engaging in regional diplomacy, optimizing human resources and social capital, and ensuring transparent governance that responds to citizens as true stakeholders. Aref also highlighted the importance of leveraging house-



hold savings, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and pursuing a fundamental overhaul of the banking system. On reforms, Aref asserted, "Transforming the banking sector is urgent. Rather than waiting for external pressures,

we must proactively cultivate competition within the system, aligning it with national development goals and public expectations. The government stands ready to support this transformation alongside the banking sector."

Phase one of Oman Sea-to-Isfahan water transfer project 90% complete



Economy Desk

The physical progress of the first phase of the Oman Sea water transfer project to Isfahan Province, managed by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), has reached 90% completion. According to IMIDRO's report to IRNA, the first phase of the project is set to be inaugurated this year. Execution of the early-phase operations for transferring water from the Oman Sea to Isfahan Province (Phase One: Sirjan-Isfahan) began in 2021. The project route spans three provinces: Kerman, Yazd, and Isfahan. The water transfer route in

the early phase from Sirjan to Isfahan spans 780 kilometers; the second Persian Gulf water transfer line is reported to have generated 8,000 jobs. Years of low rainfall, drought, and water transfers from the Zayandeh Rud basin to other regions in the central province of Isfahan have created severe water supply challenges for Isfahan, with conditions worsening notably in recent months. According to the Isfahan Meteorological Administration, below-normal precipitation, inadequate water reserves, and forecasts of subpar spring rainfall have heightened the risk of acute water stress in the province, particularly during the upcoming

summer months. Precipitation has declined sharply across most areas compared to last year's water cycle, especially in the Zayandeh Rud basin, with current seasonal rainfall also falling below long-term averages province-wide. Only northern Isfahan has reported normal precipitation levels.

A mega-solution for Eastern Iran

The large-scale transfer of water from the Oman Sea and Persian Gulf to eastern Iran, launched in November 2021, aims to partially address water shortages in the country's eastern corridor. Under existing agreements, this water will also support drinking water needs in Sistan and Baluchestan and Khorasan Razavi, with the project slated for completion by March 2026. Mohammad Hassan Asadi, CEO of IMWASCO (Water Supply for Industries and Mines Company), announced during a winter address that 1 billion cubic meters of desalinated Oman Sea water is being allocated to three eastern provinces: 300 million cubic meters for the Makoran region and 700 million cubic meters for the eastern provinces.

Over 2,000 domestic, foreign companies to attend Iran Oil Show



The photo shows a view of the 28th International Iran Oil, Gas, Refining & Petrochemical Exhibition in Tehran in 2024. ● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran Oil Show will host more than 2,000 national and foreign companies, a record-breaking number surpassing all previous editions of the event. Scheduled to run for four days starting on May 8 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, the 29th International Iran Oil, Gas, Refining & Petrochemical Exhibition marks a historic milestone in participation. The 2,000 attending companies represent the highest turnout ever recorded in the four-day exhibition's history, setting a new benchmark for engagement in this key industry event. While demand for participation exceeded this figure, spatial limitations at the venue prevented some companies from securing exhibition space. Notably, a significant portion of attendees comprises knowledge-based companies, which have demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm for the 29th edition of the exhibition. Widely recognized as Iran's premier industrial and commercial gathering in the oil, gas, refining, and petrochemical sectors, the annual event offers a highly valuable opportunity for industry players to showcase their achieve-

ments and products to professionals and specialists. It also enables companies to align their future activities and innovations with global market demands and the evolving trajectory of the industry. On April 22, the Iranian Oil Ministry announced more than 200 investment opportunities valued at more than \$135 billion, new incentive and financing packages and the launch of an Oil Guarantee Fund to support investors in the strategic industry, emphasizing its preparedness "to negotiate with the private sector regarding various types of contracts." Addressing the opening ceremony of the "Strategic Transformation in Iran's Upstream Oil & Gas Sector", Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad highlighted the event's focus on three pillars, including investment, production and structural transformation. According to the oil minister speaking at the time "The Oil Ministry has so far signed 16 contracts under the IPC (Integrated Petroleum Contracts) framework for the development of 23 oil and gas fields, with total investments exceeding \$27 billion. Of these, nine contracts worth approximately \$13 billion are under implementation, while the remainder are nearing finalization and ratification."

Iran's first indigenous airborne radar ready for operation at Abadan airport

Economy Desk

The Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company (IAC) announced that the country's first domestically developed airborne radar system is ready for commissioning at Abadan International Airport. The company confirmed its preparedness to officially inaugurate the MS-SR-Mod S (Secondary Surveillance Radar) system — a fully indigenous, knowl-

edge-based surveillance radar project — at Abadan International Airport, IRNA reported. This national project, developed through collaboration between experts from the air communications and navigation department of the Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company and Isfahan University of Technology, is capable of monitoring domestic and non-military transit flights within a 450-kilometer radius, significantly bolstering

radar coverage in southwestern Iran. Construction of the project was completed in less than six months and has been ready for operation since February 2024. Currently, the radar's data feed is active, and it will enter full operational service following flight validation procedures, performance verification by a flight-check aircraft, and final approval from the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran.



● IRNA

Iranian steel: From soaring sheet exports to slump in semi-finished steel



● SHARGH

PERSPECTIVE

The latest report from the Iranian Steel Producers Association, known as Steel Iran, shows that in the last Persian calendar year (March 20, 2024–March 20, 2025), the country's steel export chain has been on a rollercoaster ride, with exports of hot and cold-rolled steel sheets and construction steel picking up steam, while semi-finished steel exports have taken a hit.

The report indicates that, alongside the uptick in exports of cold and hot-rolled sheets and construction steel products, especially iron beams, exports of semi-finished steel have dropped. Steel industry experts believe the war between Ukraine and Russia, coupled with falling Russian steel prices on global markets, has played a major part in Iran's export woes, as Russian producers have muscled in on Iran's target markets, driving down the global price of Iranian steel.

With the US gearing up to slap more tariffs on China's steel industry, forecasts suggest that Iranian steelmakers, most of whom are based out of Isfahan Province, will have their work cut out for them on the export front this year.

Power and gas shortages have also thrown a wrench into the steel sector, holding back production and timely deliveries, with knock-on effects for exports. Experts argue that locking in a stable energy supply and moving toward innovation and technology are crucial for boosting efficiency. Given Isfahan's competitive edge in steel, ramping up steel and steel product exports in line with industry outlooks will depend on removing export barriers and beefing up energy infrastructure.

Sheet steel exports on rise

According to Steel Iran, last year, except for coated sheet exports, which dipped by 2%, exports of hot and cold-rolled sheets were on the rise, resulting in a 19% jump in volume and a 12% increase in the value of flat steel exports.

Hot-rolled sheet exports grew by 17% over the twelve months of the last year, with export value for this strategic product climbing by 12% to \$280 million.

The biggest leap was in cold-rolled sheet exports, which shot up by 194% in volume, sending 20,000 tons to export markets and bringing in \$12 million.

Last year's decline in coated sheet

exports was kept to just 2%, trimming foreign currency earnings from these exports to \$42 million.

Construction steel exports climb amid fears of rising domestic costs

The Iranian Steel Association's report reveals that, despite a 13% drop in overall steel exports last year, rebar exports rose by 13% to 2.872 million tons, while exports of angle, u channel, and other long products (excluding beams) jumped by 25% to 286,000 tons, and beam exports ticked up by 10% to 213,000 tons.

The surge in long-product exports pushed up Iran's construction steel exports by 14% in volume and 9% in value for last year. Last year's uptick in exports of rebar, angle, channel, beam, and other long products — all key construction steel items — came at a time when rebar production slipped by 0.5% to 3.967 million tons.

Rebar, the most critical construction steel product domestically, saw output fall by 0.5% over twelve months, and this, coupled with currency fluctuations, sent rebar prices soaring past IRR400,000 in ironmongers' shops.

Rising exports of construction steel products, alongside falling domestic production, could spell trouble for Iran's construction sector — which is already stuck in a rut — and set the stage for higher building costs.

Beam exports, another key construction steel product, were up last year, mainly due to changes in Iraq's import rules that paved the way for easier entry of these products.

Semi-finished steel exports take nosedive

The latest report from the Iranian Steel Association shows a 22% drop in semi-finished steel exports (billet and slab) in the twelve months of last year, with the value of these exports plunging by 26% due to falling global prices.

The steepest decline was seen in slab exports, with only 1.729 million tons shipped out, worth \$762 million — a 37% plunge in value compared to a year earlier. Severe power restrictions last year, compared to the previous year, cut semi-finished steel exports by around 22%, with billet and bloom output sliding by 18% to 4.364 million tons.

Slab and billet, Iran's main steel export products, posted the big-

gest drops, with exports tumbling by 32% and 18%, respectively.

It's worth noting that billet and bloom go into making many steel sections like pipes, rebar, and beams — mainly for construction — while slab is mostly used to turn out flat products such as coils or steel sheets for the machinery and heavy equipment industries.

Exports of sponge iron, pellet, iron ore concentrate gain ground

According to the Iranian Steel Association, a 12% jump in sponge iron exports in 2024 translated into an 11% rise in export value, bringing in roughly \$401 million.

Last year, despite export tariffs, exports of upstream steel chain materials — iron ore concentrate and pellet — continued to climb, with these two products making up 60% of the steel chain's export volume.

Despite higher export volumes, foreign currency earnings from pellet and iron ore concentrate fell by 16% and 10%, respectively, with \$918 million worth of pellet and \$548 million of concentrate exported last year.

Steel exports' impact on Isfahan's trade

Rasoul Kouhestani Pozveh, the director general of Isfahan Customs, said that last year, the province shipped out a total of 1.807 million tons of goods worth \$1.234 billion.

Pozveh added that last year's exports from the province were down by 20% in weight and 14% in value compared to the previous year, with a 60% drop in exports of cast iron, iron, and steel standing out as the main reason for the province's export slump.

Pozveh, pointing to 749 export items from the province, said the main export products included petrochemicals (\$348 million, up 28%), cast iron, iron, and steel (\$237 million, down 60%), dairy products (\$155 million, up 64%), machine-made carpets (\$108 million, up 8%), and copper and copper products (\$90 million, up 27%).

He also noted that the top export destinations for Isfahan were Pakistan (\$342 million, up 4%), Iraq (\$248 million, down 47%), Afghanistan (\$152 million, up 16%), the UAE (\$118 million, up 6%), and Turkey (\$99 million, down 14%).

Iran now ranks tenth among the 71 member countries of the World Steel Association and is expected to move up the ladder to seventh place this year by hitting a capacity of 55 million tons.

The association is one of the largest and most dynamic industry groups worldwide, representing steel producers, national and regional associations, and research institutes, with its members churning out about 85% of the world's steel.

According to the latest report from the Iranian Steel Producers Association, the value of Iran's steel export chain fell by 13% or \$1 billion over the twelve months of the last year. Isfahan Customs likewise reported a 20% drop in export weight and a 14% drop in value compared to the year before.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



● ROKNA

IMIDRO drives digital transformation in mining sector

▶ Bahareh Khazani & Ahmad Fatah
Managers at IMIDRO

OPINION

Bahareh Khazani stated during a recent press conference on the sidelines of the Iran Expo 2025 exhibition, "The smartization of mines and mineral industries can enhance the speed and precision of managerial decision-making by leveraging transparent data."

"To ensure the secure and unrestricted flow of data, a reliable communication infrastructure is essential. Over the past year, in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications, the organization has begun implementing dedicated optical fiber networks and 5G connectivity for mines," she said.

Also, according to Ahmad Fatah, IMIDRO's Exploration Manager, long-term plans for mining and mineral industries prioritize safety and sustainable development.

Smartization has been recognized as the cornerstone of progress for Iran's mineral industries, with an official for planning and empowerment management of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) declaring its transformative potential to accelerate sector-wide modernization. This strategic focus drives IMIDRO's sweeping efforts to deploy secure 5G networks, AI-powered logistics systems, and nationwide data-sharing platforms — initiatives designed to overcome legacy inefficiencies, enhance decision-making transparency, and position Iran's mining sector as a globally competitive player.

Acting Head of the Innovation, Smartization, and Security Center at the IMIDRO has emphasized the pivotal role of smartization in advancing mineral industries and detailed the organization's extensive efforts to establish digital and security infrastructure.

Launching intelligent system

Among the IMIDRO's key initiatives are the launch of an intelligent distribution system and the creation of a database for companies active in mine smartization.

Registration for qualified firms opened on IMIDRO's smartization platform in March, with competency assessments now in their final stages. The imminent release of this vetted registry will empower mining operators to identify and collaborate with certified partners, ensuring seamless integration of advanced technologies across the sector.

Digital Skills Development Center

A Digital Skills Development Center has been established as a critical infrastructure component for smartization. The organization's goal is to train skilled personnel aligned with global standards.

Smart logistics in mines — a key ongoing project — will significantly boost productivity. IMIDRO has selected the Tabas Coal Mine (underground), Zarshuran Gold Mine (open-pit), and Sangan Iron Ore Mine (open-pit) as pilot sites for testing its initiatives in critical mining sectors. Additionally, three Energy Management System (EMS) pilot projects are underway at the Qaenat Steel, Sangan Steel, and Jajarm Alumina facilities.

Digital Transformation Document for Mines

A Digital Transformation Document for Mines and Mineral Industries has been drafted,

which will soon be officially ratified. This five-year document outlines a national roadmap for smartizing Iran's mines and encompasses large-scale strategic actions.

In this regard, cybersecurity is a priority and all communications adhere to security protocols. Additionally, resistance from legacy systems and the need for cultural shifts to foster data transparency are among the key challenges highlighted in this sector.

Collaboration with security, international entities

In cases where required technologies are unavailable domestically, international collaborations will be pursued in coordination with security agencies and relevant organizations. IMIDRO's current and future initiatives represent significant strides toward Iran's mining sector's digital transformation. Smartization not only enhances productivity and security but also fosters transparency and efficient management.

Safety, sustainable development

Long-term plans for mining and mineral industries prioritize safety and sustainable development. Under the Seventh Development Plan of Iran, annual projections are made for a five-year horizon. Over the past five years, targets have consistently been exceeded — last year's goal of 600,000 meters [of exploration] reached 670,000 meters.

For this Iranian calendar year

(began on March 20, 2025), the target is 650,000 meters, but current trends suggest achieving 670,000 meters is likely.

Smart software in exploration

IMIDRO, in partnership with knowledge-based companies, is prioritizing the use of smart software in exploration.

With the gradual shift from government-led programs to collaborative models, private sector involvement has reduced the need for direct government intervention — a major achievement. However, alignment between investment conditions and production goals remains a consideration.

Currently, 250 exploration permits at various stages are held by IMIDRO, IMPASCO, and the National Iranian Copper Industries Company. These will be auctioned to attract private investment once the results are finalized.

IMPASCO is the Iranian Mineral Production and Supply Company, a key mining company associated with IMIDRO and the Ministry of Industries, Mines and Trade. IMPASCO's vision, as of 2025, is to become a leading and innovative mining company. IMIDRO and its subsidiaries invested over 40 trillion Rials [\$50 million] in exploration last year — the highest in the organization's history.

Under Article 24 of the Mines Law, IMIDRO emphasized that securing permits requires obtaining clearances from multiple regulatory bodies. These include the Natural Resources Department (for genetic reserves of flora and fauna), the Department



● MEYSAM ALLAGHEHMANDAN/IRNA

of the Environment (for protected areas categorized under four tiers), and the Atomic Energy Organization (for zones containing radioactive materials) — all cited as persistent hurdles in the licensing process.

Permitting challenges, safety certification requirements

Regarding safety issues in mines, it should be noted that over the past year, the country has witnessed multiple mining-related incidents resulting in worker fatalities. However, within the Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) domain, several measures have been implemented. These include:

- Formulating safety protocols for exploration missions,
- Mandating the use of all-terrain vehicles in high-risk zones,
- Developing safety checklists for all operational phases, and
- Requiring safety competency certification for all contractors.

In the exploration sector, where personnel enter high-risk environments, safety is paramount. Consequently, mandatory health certification for exploration teams has been incorporated into operational protocols. This means compliance with safety guidelines is required, particularly for those holding valid IMIDRO safety competency certifications.

Regarding development programs in border regions, since 2012/2013, exploration activities have been conducted in underdeveloped and border areas such as Sistan and Baluchestan, South Khorasan, Kurdistan, and Ilam.

Safety certifications for explora-

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IMIDRO's current and future initiatives represent significant strides toward Iran's mining sector's digital transformation. Smartization not only enhances productivity and security but also fosters transparency and efficient management.

tion personnel are now mandatory. Compliance with IMIDRO's safety standards is non-negotiable.

Lithium exploration

Regarding lithium exploration, while Iran's first lithium exploration permit was issued in 2015, the economic grade for lithium in brines must exceed 500 ppm. Current reserves, such as those in Nahavand at 80 ppm, remain subeconomic.

Collaboration with Geological Survey of Iran

In 2015/2016 (the Persian year 1394), the first lithium exploration license was issued. The economic grade for lithium in brines must be at least 500 ppm; however, in Iran, brine grades are typically below 200 ppm, and deposits with grades as low as 80 ppm have been identified in Nahavand. Consequently, given the current conditions, exploiting lithium reserves in Iran is not economically viable.

Regarding collaboration with the Geological Survey of Iran, an agreement was signed in 2021/2022 (Persian year 1400) between the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade and the Geological Survey of Iran. Under this agreement, the ministry bears the financial responsibility, while technical and expert execution is delegated to the Geological Survey. The objective of this initiative is to generate baseline geological data to support the expansion of mining activities.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



● LUCAS AGUAYO ARAOS/ANADOLU AGENCY

FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup: Iran hits five past Paraguay to progress

Sports Desk

Iran secured a last-eight place at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup thanks to a 5-1 victory over Paraguay in Victoria, Seychelles.

Saturday's win left Iran second in the Group B table with six points. Ali Naderi's men had to hold off a late comeback from Mauritania to edge out the African newcomer 5-4 in the opening game in the competition.

A bronze medalist in last year's edition in Dubai, Iran got off to a flying start at the Paradise Arena on Saturday, with Movahed Mohammadpour and goalkeeper Mahdi Mirjalili smashing home from distance to give the Asian champion a two-goal lead inside five minutes.

This was a third goal in eight World Cup outings for Iranian Mirjalili, who went on to pick up the Man-of-the-Match prize.

"He makes amazing saves and scores amazing goals. He's the best goalkeeper in the world and showed that again today," Mohammadpour said of Mirjalili after the game.

Milciades Medina cut the deficit with a sensational bicycle kick in the second period, but Ali Nazem restored Iran's two-goal cushion

less than two minutes before the second interval.

Mahdi Shirmohammadi added a fourth midway through the third period and Mohammad Ma'soumi found the net with seven seconds remaining to seal the win against the 2025 Copa America finalist.

Having settled for a third-place finish in its last two World Cup appearances, Iran will be eager to walk away with the ultimate prize this time around.

Saturday's showing suggests Naderi's men will be among the favorites to go all the way in Seychelles. They are solid in defense and imaginative in attack, while in Mirjalili Iran boasts a man capable of settling matches with his hands and feet.

The top spot in the group will be up for grabs when Iran and two-time champion Portugal square off today.

Andre Lourenco scored twice to help Portugal defeat Mauritania 8-4 later on Saturday to move atop the table on goal difference.

Iran skipper Mohammadali Mokhtari (white) is seen in action against Paraguay at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Victoria, Seychelles, on May 3, 2025.



IWF World Youth & Junior Championships: Zarei grabs gold as Iranians win five medals on Day 4

Sports Desk

The fourth day of the IWF World Youth & Junior Championships in Lima, Peru, saw Iranians collect five junior medals, including a clean & jerk gold through Hamidreza Zarei in the men's 96kg contests.

Having missed out on a snatch medal, Zarei went on to lift 203kg for his second effort to beat Egyptian Ahmed Gamal Elbasyouni to the ultimate prize in the C&J event.

Zarei would have also won the total gold, had he made his final attempt on 209kg, but he failed and settled for the fourth place on a 158-203-361 record.

"I could have done much better in the snatch event but the barbell slipped through my hands on my third attempt. I had lifted 210kg and even 213kg in training, but unfortunately, I couldn't repeat those feats today," Zarei said.

Meanwhile, Zarei's compatriot Amirhossein Sepah made sure Iran would finish the event with a total medal after he settled for the silver

with 364kg – two kilograms shy of Elbasyouni's overall tally.

Sepah began his campaign with a couple of failed attempts, but still managed to raise 165kg above his head for a snatch bronze behind Belarusian Ihnatsi Pauliukavets (167kg), who participated as a neutral athlete, and Elbasyouni (166kg).

Sepah then succeeded with his second C&J effort, lifting 199kg, to secure a second bronze medal in the Peruvian capital.

Illia Salehipour won a first medal for on Saturday, when he registered a 195kg lift to win the bronze in a tight clean & jerk contest in the men's 89kg class, with Georgia's Goga Jajvani (198kg) and Colombian David Cuesta Angel (196kg) winning the gold and silver, respectively.

Having stood fifth in the snatch table, Salehipour finished fourth in total with a 158-195-353 tally.

Amirmohammad Rahmati was the Iranian boy in the weight class, recording 154-184-338 to finish eighth in the total standings.

In the women's competitions, Ghaza-

leh Hosseini had a 98-121-219 result to finish sixth in total in the 76kg division.

Saturday's results came after Iranian girl Alma Hosseini had notched up first medals for the country in Lima on the preceding night, collecting a silver and a bronze in the women's youth 64kg class.

Hosseini, 17, tallied 86kg to miss out on the snatch podium, finishing fourth behind Albanian Carja Enkileda (98kg), Nauru's Crystie Nottle Femliy (92kg) and Russian Valeriia Drevnovskaia (86kg), who participated as a neutral athlete.

The 17-year-old missed out on the snatch podium, but delivered a much-improved performance to win the C&J silver with 111kg, before taking the total bronze with 86-111-197.



Iranian weightlifter Hamidreza Zarei celebrates after securing the C&J gold medal in the men's junior 96kg event at the IWF World Youth & Junior Championships in Lima, Peru, on May 3, 2025.

IWFIR

Qolizadeh at the double as Lech Poznan scores eight in Polish league

Sports Desk

Iranian international winger Ali Qolizadeh bagged a brace and provided his teammate with an assist to help Lech Poznan hammer Puszcza Niepolomice 8-1 at home in the Polish top-flight league – the Ekstraklasa – on Saturday.

Qolizadeh put his side in front with a sublime curling strike from inside the box in the third minute and then doubled the scoreline 11 minutes later, drib-

bling past a couple of defenders before his delicate side-footed effort found the bottom corner.

The winger wizard teed up Mikael Ishak for Lech Poznan's third of the night in the 16th minute.

Portuguese midfielder Afonso Sousa added a brace in the first half before Ishak completed his double after the break, with Kornel Lisman and Dino Hotic also on the scoresheet, as the emphatic result left Lech Poznan second in the Polish league table with 63 points – two points adrift of

Raków Częstochowa with three game remaining.

Saturday's performance took Qolizadeh's tally to seven goals and six assists in 30 top-flight appearances this season.



Iranian winger Ali Qolizadeh celebrates after scoring during Lech Poznan's 8-1 victory Puszcza Niepolomice in the Polish Ekstraklasa league in Poznan, Poland, on May 3, 2025.

lechpoznan.pl



Urmia Grand Mosque inviting international attention

Iranica Desk

Urmia, the capital of West Azarbaijan Province, holds a precious gem at its heart: the Urmia Grand (Jaame) Mosque — a structure that has withstood the passage of centuries. This mosque is one of the most prominent examples of Islamic architecture in northwestern Iran, showcasing a blend of Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Safavid, and Zand styles. Its original core includes a vaulted prayer hall (Shabestan) built during the Seljuk era, featuring brickwork, domes, and geometric vaulting, ISNA wrote.

A stunning mihrab (niche) decorated with fine plasterwork and Kufic and Riq'a inscriptions was added during the Ilkhanid period. According to cultural heritage experts, this mihrab is one of the largest remaining from the Ilkhanid era. During the Safavid and Zand periods, the mosque was further expanded with a forty-column prayer hall and surrounding chambers, ISNA wrote.

Nestled within Urmia's historic bazaar, this magnificent structure has borne witness to the city's rich history and culture for centuries. It is now on the verge of being inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site; however, the path to this global recognition presents several challenges. Major hurdles include completing restoration projects, organizing the surrounding area, and finalizing legal documentation. While recent efforts have been made, a collective push is increasingly



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necessary to navigate this critical stage. This year is pivotal for the Grand Mosque. Heritage experts warn that if current deficiencies are not addressed promptly, the opportunity for global registration could be lost. The Urmia Grand Mosque is more than a historical monument; it is a symbol of the identity, culture, and resilience of the local people who have lived alongside it for centuries. Achieving UNESCO registration would

be a lasting honor for Urmia and a proud achievement for Iran. With its unique architecture, delicate plasterwork, and storied past, it is one of the masterpieces emblematic of Iranian-Islamic identity. Yet, at this crucial moment, challenges remain that require collective effort — any delay risking the future of this irreplaceable treasure. Global registration reflects more than an entry on an international list; it

symbolizes a commitment to preserving the heritage and culture of those who have venerably guarded it through the ages. Therefore, it is expected that officials, experts, and cultural enthusiasts will collaborate, demonstrating solidarity to establish the necessary conditions for the mosque's international recognition. In doing so, the Urmia Grand Mosque can shine as a symbol of Iran's rich history and culture on the

world stage. Mozaffar Abbaszadeh, head of the Faculty of Architecture, Urban Planning, and Art at Urmia University, stated, "In the 10-year tourism outlook for Urmia, there is no opportunity as significant for the city's globalization as the global registration of the Grand Mosque. This will place Urmia firmly on the map of international tourist destinations." He explained that, due to

restrictions on the number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, many historical sites are registered as collections of multiple properties. Yet, registering the mosque globally would prominently feature it as a key destination, drawing tourists specifically for its significance. For example, while tourists currently pass through Urmia en route to sites like Qara Kelisa (Saint Thaddeus Monastery) in

the north and Takht-e Soleiman in the south, the global recognition of the mosque would connect these sites, positioning Urmia within the wider network of international tourism destinations.

Abbaszadeh noted, "The dome of the Urmia Grand Mosque is 800 years old, and the mihrab itself is over a thousand years old. Its mihrab is the largest stucco mihrab in the world."

He urged local officials to make every effort to facilitate relocating the seminary by providing suitable land and funding for its construction — offering the faculty's assistance in designing and supervising the project free of charge. He emphasized, "The global registration of the Grand Mosque is a unique opportunity to put Urmia on the world map."

Highlighting the significance, he stated, "The mosque embodies a document of the city's Islamic identity that spans over a thousand years. We must seize this opportunity to address the challenges ahead, as previous meetings have shown that the seminary officials are ready for positive collaboration."

Regarding ongoing efforts, Abbaszadeh added, "So far, two phases of restoration have been completed. The first involved organizing the area around the mosque, and the second included extensive internal and external restoration of the dome. Currently, the mosque's decorations are being restored, and the additional wooden coverings around the columns have been re-

Traditional wool weaving in North Khorasan Province

Pelas is a traditional wool kilim with a rich history, used for centuries as a floor covering to protect against humidity, cold, and ground heat. These rugs adorn the floors of village homes and nomadic tents in North Khorasan Province, especially in damp environ-

ments. They also serve as prayer rugs and bridal tablecloths. Typically, the background of Pelas features horizontal, colorful strips, and although similar in design and motifs to Jajims, Pelas are distinguished by their horizontal strip orientation,

while Jajims have vertical strips. While Pelas are woven in other regions of Iran, North Khorasan Province is renowned for its distinctive Pichbafi technique, which involves no special knots. Instead, patterns are created by passing colorful wefts through wraps, with

wefts passing from both front and behind for added stability, giving the patterns an embossed appearance. Nomadic weavers produce these textiles on horizontal looms using wool from their own sheep. Women spin the yarns, dye them, and weave Pelas, rugs, and

other textiles. Depending on the product's size, they choose a suitable loom and stretch the yarns in a traditional Persian or "Zarb Dari" style. Once stretched, a mixture of flour and water (clay or paste) is applied to the top and bottom of the loom to prevent the wraps from

loosening if cut. Regarding the handicrafts of North Khorasan Province, the region is renowned for its diverse and vibrant textile traditions, including kilim weaving, embroidery, and leatherwork. These craftworks reflect the cultural heritage of various

ethnic groups, like Kurds, Turkmens, and Persians, preserving ancient techniques and motifs. The local handicrafts not only serve practical purposes but also form a vital part of the region's cultural identity and are highly valued for their artistry and craftsmanship.



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Justice in education begins with equal opportunity, Pezeshkian says

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of equal educational opportunities in a speech on Sunday, declaring that justice in education begins with providing every child, regardless of their background, the chance to succeed. Speaking at a ceremony honoring top educators in Tehran, Pezeshkian called for a national effort to ensure that all children, especially those from disadvantaged communities, receive meaningful and goal-oriented education, president.ir reported. Pezeshkian urged schools to become platforms for "goal-oriented" and effective learning, stressing that "the real asset" of the country lies not in its industries but in its children. "What teachers plant today is the future of the country," the president said, calling on educators to instill the belief that "children can shine in healthy competition" and develop essential skills in a nurturing space. While announcing plans to expand school construction nationwide, Pezeshkian made clear that infrastructure alone isn't the goal. "Building schools is not the endpoint," he said. "We must create an environment where quality education thrives."

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at a ceremony to honor top educators in Tehran on May 4, 2025. president.ir

Pezeshkian warned that neglecting disadvantaged communities would stall national progress. "If we want to build the country," he said, "we have to see all children—not just those with money." He pointed to historical examples of great change-makers emerging from humble backgrounds. The president also pressed for a shift in educational values, urging decision-makers to prioritize capability and integrity over rank or wealth. "Choosing the wrong people because of status leads us astray," he said, invoking both human experience and religious teachings. "Justice in leadership," he added, "is rooted in our faith." Iran has struggled with education disparities across provinces. According to the Ministry of Education, rural and underfunded regions see higher dropout rates and limited access to qualified teachers. He also emphasized that children must be raised to be "creative, capable, and honest," and not simply conform to appearances. "They should strive to display their skills, not just themselves."



The ceremony comes amid Iran's renewed push to overhaul its public education system, which critics say remains outdated and overly central-

ized. The government's school-building drive, launched in early 2024, aims to add thousands of classrooms, but Pezeshkian stressed that curriculum

and character-building must come first. "If we get this right," he said in closing, "Iran will not fall behind any nation."

Iran plans tourism event in September to attract global operators



Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian Association of Travel Agencies (IATA) has confirmed plans to host a larger tourism event this September, following requests from major international tour operators after last week's gathering of 145 operators from 33 countries.

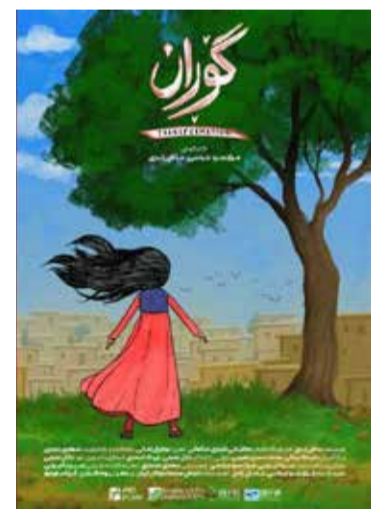
The event, set to take place in early September, will be a major expansion of the recent B2B meetings, said Hormatollah Rafiei, the association's president, IRNA reported. Speaking at a press conference on May 4, Rafiei explained that the demand from global tour operators for access to Iran had increased significantly following the success of last week's event. The event, held in conjunction with the 7th Iran Expo exhibition, was the first time tourism had been included in the Expo and proved to be a key platform for fostering international collaboration. Rafiei revealed that the B2B

sessions in Tehran and Kish had yielded promising results, with 120 Iranian tour operators meeting their counterparts from around the world. However, due to space limitations, some foreign operators were unable to participate, prompting the association to organize a larger event in September. "Due to the high demand from foreign agencies, we have decided to host an even larger event, without relying on government support," Rafiei said. He added that the focus would be on neighboring countries such as India, Pakistan, Russia, and Iraq, which together account for over 80% of inbound tourism

to Iran. Although the Iranian government had previously announced plans to bring international tour operators to the country, the association took the lead in organizing the event after delays from the private sector. Rafiei emphasized that the primary goal of the association is to ensure the arrival of "real" tourists, stating that "we need to focus on bringing genuine tourists, not just boosting numbers." He further expressed concern over the challenges faced by Iran's tourism sector, pointing to the lack of investment from both private and government sectors. "Iran is still struggling to realise

the true potential of its tourism industry," Rafiei said, referencing the ongoing financial and logistical obstacles the sector faces. In addition to the upcoming September event, Rafiei underscored the importance of focusing on neighboring countries for tourism growth, citing the examples of France and Turkey, whose tourism industries are heavily reliant on nearby regions. Despite these efforts, Rafiei noted that the Iranian tourism sector is still grappling with significant issues such as high costs, excessive taxation, and bureaucratic hurdles, which continue to impede the industry's development.

Iran's animation 'Goran' wins Special Jury Award at Düsseldorf festival



Arts & Culture Desk

The animated film 'Goran,' directed by Adnan Zandi and Faraz Seyed Abbasi, won the Special Jury Award at the Düsseldorf Kurdish Film Festival (DKFF), Germany, continuing its successful international journey. The festival, held from April 23 to April 27, showcased a range of films while also offering cultural programs aimed at promoting Kurdish heritage, tolerance, and solidarity. Through discussions and events, the festival seeks to foster understanding of Kurdish culture and history, ILNA reported. 'Goran' tells the story of a young girl battling cancer, with nature coming to her aid. The animation is a production of the Kurdish Youth Cinema Association, with international distribution handled by Befir Production, led by Sina Ayoubi.

Master painter Farshchian urges youth to embrace perseverance, Persian literature



Arts & Culture Desk

Celebrated Iranian painter Mahmoud Farshchian called on the younger generation to "embrace hard work" and cherish Persian literature during a tribute event for the late master artist Isa Bahadori. The comments came on Sunday, at a screening of 'Mystery of Isa,' a documentary directed by Abtin Shomeily, held

at Documentary, Experimental & Animation Film Center (DEFC) of Iran, IRNA reported. "I advise young people not to tire of persistence and exploration," said Farshchian in a live phone call played during the gathering. He encouraged students to stay connected with Iran's literary heritage, adding, "Art has wide horizons; our ambition must match that breadth." Farshchian, best known for the painting 'Ashura Evening,' paid homage to Isa Bahadori, his mentor and the founder of the School of Fine Arts in Isfahan. "No one in the history of Iranian art resembled Bahadori," he said. "His vision was singular. His innovations in carpet design opened a new chapter." The event, held a day after Iran's Teacher's Day (May 2), drew a strong turnout from art students and faculty.

Organized in partnership with the Farshchian University of Islamic-Iranian Arts, it featured speeches by top cultural figures including Sajjad Mohammadyar-zadeh, president of the university, and Abdolhossein Khosropanah, secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. Khosropanah praised Bahadori's legacy, noting that even Islamic-Christian dialogue found artistic form in his tile work. "We philosophers may talk for hours about religious unity, but Bahadori showed it through art," he said. 'Mystery of Isa,' produced by Mohsen Tabatabaee-Pour, goes beyond biography. It reflects on the wider tradition of Persian visual arts and its spiritual lineage. Director Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam said the film is part of a larger effort to "reclaim and honor national cultural icons."

"Documentary cinema has the power to rediscover what society has overlooked," said Hamidi-Moqaddam. He described Farshchian as the "spiritual father" of the film and emphasized the importance of connecting with younger audiences through heritage storytelling. Bahadori, who passed away in 1992, was a master of carpet design, metalwork, and miniature painting. His teaching lineage includes many who helped preserve Iran's traditional crafts in the 20th century. Farshchian's remarks underscored the spiritual depth of Iranian art. Reflecting on 'Ashura Evening,' he said it was born in solitude, inspired by his mother's suggestion to attend mourning ceremonies. "That painting is a bridge between heaven and earth," said Khosropanah, calling it a "new creation" rich with wisdom and insight.