



Leader highlights seminaries' role in building Islamic civilization



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Wednesday emphasized the "clear propagation" of Islamic principles as the foremost duty of seminaries, urging their active role in designing societal systems based on Islam and shaping a modern Islamic civilization.

In a message to the international conference marking 100 years since the reestablishment of the Qom Seminary, the Leader described the institution as "a center enriched by the vast intellectual capital of Shia scholarship," and as a dynamic force in education, culture, and politics, IRNA reported.

He stated that the seminary must be "innovative, thriving, up-to-date, responsive to emerging issues," and capable of addressing the needs of contemporary society while maintaining its moral and revolutionary identity.

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that the main objective is to "outline the primary and secondary frameworks" of a new Islamic civilization and integrate them into public life.

He urged seminaries to train "morally refined and efficient" individuals able to convey Islamic teachings with precision and impact.

Reflecting on its history, the Leader highlighted the role of prominent cleric Ayatollah Abdolkarim Haeri in establishing the seminary in the early 20th century, and pointed to the emergence of Imam Khomeini from Qom as a source of pride.

The Leader said the seminary's spiritual and social influence led to the overthrow of the US-backed Pahlavi monarchy and the establishment of Islam in a position of political authority.

Ayatollah Khamenei warned against reducing the Hawza to an academic institute alone, calling it a "comprehensive entity" that must actively respond to questions on governance, justice, the role of the people, and the stance against global arrogance.

He said every religious ruling must reflect a "comprehensive perspective" rooted in Islamic principles.

Calling for a proactive approach to religious propagation, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized the importance of "education and refinement," saying seminaries must educate students to communicate effectively in modern public and media spheres.

He called for greater engagement between seminaries and the public, increased cooperation with universities, and deeper familiarity with global scientific progress.

The Leader described Islamic civilization as "the opposite of the current materialist system," and said its goal is to place knowledge, power, and resources in the service of "social justice, public welfare, and spiritual development."

Ayatollah Khamenei urged seminary leadership to ensure the institution remains a "living and active" force in the Islamic Republic, stressing the importance of hope, discipline, and visionary scholarship in facing modern challenges.

Tehran International Book Fair opens

Salehi: Books are Iran's 'super-culture of power'

Iraqi minister says West still learning from Eastern classics

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran inaugurated the 36th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) on May 7 with calls to embrace books as a foundation for unity, resilience, and cross-cultural understanding.

The event, held at Imam Khomeini Mosalla, will run through May 17 and has drawn thousands of publishers and intellectuals from Iran and abroad, IRNA reported.

This year's fair, themed "Read for Iran," showcases 2,363 domestic publishers—up from last year—and nearly 80 international guests. Iraq participates as the guest of honor, signaling what organizers describe as a deepening of "cultural diplomacy" between the two neighbors.

At the opening ceremony, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, described books as "the super-culture of Iranian power."

He argued that lasting civilizations—from ancient Greece to India—were built on deep, structured thought transmitted through literature.

"If we seek Iran's future, its progress, and the failure of its enemies, we must think more and more about books," Salehi said. "Without coherent thinking, no civilization survives. Fast food thought may be consumed quickly, but it offers no strength."

He emphasized that Iran's own heritage—from classical Persian epics to Islamic scholarship—was shaped by its relationship to reading and writing. Referring to the national epic 'Shahnameh,' Salehi remarked that without it, "the Persian language might not have endured."

The fair includes more than 400 panels, readings, and cultural exchanges. It also marks the launch of the Tehran Publishing Fellowship Program, a new initiative to promote the translation and international publication of Iranian books—especially in children's and young adult literature.

On the sidelines of the fair, Salehi met with Iraq's Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities Ahmed Fakak al-Badrani, to discuss bilateral cultural cooperation. The two ministers highlighted shared heritage as a powerful foundation for expanding dialogue and exchange.

"We have significant opportunities for cultural diplomacy based on our deep historical ties with Iraq," Salehi said. "These links help smooth the path for stronger state and people-to-people relations." Badrani, speaking at the opening, praised the fair's scope and message. "Writers do not die," he said. "They are the awakened conscience of humanity." He stressed that authors throughout history have



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi (L), and Iraq's Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities, Ahmed Fakak al-Badrani (C), look at bookshelves at the opening ceremony of the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, on May 7, 2025.
● IRNA

taught people "how to live in peace," and argued that modern society still benefits from the moral and intellectual legacies preserved in books.

He urged audiences to look beyond the physical object of a book and toward the minds behind it. "In a book fair, we should focus not only on the books but on the thought of the writers. Through their words, we speak with them."

Badrani noted that texts by Eastern scholars such as Avicenna and Rumi continue to be taught in Western universities, underscoring the global significance of the region's literary contributions. "The world still reads us," he said.

Speaker of Parliament Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf also

addressed the gathering, underscoring the strategic importance of books to Iranian society. "The core index of progress is culture," Qalibaf stated. "Even in areas like energy and economy, it is cultural behavior—production, consumption, responsibility—that determines success."

Qalibaf, who has long emphasized the role of social cohesion, said book reading must be seen as a pillar of national development, especially in shaping the next generation. "In Islamic thought, books are the distilled essence of human knowledge. They elevate individuals and societies," he said.

He also tied the event to the broader national agenda, noting that although Iran's

leadership has stressed economic reform in recent years, cultural growth remains essential. "Even the best economic plans fail without a cultural foundation," he said.

Iranian organizers reported receiving more than 2,300 applications for events this year and said they had cut operational costs by up to 40 percent while increasing support for publishers facing rising production expenses. The fair is expected to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors before it closes.

"This fair is not just about publishing," Salehi said. "It's a social club—a place to connect, to unify, and to remind ourselves that Iran's strength lies in its collective intellect."

Fake names can't ...

Iran must respond firmly and appropriately to such provocations, which strike at the very heart of the nation's dignity, history, credibility, and culture. However, under current circumstances, the scope for active countermeasures is somewhat limited. Still, Iran should lodge a formal protest and follow up on the matter through diplomatic channels.

The country ought to release historical documents substantiating the name Persian Gulf, and hold academic and historical seminars to expose how these name-change efforts are intended to cover up an undeniable historical reality. It falls to Iran to win over public opinion globally and to shine a light on the facts through media outreach.

Iran must in no way sit idly by in the face of such statements and events. Instead, it should mount a media campaign vigorous enough to ensure that Trump comes away with nothing on this front politically.

Trump's move is apparently aimed at drawing attention from Arab audiences in the region, by seizing on an issue he believes will strike a chord with his hosts to cozy up to Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman. Naturally, members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and other Arab countries are likely to welcome Trump's adoption of the false term "Arabian Gulf."

Yet from a strategic standpoint, this maneuver brings Washington little to no tangible gain. Nor does it do anything to chip away at the Persian Gulf's internationally recognized historical name.

What is needed is a long-term, consistent campaign to remind international bodies of the historical truth and to formally assert the rightful name of the Persian Gulf. This will be no quick fix; it demands patience and persistence. At the end of the day, Washington's use of the

false name "Arabian Gulf" serves them solely as a media ploy; it won't translate into any meaningful strategic leverage. Frankly, this is not a matter Iran ought to blow out of proportion.

There is an old saying: "Falsehood perishes when ignored." Giving undue attention to such empty gestures only risk amplifying them, which is precisely what the other side is aiming for.

Therefore, while Iran must avoid turning a blind eye to such provocations, it must also avoid letting this issue hijack its diplomatic agenda. This naming controversy is clearly meant to curry favor with Persian Gulf Arab states, but in the broader context of ongoing negotiations between Tehran and Washington, it sends a misguided and harmful signal.

Like the sanctions the US continues to pile on Iran even as talks progress, this latest move reflects yet another instance of the recklessness and poor judgment plaguing the current White House leadership.