



## Leader hails Iran's aid workers as 'embodiment of humanitarian values'



Social Desk

Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei met with members of the organizing committee for the National Conference in Commemoration of Martyred Aid Workers on Monday in Tehran. Describing aid workers as the "embodiment of humanitarian values," Khamenei called on the nation to preserve and promote a spirit of selflessness and compassion. "This culture must be cultivated," he said, urging continued efforts to showcase the sacrifices made by Iran's medical and relief personnel during conflict, khamenei.ir reported.

The meeting, held two days prior to the conference and publicized on May 12, centered on efforts to honor those who died in service. Khamenei linked the spirit of Iranian aid workers—who he said risked their lives "under rain of bullets" to save others—with the broader Islamic and human duty to oppose violence.

He drew a sharp contrast between these values and what he called "the savage behavior" of Israel in Gaza.

He condemned attacks on ambulances, hospitals, and civilians, referring to Israel's ongoing military actions as the acts of "inhuman beasts."

He admonished Western governments for supporting these "crimes," calling global silence a shared moral failure.

"It is a universal duty to oppose such bloodshed," he said. "The Islamic Republic will never remain silent in the face of such cruelty."

# Tajikistan to honor Hafez at UNESCO, showcases over 500 titles at Tehran Int'l Book Fair



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

## EXCLUSIVE

Tajikistan will mark the 700th anniversary of Persian poet Hafez with a special event at UNESCO headquarters in Paris this June, featuring literary programs and two book launches, a senior cultural official said during the 36th Tehran International Book Fair.

Abdulrahman Zadeh Abdoli, Tajikistan's Ministry of Culture representative and director of the country's stand at the fair, said the commemoration will include the unveiling of 'Selected Ghazals of Hafez Shirazi' and 'A Cry from the Heavens,' a critical work on Hafez's poetry.

Speaking with Iran Daily on the sidelines of the fair, Abdoli called Persian literature "invaluable" and said its reach has expanded across borders. "Our literature has conquered the

world," he said, adding that its timeless themes are resonating globally. He emphasized that today, the world "needs this rich literature more than ever," especially the moral and spiritual depth found in the works of classical poets like Rudaki, Rumi, Jami, Sa'adi, and Hafez.

Tajikistan, he said, is committed to introducing Persian-language poets and their ideas to global audiences. Last year, the country hosted an event at UNESCO in Paris to honor Rumi, where 'Jaam-e Jaan' and a selection of Rumi's ghazals were distributed. "The reception was warm," he noted.

He praised the high level of cultural and literary relations between Tajikistan and Iran, saying cultural exchange plays a vital role in strengthening "friendship and brotherhood" between the two nations. "This book fair is an excellent platform for enhancing bilateral cooperation in literature and culture," he said.

Tajikistan is participating in this

year's fair with over 500 book titles across various fields, including science, literature, history, and encyclopedias. "There's been strong interest in our publications," Abdoli said, adding that ongoing talks with Iranian publishers may pave the way for deeper cooperation in the publishing sector.

He pointed to continued state support for literature in Tajikistan. "Every year, the government allocates a substantial budget to print and distribute literary works both at home and abroad." One major project is the Stars of Literature series — a 50-volume collection featuring the works of Persian-speaking poets from Rudaki to contemporary voices.

In 2024, Tajikistan also published a historical and cultural study by the late scholar Babajan Gafurov. "A copy was given to every Tajik household," Abdoli said. In 2025, the government plans to publish a



Visitors browse books on display at the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, held on May 13, 2025.  
● IRNA



two-volume edition of Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh,' again distributing it free to households to promote awareness of the nation's cultural heritage. Abdoli highlighted the deep connection Tajiks have with Persian literature. "Tajik families have a profound love for poetry," he said. "Many

mothers place books like Sa'adi's 'Golestan,' Rumi's 'Mathnavi,' or Hafez's 'Divan' under their children's pillows. It's how they grow up with our literary legacy." The 36th Tehran International Book Fair began on May 7 and runs through May 17, under the slogan "Read for Iran."

## Tourism, pilgrimage, handicrafts take center stage at Khorasan Razavi expo



By Leila Imeni  
Staff writer

The 18th International Tourism and Handicraft Exhibition of Khorasan Razavi Province officially opened on Wednesday at the Permanent International Exhibition Center in Mashhad, with the presence of numerous national, provincial officials, and some consul generals. Spanning approximately 12,000 square meters, the expo features representatives from several Iranian provinces and will run until May 17.

This event results from extensive collaboration between the Provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization and various trade associations. It offers a unique platform to showcase the tourism

attractions, sites, and facilities of different regions, alongside displays of local handicrafts and tourist services.

Participating countries include Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Oman. A total of 490 companies and organizations from across Iran — such as travel agencies, health tourism operators, hotel equipment manufacturers, accommodation providers, handicraft producers, and souvenir vendors — are part of the expo. Their participation highlights the event's importance as a hub for knowledge exchange, networking, and promoting sustainable development in the tourism sector. Speaking in an interview with Iran Daily, Deputy Head of Khorasan Razavi Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization for Tourism Affairs, Yousef

Bidkhor, emphasized that this year's exhibition focuses more on tourism and hospitality topics. "Given the sector's significance, we deemed it essential to hold the event at a specific time each year for better planning and optimal results," he said.

Thanks to recent collaborations with expatriate who are active in tourism sector in Mashhad, many foreign companies are participating, aiming to foster international connections and expand cooperation. The foreign participants mainly operate in pilgrimage and health tourism. Countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Afghanistan send visitors for pilgrimage or medical treatment — highlighting the importance of tourist exchanges between Iran and these countries.

"Currently, about half of the foreign tourists



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in Mashhad come from Persian Gulf nations, primarily Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain. Additionally, visitors from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Mongolia seek medical treatment, contributing to the growing demand for health services in the region," Bidkhor noted.

## Iran urges cultural strategy to drive regional tourism

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Wednesday called for a "new architecture" of cultural cooperation among Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) nations, saying sustainable regional development hinges on shared identity and political resolve.

Speaking at the Regional Tourism Market Symposium held on Kish Island, Reza Salehi Amiri said the region must rethink its ties through "civilizational links" rather than surface-level diplomacy, IRNA reported.

He urged leaders to "move beyond symbolism" and turn historical, linguistic and religious common ground into real, people-centered collaboration.

"The ECO needs a redefined cultural framework," Salehi Amiri told delegates. That, he stressed, requires dialogue, relaxed visa rules, and shared tourism strategies. He suggested a summit of ECO cultural elites in Tehran to deepen "mutual understanding" and boost cohesion.

Salehi Amiri pointed to visas as a major sticking point. "Removing visa barriers should be top of the list," he said, noting that Iran had

already taken "meaningful steps" and now expects ECO's secretariat to help speed up the process.

Iran is also pushing for joint tourism fairs, including expanded participation in Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition. "This is how we showcase cultural assets to each other — and the world," the minister said. He offered state media resources to help promote ECO countries' tourist attractions in Iran. Each year, roughly 10 million Iranians travel abroad. "A major portion of this can be directed to ECO states," he said, if tourism infrastructure and cultural pathways are improved. Highlighting ongoing projects, he revealed that Iran has more than 2,700 tourism initiatives underway. Kish Island alone accounts for around 10% of the country's tourism capacity, with 57 hotels in operation and another 52 being built. In a separate press briefing, Salehi Amiri pushed back on negative portrayals of Iran in Western media, calling "Iranophobia" a deliberate narrative spun by hostile outlets. "These stories don't match the reality on the ground," he said.

"The lived experience of visitors is one of peace and splendor," he said. He pointed to the recent international expo in Tehran, where



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over 2,700 foreign guests attended. "They didn't just see Iran. They understood it — and became storytellers of a different kind."

Kish, he argued, could serve as a strategic hub for rewriting Iran's global tourism image. But infrastructure remains a challenge. "Over 80% of travel to the island is by air," he said. Talks are underway to reinforce air routes and designate Kish Air as a core carrier. Three airlines have already agreed to invest in hotels on the island. "This synergy between air travel and hospitality builds a stable future for tourism," he said. Salehi Amiri called for a sustained campaign of persuasion — both at home and abroad. "With truth on our side, smart diplomacy, and private sector buy-in, we see a bright future for Kish — and for Iran's global tourism standing."

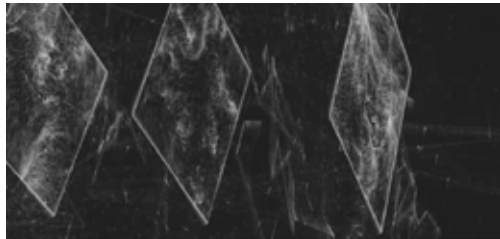
## Iran's 'Infinite Realms' joins global digital stage in Japan

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's digital art collective Platform 101 has been selected to present 'Infinite Realms,' a large-scale projection mapping work, at Expo 2025 Osaka. The group, led by director Mohammad Ali Famori, is the only digital art team from Iran and West Asia featured in the projection program. Their work appears alongside global names such as Maxin10sity and Michiyuki Ishita, IRNA reported.

Platform 101 confirmed its participation after responding to an open call under the expo's main theme, Designing Future Society for Our Lives. 'Infinite Realms' is now scheduled for repeated showings during the Expo, from April 13 to July 14, at the iconic "Shining Hat" structure on Osaka's Yumeshima Island. The work, a collaboration between Famori, creative coder Arash Masoum, and sound designers Ehsan Masoudian and Reza Famori, uses generative art, immersive sound, and real-time mapping to explore what the team calls "parallel dimensions" through fractal geometry. It was fully created using TouchDesigner software.

"This piece opens a new chapter for Iranian art in the digital space," said Famori. "We're stepping onto a global stage, using code and sound as our language." Platform 101 has positioned itself as a pioneer in digital and immersive art since its founding in 2018. Famori, originally known for his solo exhibition 'Hypnotic Zone' in 2016, said he turned to building a platform after finding "no infrastructure" for digital art in Iran. Their first touring exhibition launched that same year, focusing on digital photography. By 2019, the group introduced glitch art and video art to international audiences through the 'Glitch: Pixel Language' manifesto, which shaped multiple exhibitions across Europe and



the Americas.

In 2020, the group organized Iran's first glitch group show. A year later, it expanded into 'The Aesthetics of the Pixel' at the Pejman Foundation. The platform began researching fractal-based visual structures in 2022, leading to a landmark 2023 video art exhibition at Ivan Gallery, described by Art News as "Iran's largest group video art show."

In fall 2024, Platform 101 staged a fifth exhibition, 'Fractal Soundscapes,' blending sound and image. The latest show, 'Hidden Geometry and Glitch Art,' ran from December 2024 through April 2025 at Gallery Rische 29, featuring 21 video artists from 11 countries including Japan, the US, France, and Brazil. Famori described it as "Iran's longest-running video art exhibition."

While a few Iranian galleries promote contemporary art abroad, Famori noted that many remain focused on traditional forms like painting and sculpture. "Digital art is rarely supported, partly because there's no financial model for it in the gallery system," he said. "But that doesn't mean it lacks value."

He sees the Expo as a rare opportunity. "We're not just exporting an artwork," he said. "We're sharing a process, a system that has evolved inside Iran and can speak to global audiences."