



Leader endorses new biography of Imam Khomeini



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei endorsed a newly released book about the life of founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, calling it a "powerful" and "truthful" portrayal of the late revolutionary leader. The endorsement was unveiled during a ceremony in Tehran for Ruhollah, a biography by Iranian author Hadi Hakimian, published by Shahrestan Adab Publishing House, khamenei.ir reported. In a handwritten message dated Mordad 1403 in the Iranian calendar (July–August 2024), Ayatollah Khamenei wrote that the book draws "a close-to-reality image" of Khomeini, describing him as a leader with "pure faith," "unmatched courage," and "iron will." The book, Ayatollah Khamenei noted, reflects Khomeini's "deep belief" in his mission and people, saying this trust "makes up half the weight" of his leadership. Ayatollah Khamenei, who succeeded Khomeini as Leader in 1989, also stressed the book's value for young Iranians. "Reading this book is highly beneficial for our youth," he wrote. The book 'Ruhollah' comes as Iran prepares to mark the 36th anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's death on June 3.

City Theater Festival returns after eight-year hiatus



Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran's long-paused City Theater Festival will return this year after an eight-year break, the city's top cultural official said June 1, marking a renewed push to spotlight the capital's layered identity. Mehrdad Bagheri, head of Tehran's Cultural and Artistic Organization, confirmed the seventh City Theater Festival will be held in 2025. The last edition ran in the early 2010s before falling silent, IRNA reported. "We're coming back with a fresh approach," Bagheri said, pointing to changes in both execution and themes. This year's edition will focus on "the many layers of Tehran," from the city's storied past to its evolving future. The event aims to "build social cohesion" and rekindle a sense of belonging, especially among the younger generation. Organizers also hope to highlight old Tehran traditions like Pahlavani (heroism), chivalry, faith, and community spirit. Between 2010 and 2016, the festival ran six successful editions and helped launch a "new wave" of young, creative performers into the national spotlight, Bagheri noted. A policy committee meeting is scheduled soon to finalize the framework.

Foreign Ministry's spokesman says Persian seen as 'unique bridge' in diplomacy

Scholars urge global efforts to preserve, promote Iran's rich heritage

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Sunday that the Persian language holds a "unique" role in diplomatic dialogue and remains a living legacy of a civilization that once stretched from India to the Balkans. Speaking at the 11th annual gathering of Persian language educators and institutions, hosted on June 1 by the Saadi Foundation in Tehran, Baqaei stressed that Persian is more than a language — it's a carrier of "thought, wisdom, and history." He called Iranian diplomats "ambassadors" not only of the Islamic Republic, but of Persian culture. "We believe Persian can still play a remarkable role in international diplomacy," he told a hall packed with university officials, diplomats, and cultural experts. Baqaei cited long-standing cooperation between the foreign ministry, the Saadi Foundation, and the ministry of science as key to advancing Persian instruction abroad, despite what he called "tight budgets and limitations" in

some countries. He closed his remarks with couplets from 13th-century poet Rumi, urging listeners to "speak Persian" and not let the language fade into silence. Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, head of the Saadi Foundation and a former speaker of Iran's parliament, echoed the call for deeper investment in language education. "We must build the infrastructure," he said, "and help every institution that wants to teach Persian." Tracing the foundation's roots to a small program launched at Allameh Tabataba'i University four decades ago, Haddad-Adel said the aim has always been to train teachers and produce textbooks designed for non-native speakers. "We started with zero," he noted. "Today we're nearing 100 published books." Still, he warned that Persian needs a standardized certification system like TOEFL or IELTS. Without such benchmarks, global learners may hesitate. "Our burden is heavy," he said. "But we cannot afford to fall behind." Saeed Habiba, deputy science



minister and head of Iran's student affairs organization, called Persian the "second great classical language" after Greek and said it must evolve into a modern scientific tool. "Diplomatic science begins with language," he said. "If we lose that, we lose our voice." The conference also featured panels on artificial intelli-

gence, educational technology, and student recruitment. A cooperation agreement between Iran University of Medical Sciences and the Saadi Foundation was signed on the sidelines. Haddad-Adel wrapped up the event with a nod to the growing interest in Persian around the world. "Even if we lose



Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei speaks at the 11th annual gathering of Persian language educators and institutions in Tehran on June 1, 2025.
● IRNA

motivation," he said, "there are still people out there eager to learn our language."

50 years of Iranology in Japan

Japanese scholar stresses need to preserve Persian heritage



Arts & Culture Desk

Hashem Rajabzadeh, a leading scholar of Persian language and literature at Osaka University of Foreign Studies, offered what he called a "clear picture" of the past, present and future of Iranian studies in Japan during a symposium at the Iranology Foundation in Tehran. Rajabzadeh, who has spent more than five decades bridging cultures, said efforts to introduce Iranian heritage to Japanese audiences remain "unfinished business." The event, attended by researchers, professors and students, centered on his life's work in promoting Iranian culture and literature in Japan.

"Few have walked this road," he said, reflecting on his journey since 1973, when he moved to Japan and immersed himself in cultural and linguistic research. He emphasized the need to preserve and publicize neglected Persian texts. Among his major contributions is the compilation and translation of Japanese travelogues about Iran, including the 19th-century "Sheila," penned by the first Japanese diplomatic mission to Qajar-era Iran. He noted the book's detailed account of Iran's political and cultural fabric, but pointed out the need for a more polished edition for today's readers. Rajabzadeh also discussed the publication of Fazlollah Hamedani's



Hashem Rajabzadeh (L), a leading scholar of Persian language and literature at Osaka University of Foreign Studies addresses a symposium at the Iranology Foundation in Tehran on June 1, 2025.
● IRNA

theological treatises, a project completed in collaboration with Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, head of Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature. He cited his regular research column "Cheshmeh-ye Khorshid" in journals such as Kelk and Bukhara, now slated for release as a book series. Though the first volume was printed ten years ago, half the thousand-copy run remains in storage due to distribution and paper shortages. Still, follow-up volumes are ready for press. He pointed to long-standing Japanese-Iranian cooperation in archaeology, recalling projects at Persepolis and studies in the village of Khey-rabad. Rajabzadeh praised the late Japanese Iranologist Uno for choosing Khey-rabad as a base for field research, producing 'Khey-rabadnameh,' a work now regarded as a benchmark in Iranian rural studies. "Fifty years of research show how Marvdasht grew from a small village into a major city," he said, adding that a Persian edition of those findings will soon be published.

When asked about Japanese readers' familiarity with Persian classics, Rajabzadeh singled out Omar Khayyam as an exception. "No other Iranian poet has achieved that level of recognition in Japan," he said. He noted Japanese translations of 'Shahnameh' (under the title "Oshu"), as well as selections from Hafez and Rumi, though he admitted they were adapted to Japanese literary tastes rather than Persian ones. "Still, they're valuable," he said. Rajabzadeh drew a line between art and literature, saying Japanese audiences have connected more deeply with Iranian visual arts — especially calligraphy and painting. He mentioned students who had written theses on Persian calligraphy and highlighted the photo archive of Japanese photographer Banri Namikawa, whose images of Isfahan are now housed in a museum named after him in Japan. On the institutional front, Rajabzadeh named the University of Tokyo of Foreign Studies and Osaka University as Japan's leading centers for Iranology. Both schools have supported research and offered Persian language programs for decades. Addressing a question about the influence of European thought on Japanese Iranology, he argued that while early scholars were "inspired" by Western models, the field has matured into a uniquely Eastern approach to Eastern studies.