



Decentralization of arts policy

Culture minister calls for stronger creative economy

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi on Thursday urged greater efforts to “activate” the country’s creative economy during meetings with artists, writers and media figures in Kerman, saying cultural industries must be treated as a driver of growth and employment. The minister, who traveled to the southeastern province as part of Government Week events, also inaugurated the Pars Hamoon ferrochrome plant a day later, framing the project as a model of local development and stressing that linking production to “jobs and value-added output” was a strategic goal. His two-day trip highlighted Tehran’s bid to blend cultural policy with regional economic initiatives.

At a gathering with Kerman’s cultural and religious community, Salehi said decentralization was at the heart of his ministry’s agenda. “The idea that the center necessarily makes better decisions than the provinces is not correct,” he noted, pointing to new powers given to provincial book licensing committees and local cultural institutions. He said Tehran had been moving to shrink central bureaucracy and shift decision-making to the regions. The minister stressed that cultural industries should not depend on wealthy patrons. “We cannot send the artist to the doors of the rich,” he said. Instead, he cited new financial tools, including a state-backed Culture and Arts Fund that has secured a capital market license and can channel private investment into cultural projects.

He also mentioned the rollout of a “culture card,” due in September, which will provide about \$330 in credit to 100,000 artists for buying cultural products interest-free. Salehi added that government rules now oblige companies to allocate part of their corporate social responsibility budgets to culture and the arts. “This creates transparency and an incentive for firms that want to play a role in society,” he said, noting plans for a national prize recognizing companies active in cultural sponsorship. In cinema, he said provincial film councils chaired by governors would be set up nationwide by October, while support was being arranged for building movie theaters in cities of more than 100,000 people that currently lack them. A Higher Council of Arts is



Iran’s Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi speaks during a gathering of artists and cultural figures in Kerman, southeastern Iran, August 28, 2025.
● farhang.gov.ir

also planned as an umbrella body extending to the provinces. On Friday, Salehi attended the opening of the Pars Hamoon ferrochrome plant in Orzuiyeh county, calling the project a “sweet and memorable” example of local initiative. He said tapping into regional strengths was a “strategic policy for grassroots development” and praised the private sector’s push to curb raw mineral exports in favor of processing industries that generate jobs and added value. Salehi also pointed to Kerman’s



animation sector, local festivals, and proposals for heritage projects such as the Tepe Yahya, an ancient hill in Dowlatabad, southeastern Iran, which he described as “valu-

able opportunities” for both the province and the country. “Culture and art are not marginal,” he told participants. “They are the key to solving social issues.

Tourism boom puts Iran closer to 15m foreign visitor target



● IRNA

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Iran’s deputy tourism minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey said that foreign tourist arrivals jumped by nearly 50% in April 2025 compared with a year earlier, putting the country on track to meet its goal of attracting 15 million visitors by the end of its seventh development plan. The government has made tourism a pillar of its “post-oil” economy, portraying the sector as a source of jobs, foreign currency and social cohesion. Officials say the strategy is backed by international outreach, private-sector partnerships and fresh funding from state resources, inn.ir reported.

Bandpey said more than 7.39 million foreign tourists entered Iran in the year that ended on March 20, 2025. In April alone, arrivals rose 48.5% from the same month in 2024. “The figures show that the 15 million target is becoming a reality,” he told reporters.

Iran also returned to Dubai’s international tourism fair this year after a decade-long absence, covering exhibition costs to allow private firms to showcase attractions ranging from cultural and religious heritage to eco-tourism. Officials signed bilateral agreements with neighboring states and members of the Nowruz cultural sphere to spur cross-border travel. New financing has flowed into infrastructure. For the first time, \$1bn from the National Development Fund was directed to the tourism ministry, matched by commercial banks. The Central Bank of Iran also issued \$5bn in bonds for hotels already 80% complete. Another \$1.5bn was allocated to small businesses such as eco-lodges and handicrafts, with \$2bn distributed to provinces. Between March 2024 and late August 2025, 138 hotels were opened nationwide, surpassing the annual target of 100. Bandpey said the figure “proves the target is within reach” by the end of 2025. Regulatory reforms have moved in tandem. Cabinet approval was secured for new rules under the Seventh Development Plan, including customs exemptions on over 200 tourism-related goods and permits for mixed-use facilities in areas where stand-alone hotels lack economic viability. Bandpey stressed that if international conditions stabilize and “trust-building” continues, the country could even exceed its official goals.

Iran, Tajikistan push Persian literary ties with 3.4m ‘Shahnameh’ print run

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Iran’s National Library chief Gholamreza Amirkhani met Tajikistan’s ambassador in Tehran, Nizomiddin Zohidi, on Thursday, stressing plans for joint workshops, researcher exchanges and wider access to archives, the Iranian body said. The talks reflected growing cultural and linguistic cooperation between the Persian-speaking neighbors, ISNA reported. Both officials said historic ties should be translated into practical programs in libraries, publishing and preservation. Amirkhani called Tajikistan “not just a neighbor” but part of “a shared civilizational sphere.” Amirkhani praised Dushanbe’s ongoing project to distribute Ferdowsi’s ‘Shahnameh’ (The Book of Kings) nationwide, calling it a “valuable step” for Persian heritage. He recalled the 2017 establishment of an “Iran Room” at National Library of Tajikistan in Dushanbe, saying the space now needed fresh momentum and stronger academic exchange. Zohidi said Tajikistan aimed to print and distribute 3.4mn copies of the epic poem, much of it produced in Iranian printing houses. He noted that about 40 train wagons of books had already been shipped, adding: “We hope every Tajik family will have a two-volume Shahnameh by the end of the year.” The envoy outlined five proposals, including sharing expertise in restoration, exchanging manuscripts, enabling online researcher access, holding joint workshops and strengthening Tajikistan’s cultural corner in Tehran’s National Library. He also sought Iranian help to compile a full index of



Women prepare copies of the Persian epic ‘Shahnameh’ for free distribution in different cities of Tajikistan.
● asiaplustj.info

works on Tajikistan published in Iran.

Zohidi urged cooperation on archival matters, stressing that in Tajikistan the archive and library are separate institutions requiring greater ties with Iran. He also suggested next year’s 150th anniversary of Tajik writer Sadriddin Aini be marked with a commemoration in Tehran.

Both sides pointed to recent high-level visits, including Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian’s trip to Dushanbe this summer, as laying the groundwork for what the ambassador described as “a new page” in cultural ties.

Iran should use ...

For this reason, it would be a mistake to assume the snap-back has no impact. The political consequence would be more severe. Iran would be branded as a violator of international law under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Under the JCPOA framework, enrichment had been legitimized and even capped at 3.67%. But with the return of Resolution 1929, Iran would be required to halt enrichment altogether. Another outcome would

be the difficulty of lifting sanctions again. One of the JCPOA’s most significant achievements was the cancellation, on its very first day of implementation, of six Security Council resolutions against Iran. Yet once the snapback is triggered, those resolutions will be revived, placing Iran once more under Chapter VII. To exit that situation a second time, Tehran might be compelled to grant greater concessions. This is why Iran should not to allow the snapback

to take effect. Preserving the JCPOA, even in a limited form, can still prevent sanctions from returning. If confidence-building is required, Iran could temporarily agree—whether for a few months or even several years—to certain restrictions on enrichment. This would not only help break through the current political deadlock but also allow Tehran to rebuild damaged facilities and thereby restore enrichment capacity in practice.

Tehran hosts int’l gemstone fair with focus on exports, cultural industry

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened its second International Exhibition of Gemstones, Machinery and Related Industries in Tehran on Thursday, an event officials described as a “strategic opportunity” to expand exports and deepen economic diplomacy. The four-day fair runs through Aug. 31 at the Tehran International Exhibition Center. The showcase brings together domestic and foreign players in the gemstone sector, from

jewelers and miners to machinery makers and research institutes. Organizers say the gathering not only highlights Iranian craftsmanship but also aims to forge international links in a niche yet lucrative global market valued in the billions of dollars, IRNA reported. Farzad Ojani, head of commercialization and marketing at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said the fair provides a platform for artists and entrepreneurs while promoting

“innovation and scientific progress.” He added, “This exhibition is more than a display of stones. It is a bridge for knowledge exchange and a step toward stronger trade partnerships.” The ministry has given free booths to 20 artists from Tehran, East Azarbaijan and Khorasan Razavi provinces to encourage wider participation. Alongside displays of precious and semi-precious stones, the program features technical seminars, product launches and discussions on emerging



technologies in gemstone processing.