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Enrichment or not, the West won't shift its policy on Iran

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE



Iran's nuclear issue has evolved into a major flashpoint between Tehran and the West. The concessions both sides made under the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, failed to settle the dispute for good, and even the military confrontation that the international community tried hard to ward off eventually broke out in June. Today, Washington's insistence on a complete halt to enrichment in Iran and Tehran's insistence on its inherent right under the NPT have made any kind of compromise look unattainable. Meanwhile, Western pressure through the International Atomic Energy Agency continues, with reports suggesting plans to push through a draft resolution at the IAEA Board of Governors, citing Iran's alleged lack of cooperation. In this highly sensitive and tense climate, every step Iran takes in its foreign policy carries significant weight and could have far-reaching consequences. International affairs analyst Afifeh Abedi has told Iran Daily that the West's hostile approach has persisted even when enrichment was halted, and that Western governments will always find a way to pile on pressure regardless of Iran's actions.

IRAN DAILY: Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said that enrichment in Iran is currently halted due to the June attack on nuclear facilities, but that Iran will continue to pursue its undeniable right to enrichment. Under current circumstances, does Iran intend to restart enrichment, and what impact would such a move have on international tensions?

ABEDI: From Iran's perspective, the right to enrichment is indisputable, and therefore a swift resumption of enrichment is very likely. While this step would certainly ratchet up tensions in the short term, Tehran sees its right to enrichment and the continuation of its peaceful nuclear program as non-negotiable. Restarting enrichment is essentially viewed as protecting decades of investment in peaceful nuclear technology.

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US not eager to engage in 'equal and fair' talks despite new requests

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) addresses an international conference, titled "International Law Under Attack: Aggression and Defense," in Tehran, Iran, on November 16, 2025. ANA

Intersecting narratives of Iran, West

From power politics to ethics, culture

INTERVIEW
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Iran's message at WTDC-25: Tech diplomacy returns to forefront



By Seyyed Sattar Hashemi
Iran's ICT minister

OPINION

The World Telecommunication Development Conference 2025 (WTDC-25), which begins on Monday hosted by the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku is considered an ongoing and specialized event for many countries, a venue to exchange technical views, share experience, and review telecommunications development trends. However, for the Islamic Republic of Iran, this year's event carries a completely different meaning. After the 12-day US-Israel imposed war last June that targeted the country's critical cyber infrastructure and exposed us to the most sophisticated digital attacks, WTDC-25 was the first international stage where Iran could present its narrative of resilience. We are not simply a technical and specialized delegation representing Iran at this summit; rather, we are the bearers of the narrative of national resilience and the representative of our country's digital resistance model, which we are narrating

in plenary meeting as well as on its sidelines, in a series of high-level and intensive meetings with the Ministers of Communications of Russia, India, Malaysia, Algeria, Azerbaijan, as well as with the Secretary General and senior managers of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

1) Digital resilience

In modern world, technology is no longer on the margins of economy, culture, politics, and security; it is at the center of national power. As recent developments have shown, cyber borders are sometimes more important than land borders. The 12-day cyber war against Iran, in addition to the losses and pressures, revealed an important reality: The Islamic Republic of Iran has reached a stage of capability that not only remains resilient against large-scale attacks, but is also capable of sustaining and rebuilding the country's communications chain by relying on indigenous infrastructure.

This experience has become the backbone of Iran's technology diplomacy strategy today, as we arrived in Baku with full hands, with practical experience, not theoretical discourse.

2) Technology diplomacy

In today's interconnected world, countries are more successful that can, in addition to domestic development, gain negotiating power, active presence in the technology value chain, and participate in global markets. Technology sanctions have tried to keep Iran away from this chain over the past years, but the result was exactly the opposite: Iran continued its march on the endogenous path with strength, and we have reached a point where we are able to export technology, cloud services, network equipment, software, and digital solutions. In such circumstances, participation in international events is not a option but a strategic necessity. WTDC-25 was an opportunity for Iran to transform itself from a beneficiary of international examples to an influential player and global model.

3- Intensive negotiations

On the sidelines of the summit, a series of important meetings are on the agenda with the ministers of communications of Russia, India, Malaysia, Algeria, Azerbaijan, as well as with the Secretary General

and senior managers of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). In all these discussions, we will emphasize a common principle: Protecting the rights of nations and vital infrastructure in modern wars, and at the same time developing technical, commercial and research cooperation as a definitive path to global stability. These meetings are taking place in line with redefining the new regional and international arena with the objective of expanding the export markets of Iranian companies, connecting to the knowledge and innovation exchange network, creating paths for participation in regional project, and interacting with countries that want to transfer and use Iran's achievements and experiences. This process has made Iran in Baku, not just a country present at the conference, but an active actor in the field of technology diplomacy. The West also anticipates such a move, which is why it is trying to open the door to renewed negotiations. A revived enrichment program will almost certainly heighten Western political and diplomatic pressure and could even lead to political or military threats.

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Iran favors diplomacy to resolve nuclear standoff: *Araghchi*

US not eager to engage in 'equal and fair' talks despite new requests



Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi talks with reporters on the sidelines of an international conference titled "International Law Under Attack: Aggression and Defense" in Tehran on November 16, 2025.

● MIZAN

International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Iran's nuclear issue has no military solution and should be resolved through diplomacy but the United States' current behavior does not reflect a willingness to engage in "equal and fair" negotiations. "Requests for negotiations have now resumed, which is natural, since they (Israel and the US) did not

achieve their goals regarding Iran's nuclear program through military action. This is exactly what we have always said. Iran's nuclear issue has no military solution. They tried it and realized it is not the right path," Abbas Araghchi told an international conference, entitled "International Law Under Attack: Aggression and Defense", which was held in Tehran, according to IRNA. Back in June, Israel waged a war on Iran amid nuclear talks with the

US, during which more than 1,000 Iranians including ordinary people, military commanders and nuclear scientists were killed. The US later joined the aggression by targeting Iran's nuclear facilities. Since then, attempts at renewing talks on Tehran's nuclear program have failed due to the US's excessive demands. Araghchi said that the first step in diplomacy is to recognize that "dialogue differs from dictation and

coercion," reiterating that negotiations should be grounded in reason and logic and conducted seriously. However, he said Washington's current approach toward Tehran does not indicate any readiness for "equal and fair" talks.

Diplomacy first victim of 12-day war

The top diplomat said Israel launched the assault before the sixth round of Iran-US nuclear talks in Muscat, against the possibility of reaching an agreement through peaceful means. "The truth is that when the Israeli regime attacked Iran on June 13, under the order and guidance of the US president, the first bombs were fired at the negotiating table between Iran and the United States — negotiations of which five rounds had been held, with the sixth round slated for two days later, the 15th of June," he stated. "Diplomacy was the first victim of the 12-day war."

Iran not enriching uranium

In response to a question about the existence of undeclared nuclear facilities in Iran on the sidelines of the conference, Araghchi said there

are "no undeclared nuclear enrichment facilities" in Iran, adding that all of Iran's nuclear facilities are under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). He said that Iran is not currently enriching uranium due to the Israeli and US strikes on the enrichment facilities.

"Our message is clear: Iran's right to enrichment and to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including enrichment, is undeniable. Iran has this right and will continue its efforts to exercise it."

The minister also pointed to the US administration's warmongering policies across the world, censuring it for initiating an arms race across the world by its naked use of force and violations of international law. Araghchi said that there is no choice but to grow strong in the "jungle" created by the United States.

He said that US President Donald Trump came to the White House with the doctrine of "peace through strength," which turned out to be a code for "hegemony through force." The top diplomat also noted that the manifesto of a hegemonic America, which is "a return to the law of the jungle," includes the re-

naming of the US Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of War and the testing of nuclear weapons.

"A president who styles himself as the president of peace arbitrarily attacks wherever he pleases without reason or justification, orders the evacuation of cities, demands unconditional surrender, and violates and rips up all international laws, even the commitments of his predecessors," he added.

Israel's geopolitical ambitions

Araghchi also described Israel as an agent and appendage of the US in West Asia, warning that the regime pursues its boundless and dangerous geopolitical ambitions by attacking the most fundamental principles of international law. He warned that no country in West Asia is safe from Israel's military and security aspirations as the regime has attacked seven countries in the past two years, and occupied new areas in the region in addition to Palestine.

Since the beginning of Israel's war on the Gaza Strip in 2023, the regime has also launched attacks on several regional countries including Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq.

Deputy FM: Iran will reconsider ties with IAEA if new resolution adopted

International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi on Sunday warned the European powers that if they get through their draft resolution against Iran at the UN nuclear watchdog, Iran would make a "fundamental revision" in its interactions with the agency and issues related to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). There are reports that the United States, together with Britain, France, and Germany are gearing up to introduce a resolution against Iran over its "lack of cooperation" with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at an upcoming meeting of the Board of Governors scheduled to take place from November 19 to 21 in Vienna. "These countries, instead of being held accountable for their silence and inaction regarding the US and Israeli attacks on Iran [in June], now want to impose further pressure on Iran," Gharibabadi said, adding the reason was that they failed to achieve what they sought through the snapback mechanism,



Kazem Gharibabadi

● MIZAN

ISNA reported.

He expressed hope that the Western countries would "act rationally" and drop their bid at the IAEA meeting. Meanwhile, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami said on Sunday that the European troika continued "bullying behavior" against Iran and were adamant about taking further "provocative moves" against the country. Eslami said the IAEA, its Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, the Board of Governors, and the UN Security Council failed to condemn US and Israeli strikes on Iran's civilian nuclear facilities during

the June war.

"It is regrettable that the European troika continues the same bullying behavior against Iran and has set provocative moves on the agenda," he added. On June 13, Israel launched an unprovoked war against Iran, killing dozens of high-ranking military commanders and nuclear scientists, as well as hundreds of ordinary civilians. More than a week later, the United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the NPT. Eslami also described the country's nuclear activities as transparent, vowing to continue the same path despite the persisting pressure by the US and Europeans. He emphasized that the IAEA has a clear statute and its mission is to contribute to peaceful nuclear technology. The Iranian nuclear chief noted that Tehran has been fully cooperating with the agency over the past 10 years, and that the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 officially expired on October 18.

Pezeshkian: Armed Forces' capabilities can help gov't tackle shortages



National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that the Armed Forces' capabilities could greatly assist the government to resolve the country's problems and shortages in different sectors. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting of the Strategic Council of the Ministry of Defense in Tehran, according to IRNA. Pezeshkian stressed that the Defense Ministry could play an effective role in synergizing the capacities of various sectors of the country, adding that the ministry's achievements could contribute to the country's development in technical and infrastructural areas. "As Iran's enemies know a military attack

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks in a meeting of the Strategic Council of the Ministry of Defense in Tehran on November 16, 2025.

● president.ir

cannot alone bring the Islamic Republic to its knees, they seek to intensify dissatisfaction in Iran by targeting the country's economy," Pezeshkian said.

However, he also blamed the country's "bulky administrative structure" and its associated costs as among the root causes of budget deficits and mismatch between resources and expenditures.

"We have made every effort in the government to reduce expenses in drafting the next year's budget, prevent imbalances between resources and spending, and improve efficiency," the president pointed out. Pezeshkian underlined that unity and cohesion were the key to saving the country and overcoming difficulties.

"Unfortunately, for 47 years, instead of addressing the root causes, we sought to solve problems by changing individuals. We must begin reform with ourselves, and this is the path we have taken in the fourteenth government," he said.

West targets Iran's ...

But it should be noted that even during the pause in Iran's enrichment activities, the West did not back off from threatening Iran. In fact, with or without enrichment, Western policy toward Iran does not change.

Given that Iran has severely restricted its cooperation with the IAEA, what effect would such a step have on Iran's relations with this international watchdog?

Before answering that, I must stress that Iran has never opposed cooperation with the IAEA, and in fact has accepted more inspections and monitoring than many other member states. What has damaged Iran's cooperation with the agency is the West's misuse of the IAEA as a political tool against Iran. Tehran has consistently shown commitment to international law, and I believe that if enrichment resumes, Iran will try to set out its actions in a way that is technically justifiable and manageable, so they don't become a fresh pretext for propaganda. However, Western politicization of Iran's

nuclear issue is so extreme that even during the period of suspended enrichment, threats, intimidation, and talk of resolutions and war never stopped.

Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh has said that any potential negotiation with the United States would be an "armed negotiation," meaning that Iran has no trust in Washington and is prepared to take effective countermeasures against any deceit. In your view, how likely is such a negotiation to take shape, and to succeed?

The 12-day war erupted just as the Iranian negotiating team was preparing to travel to Oman for the sixth round of Iran-US nuclear talks. US President Donald Trump's admission that Washington ordered and oversaw the attack on Iran showed that the Americans were preparing military action even as they sat at the negotiating table. This is an unforgettable and extremely significant experience. Iran understands that any future talks could again come hand in hand with parallel military threats, so Tehran must preserve its deterrence even as it negotiates.

From Iran's viewpoint, an "armed negotiation" means entering talks while remaining ready to respond decisively in case of deception or breaches, such as the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. Reaching an agreement under such deep mistrust will be difficult, though not impossible, and it requires concrete guarantees. In essence, the US must pay the price for breaking the negotiating table and destroying trust by offering greater concessions and firmer guarantees to Iran.

Considering Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi's remarks about revisiting issues related to the Non-Proliferation Treaty should a resolution be passed against Iran at the upcoming IAEA Board of Governors meeting, could Iran's possible response involve reducing its NPT commitments or withdrawing from the Treaty altogether?

I believe a complete withdrawal from the NPT would be among Iran's very last options. Tehran's response to any resolution passed against Iran would most likely be technical rather than political.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran launches first cloud seeding in water year amid record low precipitation



ISNA

Economy Desk

The head of the Organization for Development and Utilization of Modern Meteoric Water Technologies under the Ministry of Energy announced on Sunday that the first cloud fertiliza-

tion operation in the current water year was carried out in the Urmia Lake basin. Mohammad Mehdi Javadianzadeh was cited by IRNA as saying that the first operation of the cloud seeding project was conducted in the northwest

region of the country and the Urmia Lake basin. "Owing to the entry of a proper rainfall system to the country, the operation was carried out by sending an aircraft equipped with cloud fertilization equipment to the region," he said. "We

are trying to carry out the operation on all systems entering the country that are favorable for fertilization." Regarding the implementation of the project in Tehran Province, Javadianzadeh said, "There has not yet been a proper rainfall system for this operation in Tehran." Javadianzadeh added that, "There is a weak forecast for the arrival of precipitation systems on Monday in Tehran Province, but we are still not sure whether these systems are suitable for cloud seeding or not. However, we are monitoring and checking, and as soon as their suitability is confirmed, the cloud seeding operation will be carried out." In response to the question of how long cloud fertilization would continue, Javadianzadeh said, "This operation will continue until mid-May 2026, both with airplanes and drones, and if appropriate systems for this purpose exist in the country, it will continue until the end of May." The head of Organization for Development and Utilization of Modern Meteoric Water Technologies stressed that cloud seeding in the world has been proven as a cost-effective method for extracting water from meteoric water resources, and its impact on increas-

ing rainfall has been recognized. "Worldwide, cloud seeding is used not only to increase rainfall but also for various purposes such as hail suppression, fog removal, delaying and preventing precipitation, and increasing water behind dams to enhance the capacity of hydroelectric power plants," he added. Javadianzadeh's announcement comes as Iran's water resources have declined by over one-third in two decades, pushing the country into absolute water scarcity by the end of 2025. The renewable water resources have dropped from an average of 128 billion cubic meters annually to about 80 billion cubic meters, exacerbated by climate change, poor water management, and sanctions limiting technology access. Iran's agriculture consumes over 90% of water, mostly inefficiently, leading to severe groundwater depletion and land subsidence in many regions. Dams and reservoirs nationwide are nearly dry, and Tehran faces water rationing and potential evacuation if rains do not come. The country is experiencing its sixth consecutive year of drought, worsening the crisis and posing major risks to food security and social stability.

350 tons of saffron produced per year, 250 tons exported: Deputy minister



IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's deputy minister of agriculture reported on Sunday that 350 tons of saffron are produced across the country per annum, of which 250 tons are exported, with the value of the export estimated to be about 400 million dollars. "The level of saffron cultivation in the country is about 127,000 hectares and harvesting is now underway," Majid Anjafi said, adding, "The bulk of the country's saffron is unfortunately supplied under the brand of other countries, and it is necessary to pursue the export of this product with full added value." Anjafi stated that the value of saffron exports can reach more than \$800 million by improving processes and supporting farmers. Referring to the agricultural restrictions in the drought year, he said, "This year,

the distribution of inputs and fertilizers was carried out two months earlier and has increased by 27 percent." Meanwhile, the chairman of Iran's National Saffron Council (NSC) said the development of saffron exports requires a move towards standard packaging and scientific marketing. "The cultivation of saffron should be done with the national brand and an open operational model should be designed to move from production-oriented to innovative one," Mohsen Ehtsham said. "Paying attention to packaging with global standards and the use of new technologies is the key to the success of farmers and the stabilization of the position of Iranian saffron in the global market." Saffron cultivation in Iran flourishes mainly in the Khorasan Province, the country's and world's primary saffron-producing region, including cities like Torbat Heydariyeh, Gonabad, and Qaenat. Iran produces more than 70% of the global saffron supply due to its optimal climate regions characterized by low rainfall, light, sandy soil, and altitudes between 1000 and 2300 meters. The crop requires little water and is mostly hand-planted. Besides Khorasan, provinces such as Fars, Kerman, and Lorestan also cultivate saffron, benefiting from favorable climatic conditions. Saffron farming demands intense labor, including careful harvesting of the delicate stigmas, making it a valuable yet labor-intensive spice globally.

Veep hails Iran as best transit route for landlocked countries



Economy Desk

First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref praised Iran on Sunday as the best transit route for the landlocked countries across the region. Addressing a meeting of the National Border-to-Border Transit Headquarters in Tehran, Aref underlined that the transit sector for the Islamic Republic of Iran can have economic and trade benefits with the neighboring countries. "Iran is the best transit route for landlocked countries that do not

have access to the high seas," the first vice president said. Aref added that the issue of transit and geographical location of the country has been emphasized at the 7th Five-Year Socioeconomic and Cultural Development Plan. "Transit is effective in developing tourism, cultural, and scientific relations," he said. "Expanding and deepening transit relations is influential in increasing political and regional cooperation." The first vice president called on the responsible officials and organizations to establish very close cooperation and interaction with



First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (c) chairs a meeting of the National Border-to-Border Transit Headquarters in Tehran on November 16, 2025. IRNA

the current administration to optimally boost the status of transit in the country. Developing sustainable and maximal relations with the regional countries and neighbors in all sectors, including transit, is the strategy of President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration, Aref noted.

Iran's message at ...

4- Technology as right of nations
Our emphasis at the Baku conference is that the development of communications is a human right and should not be turned into a tool of pressure, sanctions, or domination. This view is not just a political position but our lived experience for other nations. Technological sanctions over the past years have attempted to limit Iran's industrial, educational, commercial, and

innovative capacities, however, the result has been a leap and independence for domestic power. Today, in line with technological diplomacy, the messages of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the world are that today Iran is an independent country in the field of communications development, has export capacity in the field of cloud networks and digital services, and has a proven indigenous model in the field of

cybersecurity. This message is an inspiring message for the nations and countries of the region and many independent countries.
5- Iran's new technology diplomacy
Nevertheless, technology diplomacy at the Baku WTDC-25 is not the end of a technical mission, rather the beginning of a new chapter and mutual cooperation

with other governments and nations in the fields of cybersecurity, the development of smart networks, the endogenous digital economy, and the digital transformation of countries. This year's event is an opportunity for Iran to consolidate the country's technology diplomacy. We arrived in Baku with a new narrative: The narrative of a country that stood firm in the most difficult cyber war in the region and is ready to share its

experience and be a partner in the development of global communications. Last but not least, this an invitation to all government and private agencies, companies, and institutions active in the country's technology field: Iran's future path is not only the path of domestic development, it is also the path of presence in international arenas and regional and global markets, and the ICT Ministry is set to facilitate this path.

Intersecting narratives of Iran, West

From power politics to ethics, culture

By Asgar Ghahremanpour
Editor-in-chief

INTERVIEW

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam is a professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies at SOAS University of London, where he received his chair as one of the youngest academics in his field. A distinguished scholar and world-renowned public intellectual, Adib-Moghaddam

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam

has held several honorary positions, including as a senior member of Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, where he finished his MPhil and PhD, and the first Jarvis Doctorow Junior Research Fellow at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford. In addition, Adib-Moghaddam is the inaugural co-director of the SOAS Centre for AI Futures.

His newest book, "The Myth of Good AI: A Manifesto for Critical Artificial Intelligence," has just been published, initiating his new book series "AI Futures" published by Manchester University Press. The book challenges dominant narratives about artificial intelligence from a global thought perspective and calls for justice-oriented, globally inclusive approaches to technology.

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, conducted by Asgar Ghahremanpour, editor-in-chief of the English-language newspaper, Arshin Adib-Moghaddam reflects on the narratives constructed about Iran in the West — and conversely, how the West is perceived within Iranian discourse. In this wide-ranging conversation, he critically examines the politicized and often distorted portrayals of Iran in Western media and academia, emphasizing the urgent need to rebuild cultural and intellectual bridges between the two worlds.

As an influential scholar whose works explore nationalism, identity, and power in the Middle East, Adib-Moghaddam discusses the complex intersections of ethics, technology, and politics, highlighting the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence in shaping the future of global cultural narratives.

He argues that if younger generations are allowed to move beyond ideological stereotypes and encounter the lived realities of one another, a more humane and equal dialogue between Iran and the West can emerge. So, this interview offers a timely reflection on what it truly means to speak of "the Iranian narrative" in an interconnected yet deeply divided world.



People and vehicles pass next to a billboard displaying a sinister depiction of the Statue of Liberty, at the Enqelab Square in Tehran, Iran, on November 5, 2025.
MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA

I. West's perception of Iran

IRAN DAILY: To what extent do you believe Western perceptions of Iranian society are grounded in genuine cultural and historical understanding, and to what extent are they shaped by political or security-oriented narratives?

ADIB-MOGHADDAM: I would start by saying that there is no coherent "Western" narrative of Iran. There are representations, some of which are not only distinctly different but also contradictory. The closer one gets to the loci of truth — poets,

artists, intellectuals — the more truthful the depiction of Iran gets. The closer one ventures to power, government in particular but also shady think-tanks tied to ideological agendas, the more tainted the narratives become.

That said, I have also seen individuals tied to the state who have a solid understanding of Iran in all its dimensions, including the former British secretary of state Jack Straw and immensely perceptive journalists with whom I have interacted closely, like Jon

Snow, Lindsey Hilsum, or Mah-Rukh Ali in Norway.

Why is Iran so often represented in Western academic and media discourses primarily through the lenses of threat, revolution, or ideology, rather than as a complex and diverse society with rich cultural dynamics?

Again, I would contend that we have an armada of scholars in Iranian Studies who have spent a lifetime producing stellar scholarship about Iran.

The reason why Iran ap-

pears scattered is exactly because no one has managed to bring the various interpretations of the country into an agonistic dialogue. In fact, this is why Iranian society, inside and outside the homeland, does not harmonise. When a discourse is scattered, the people are scattered.

Which institutions or actors in the West — media, think tanks, security establishments, or intellectual circles — have had the most significant influence in shaping the prevailing

image of Iran?

Certainly, recurrent Republican administrations in the United States have had the upperhand in terms of the Iran-threat narrative. They are intimately tied to a coterie of right-wing Israeli think-tanks such as AIPAC, which have successfully penetrated the corridors of power in Washington, DC. This is all very well documented in the work of colleagues — exactly in the scholarship I already mentioned — for instance, in Hagai Ram's work or the iconic book about the "Israel lobby" written by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt.

In the era of digital globalization and social media, do you think the Western narrative of Iran has evolved beyond the Cold War framework, or does it still reflect older paradigms of otherness and confrontation?

There will always be an "Other" in the Western narrative, or any centred narrative for that matter. This is because the "Western" or "Eastern" self is a relational concept that can only be signified in juxtaposition to the binary other.

In the Persian-Muslim intellectual tradition, certainly in the philosophy of Farabi and Ibn-Sina and the poetry of Khayyam, Saadi, and Rumi, we have access to a long epistemology of humanistic, Renaissance thinking that transcends binaries. This is an incredibly potent intellectual reservoir to combat cultural and social dichotomies, and it has remained largely untapped for a positively inclusive politics of culture.



The illustration depicts some of the contemporary Republicans who have a hawkish stance on Iran.
THE NEW REPUBLIC



There is no coherent "Western" narrative of Iran. There are representations, some of which are not only distinctly different but also contradictory. The closer one gets to the loci of truth — poets, artists, intellectuals — the more truthful the depiction of Iran gets. The closer one ventures to power, government in particular but also shady think-tanks tied to ideological agendas, the more tainted the narratives become.

II. Iranian perception of West

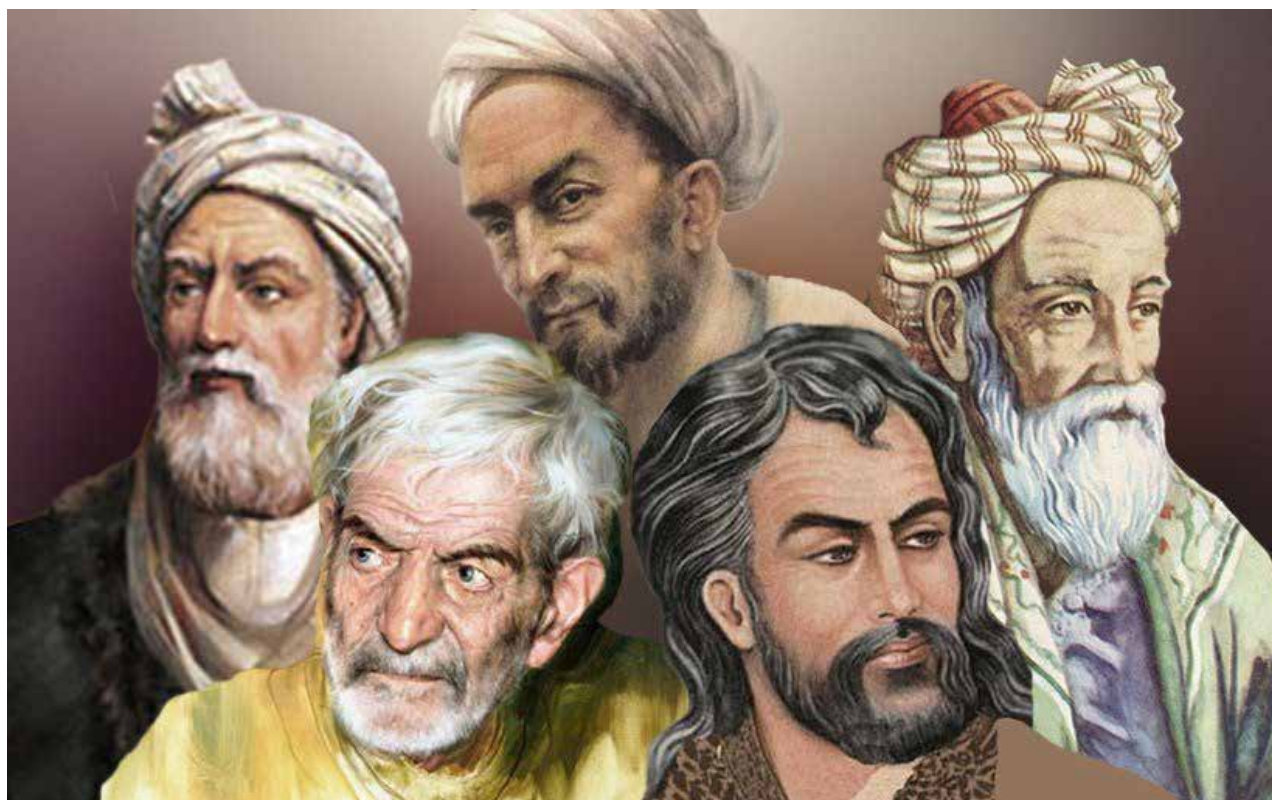
Within Iranian discourse, there are multiple and often competing narratives about “the West”. Which of these narratives, in your view, comes closest to a balanced and realistic understanding?

The way you frame this important question already gives us the answer: The representation of Iran in the homeland has had political value.

So, again, our embattled subject matter — mighty Persia — escapes the narrow frame enforced upon it to contain the ability of the people to see the world beyond the artificial fog. By the way, this is why in Iran, many members of the newer generation believe that the “West” is a Disneyland theme park where everyone is content and happy, an image transmitted by social media channels and satellite TV stations, which has nothing to do with the reality of so-called Western societies. A better understanding of the world and the so-called “West” as a part of it can only emerge out of free Social Sciences and Humanities, a free media, indeed, out of the freedom to see without restrictions. At that stage, the master-narrative of Iran would be presented by Iranians within the country itself.

Does contemporary Iranian society still perceive the West primarily as a model of progress, or more as a cultural and moral challenge?

The reality is that Iran itself is a part of the “Occident” and that Iran has been a central factor in the imagination of the “West” at least since Herodotus. The former theme



The illustration includes portraits of some of the most famous Iranian poets, namely, Saadi (top-L), Omar Khayyam (top-R), Ferdowsi (bottom-L), Hafiz (bottom-R), and Mohammad-Hossein Shahrir (bottom-L).
● profarsi.com

has been touched upon by Soroush, Zibakalam, and others. However, identity constructions must be analysed dialectically as it is not enough to point to Iran's profound Western heritage, but the Persian imprint on the “West” as well. Persia has been a constitutive factor in the making of the Western “self”. The new movements in disciplines such as Global History and Global Thought hint at these universal linkages between the peoples of the world, and they have managed

to write better History that emphasises connections rather than dichotomies. This is a movement that can be easily tied into the Persian poets and philosophers' worldview, as indicated — and we are doing this. This approach is central to my book “What is Iran?”, too.

In the age of social media and global interconnectivity, how do younger generations of Iranians engage with Western societies? Could they become a bridge toward greater

mutual understanding?

Undoubtedly, if the new generation is allowed to encounter the realities of the so-called “West” beyond the propaganda, then the bridges can be rebuilt. Now, largely due to the thrown over the “West” within Iran itself, this “othered” and, therefore, untrue version has incited Iranians to find out what lies beneath that tabooed version. Ironically, the “West” appears as even more appealing than it would be if the realities were

known without propaganda. Therefore, when people are bridging that gap between representation and the reality of living in the “West,” they rarely look back to the homeland with constructive engagement. In these cases, this gigantic inheritance that we have — Persia — is reduced to a tourist destination to visit family and friends with no real cultural and social benefits for the country, which could be so incredibly immense given the prowess of Iranians all over the world. Cultural bridges need an intricate architecture to hold the heavy presence of the Iranian narrative.



The “West” still appears as an idealised utopia for many. On the other side of the untruth spectrum, the “West” is perceived as the incarnation of evil. The nuanced voices that do exist, as well, are largely silenced within this shouting contest between the pro-Western factions and the anti-Western ones. The reality is that Iran itself is a part of the “Occident” and that Iran has been a central factor in the imagination of the “West” at least since Herodotus.

III. Politics, society, and power

In your theoretical perspective, how distinct are politics and society in international relations? Ultimately, who holds the power to reshape perceptions — political institutions or the people themselves? In an increasingly interconnected global public sphere, is humanity moving toward emancipation from state-controlled narratives, or do governments still dominate the discourse?

This speaks to the age-old structure-agency dilemma.



People of different ages hold up pairs of meels in a zoorkhaneh (a gymnasium in which the Persian traditional sport is practiced) in Iran.
● KASRA YAZDAN/HIPERSIA

Are we mere subjects of political and economic systems, or do we have agency? Can

we enact our freedom as individuals? The truth lies somewhere in between as

structure and agency are always in a dialectical relationship. We are shaped and

shape systems. It lies within the responsibility of everyone to maximise his/her freedom to act beyond the systemic status quo.

Training the mind and the body as the Persian knights would do in the zoorkhaneh would be one prophylaxis against being absorbed and subordinated by unjust systems. It is an everyday enterprise to train yourself to think and act freely within society, and it is the precursor for everything that we associate with being human — from spirituality to political justice.

IV. Ethics, technology, and future

You have emphasized in your writings the importance of ethics and normative responsibility in international politics. Can ethical reasoning realistically counter-balance the logic of power politics? In light of your recent reflections on artificial intelligence and racialized knowledge systems, do you believe AI technologies risk reproducing and amplifying cultural or racial stereotypes — including those about societies like Iran? How can cultural diplomacy and academic exchange contribute to rebuilding a more accurate and humane image of Iran in Western public opinion?

The age of Artificial Intelligence is already reshaping everything. Very soon, we will

be faced by an AI god that can be drawn into our everyday life via an app. Large Language Models (LLMs) are already functioning as everyday guidance for many individuals, much in the same way as priests, psychologists, and mentors have done. In my recent research, I have looked into this deus ex machina that transhumanist enthusiasts already worship. These AI Gods are reshaping the meaning of ethics, morality, and the very definition of what it means to be human in the first place. Given the fact that the boundaries of our cognitive faculties are being breached by companies such as Elon Musk's Neuralink, (trans)humans will soon be able to communicate with this AI God via a microchip implanted in their heads. There

won't be any hocus pocus anymore. Deus ex machina is not remote. This AI God is literally present in the frontal lobe. Since the beginning of time, humans have wanted a God that is immediately available. Deus ex machina is not only available; via the human-machine microchip, it would be implanted in us.

To my mind, questions of cultural diplomacy and academic exchanges must be analysed within this fundamentally altering landscape for humanity, alerting decision-makers to the urgency of the task. Every Iranian university, cultural institution, NGO, etc., would be well advised to establish an AI outreach unit to liaise and connect with like-minded community AI projects all

over the world. In concrete terms, this could translate into virtual research labs, training AI systems that are based on cultural inclusivity, dialogue, and peace — a Hafiz or Rumi AI of some sort. Where there is power, there is always resistance. What we need in this age of artificial intelligence is a civilian, community-based resistance strategy that leverages the vast opportunities that AI offers, whilst containing the harm that it may cause, at the same time.

As ever, it is all about nuance. I am in no doubt that this battle for an Iranian presence in this AI age will determine the future of the country — and, indeed, the viability of the Iranian narrative in human history.



Riyadh 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games: Triumphant teens inspire Iran to triple taekwondo medals



● Sayna Karimi celebrates with the Iranian flag after winning the -46kg gold in the taekwondo event of the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 15, 2025.
● VARZESH3



● Iran's Hasti Mohammadi (L) is seen in action during her victory over Uzbekistan's Madina Mirabzalova in the -57kg bronze bout in the taekwondo event of the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 15, 2025.
● VARZESH3

Sports Desk

Teenage girls Sayna Karimi and Hasti Mohammadi made their senior international breakthrough in style as Iran collected three medals on the opening day of the taekwondo event at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh on Saturday. While Mohammadi recovered from a last-eight setback to secure an impressive bronze in the -57kg class, Karimi stunned taekwondo fans at the Malaz Combat Hall by going all the way to capture the ultimate prize in the -46kg category.

Ali Khoshravesh gave Iran something to cheer about in the men's competition, earning a consolation bronze in the -74kg event. Karimi defeated Azerbaijan's Minaya Akbarova in back-to-back rounds (2-1, 7-6) in the final to cap off her emphatic run in Riyadh, during which the 19-year-old Iranian did not concede a single round across four bouts. The pinnacle of Karimi's campaign came in the quarterfinals, where the Iranian prodigy emerged victorious (4-1, 9-5) against Türkiye's Emine Gögebakan, who stepped onto the mat

fresh off a gold medal at October's World Championships in Wuxi, China. "I faced tough, well-prepared opponents today, but my goal was always to win the gold here. My preparation for the event was key, and by sticking to the coach's gameplan, I secured this precious medal," said Karimi, who dedicated her gold to Iranian head coach Mahrouz Saei. "This was my first appearance at an event of this magnitude, which fortunately ended with a gold medal. I will certainly continue on my path with even more deter-

mination, hard work, and focus, aiming to achieve even greater successes," added the Iranian. Earlier in the day, Mohammadi – also 19 – put in a brave performance against her high-profile Turkish opponent Hatice K. İlgün in the quarterfinals but was unfortunate to lose 2-1 (15-2, 5-7, 6-3) to the former Olympic bronze medalist. Mohammadi then came from behind to beat Uzbekistan's Madina Mirabzalova (1-9, 11-5, 17-2) in the third-place bout. "My Turkish opponent has won several world and Olympic medals. She is also about 12 years

older than me and was already in the sport when I was born. I gave away the bout in the closing seconds of the third round, and she capitalized on her experience to beat me," Mohammadi said, before throwing down the gauntlet to İlgün, adding: "There will be time to make amends for today's setback, as we will meet again in future tournaments." Khosravesh, meanwhile, bounced back from a 2-1 (11-1, 4-5, 8-6) defeat against reigning world champion Najmiddin Kosimkhoev of Uzbekistan in the quarterfinals to beat Azerbaijan's former world

and European bronze medallist Javad Aghayev in straight rounds (4-1, 10-0) to claim the joint-bronze medal. Amirmohammad Nasirahmadi was the Iranian in the men's action on Saturday, but finished his -54kg campaign empty-handed after successive defeats against the host's Abdullah Almushraf and Turkish Deniz Dağdelen. Saturday's success saw Iran rise to third in the medals table by the end of the eighth day of the Games, level on 11 golds and 12 silvers with fourth-placed Kazakhstan.

25th Summer Deaflympics: Salahshour gets Iran off the mark with judo bronze



● Iranian judoka Ali Salahshour (blue) is seen in action against Japan's Masaki Sato in the -66kg bronze-medal bout at the Summer Deaflympics in Tokyo, Japan, on November 16, 2025.
● MNA

Sports Desk

Ali Salahshour bagged Iran's first medal at the 2025 Summer Deaflympics in Tokyo, securing a judo bronze on the second day of the multi-sport event. Representing the country in the men's -66kg class, Salahshour began his campaign with a victory over Turkish judoka Mehmet Emin Budak and then emerged victorious against South Korean Lee Juho to progress to the

semifinals. Salahshour suffered a last-four setback to Algeria's Abderrahmane Bouhidel but recovered to defeat the host's Masaki Sato for a consolation bronze medal. Amirmohammad Daftari (-73kg) and 17-year-old Ali Sheikh (-60kg) were the other Iranian judokas in the men's action on Sunday but finished outside the medals following third-place defeats in their respective weight classes. Iran is represented by 83

athletes – including 19 female contestants – competing in football, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling, athletics, karate, taekwondo, shooting, judo, bowling, badminton, table tennis, swimming, and beach volleyball at the 25th edition of the Summer Deaflympics. Iran achieved its best finish in the medals table at the previous edition in Caxias do Sul, Brazil, coming fourth with 14 golds, 12 silvers, and 14 bronzes.

Late drama sinks 10-man Iran U23 against Kyrgyzstan at Manas Cup

Sports Desk

The Iranian under-23 side conceded twice deep into stoppage time to suffer a 2-1 defeat against Kyrgyzstan at the Manas Cup football tournament in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, on Saturday. Iran went ahead in the 58th minute thanks to Mahdi Jafari's sublime finish from the edge of the box, but was reduced to 10 men when substitute Mohammad-Javad Hosseini was sent off for a harsh challenge with 14 minutes remaining. Backed by the home support, Kyrgyzstan capitalized on the one-man advantage and found the equalizer through Marlen Murzakhmatov in the first



● FFIRI

minute of added time. The home side completed the comeback in the 98th minute, thanks to Iranian goalkeeper Mohammad Khalifeh's howler, as he failed to deal with Said Datsiev's tame effort from distance, with the ball slip-

ping through his hands and finding the back of the net. This was the second consecutive defeat for Omid Ravankhah's side at the four-team tournament, following a 2-0 setback against Russia on the opening day. Iran will take on Bahrain in

its final outing at the event on Tuesday. The tournament is part of Iran's preparation for the 2026 AFC U23 Asian Cup, which will start on January 6 in Saudi Arabia. On his debut on Iran's bench, Ravankhah guided his team to an impressive first-place finish in Group I of the Asian Cup qualifiers in September, thanks to a clean sweep of three victories against Hong Kong (4-0), Guam (6-0), and the United Arab Emirates (3-2) in Abu Dhabi. Iran has been drawn in Group C of the finals alongside Uzbekistan – last year's runner-up – 2020 champion South Korea, and Lebanon.

Iran learns fate at Women's Kabaddi World Cup

Sports Desk



● TASNIM

Iran has been pitted against Chinese Taipei, Nepal, Poland, and Kenya in Group B of the Women's Kabaddi World Cup, which starts today in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The host country will be joined by India, Thailand, Uganda, and Germany in Group A of the 11-team tournament. The top two teams from each group advance to the semifinals, with the final showpiece scheduled for November 24

at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur. This will be the second edition of the Women's Kabaddi World Cup as the tournament returns after 13 years. India defeated Iran in the final to win the inaugural edition at home, after 16 teams battled it out for the title. While India and Iran are the traditional powerhouses in kabaddi, Chinese Taipei created waves at the Asian Games in 2023 as it almost upset India for in the final.

Saqqez joins Historical Cities Network of Iran

Iranica Desk

The historic city of Saqqez in Kurdistan Province has officially joined the Historical Cities Network of Iran, following a vote by members at the second session of the assembly held in Yazd. During the session, the city’s mayor submitted a formal request for membership, which was approved after careful review of Saqqez’s historical background, cultural values, and urban management programs. As one of the oldest settlements in northwestern Iran, Saqqez has now secured its place within the network of the country’s historical cities. This milestone is considered an important step toward safeguarding the city’s cultural heritage, promoting its tourism potential, and reviving its historical identity, chtn.ir wrote. The city’s Mayor Arastu Gavili emphasized the importance of understanding the identity and historical spirit of cities, stating, “As mayors, we must recognize the soul of our cities. Saqqez is one of Iran’s oldest cities, with roots stretching from the Bronze Age through the Safavid and Qajar eras. This long historical span increases our responsibility to protect cultural heritage and implement principled tourism planning.”



Ziwiyeh archeological site
● kojara.com

Referring to the ancient Ziwiyeh site, he added, “This area is not merely an archeological site; it is part of the collective memory and cultural identity of the local people. It is one of the most significant symbols of the Mannean civilization and one of Kurdistan’s most valuable historical assets.” He noted that with proper scientific and administrative attention, the site could play a key role in showcasing the history of northwestern Iran.

He also outlined urban management plans to leverage Saqqez’s membership in the National Network of Historical Cities, stating, “The main goal of the municipality is to provide the necessary infrastructure for investment, encourage public participation, and utilize support from cultural institutions. With a comprehensive plan, the city’s 46-hectare historical district will become the vibrant heart of urban tourism

and the local economy.” Gavili emphasized that protecting historic neighborhoods not only preserves the city’s identity but also fosters economic growth, creates jobs, improves quality of life, and attracts domestic and international tourists. Saqqez, the second-largest city in Kurdistan Province, is home to more than 125 nationally registered historical sites, making it one of the region’s key centers of cultural heritage.

Joining the network allows Saqqez to plan more strategically, benefit from shared experiences of other member cities, expand professional collaborations, and receive national support for heritage conservation. Cultural heritage experts believe that Saqqez’s inclusion in this national network could drive significant developments in historic district restoration, promotion of cultural assets, sustainable tourism, and identity-based urban management.

The formal accession of Saqqez to Historical Cities Network of Iran represents a major step toward identity-building, scientific urban planning, and sustainable development in a city with millennia of history, valuable archaeological sites, and a unique historical fabric. This achievement is expected to pave the way for greater recognition of the region’s rich history and culture.



Saqqez
● wikipedia.org

Restoration of Qeysarieh historical bazaar in Larestan nears completion



Iranica Desk

The head of Larestan’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Fars Province announced that the majority of restoration work on the city’s historic Qeysarieh Bazaar has been completed, describing the project as one of the most significant initiatives for reviving Larestan’s historic fabric. Mohammad-Ebrahim Kian stated that the project aims to safeguard the historical identity of Larestan while enhancing the city’s tourism attractions. “In this phase, the damaged sections — including the Chaharsouqs (intersecting corridors), gutters, and the main structural body — have been fully restored. All work has been carried out under the direct supervision of heritage experts to preserve the architectural authenticity of the bazaar,” he said. He added that, given the favorable progress, this phase of the project is expected to be completed soon. Following this,

phasized that revitalizing such spaces plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism and attracting both domestic and international visitors. Underlining the importance of inter-agency cooperation, Kian stressed that continued collaboration between government bodies, the municipality, and the Urban Regeneration Corporation of Iran is essential for protecting Larestan’s valuable heritage and sustaining the restoration and development of the city’s historic fabric. Larestan, located in southern Fars Province with the city of



● hamsafarshim.ir

restoration of the remaining sections and rehabilitation of the surrounding façades will be undertaken. Kian also highlighted the historical and social significance of Qeysarieh Bazaar, noting that it has long been one of the most prominent elements of Larestan’s historic core, historically serving as a central hub for social interactions and economic activities. He em-

Lar as its administrative center, is bordered by Hormozgan Province to the south and east, Lamerd to the southwest, Khonj to the west, and Jahrom and Darab to the north. Renowned for its unique historical background, Larestan was historically referred to as the “State of Larestan,” a vast region encompassing cities such as Bandar-e Gambroon, Bandar Lengeh and Bastak.

Transforming Kandolus Museum into cultural hub



● toptourist.ir



● MEHR

Iranica Desk

Deep in the lush mountains of Mazandaran Province lies Kandolus village, a hidden gem where history and culture are etched into every stone and pathway. While it may appear as just another quiet northern settlement, Kandolus is home to a remarkable landmark: the Kandolus Museum, the first private rural museum in the Middle East and one of Iran’s most significant cultural destinations. The museum is the vision of Ali-Asghar Jahangiri, who conceived the project in 1981 and dedicated eight years to its creation. Driven by his lifelong love for the culture and art of his birthplace, Jahangiri gathered an extraordinary collection of historical, artistic, and cultural artifacts. Today, the museum houses over 8,000 items, from farming tools and traditional pottery to rare artworks and ancient relics, according to Mehr News Agency. Ali Kermani, the museum’s director, explained, “Jahangiri wanted to create a space where the cultural heritage of Kandolus and Mazandaran Province could be preserved and celebrated.” The

museum’s construction was a community effort, with local villagers helping transport more than six million stones from the foot of the mountain to the museum site. Visitors entering the Kandolus Museum encounter ten exhibition halls, each offering a glimpse into the lives, crafts, and history of the region. Highlights include a collection of locks dating back over 3,000 years, nearly 4,000-year-old alchemy instruments, and Elamite statues spanning 500 to 5,000 years. The museum also showcases Jahangiri’s paintings alongside works by regional artists, as well as over 8,000 poems penned by Jahangiri, many from his childhood. A photography hall captures daily life in the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods, offering a vivid portrait of local history. The museum’s strong connection to the community is reflected in the contributions of villagers, who donated many artifacts and actively participated in its construction. Over time, the Kandolus Museum has become a key cultural tourism destination. Visitors experience not only the region’s history and art but also the beauty of rural

life and Mazandaran’s pristine landscapes. The museum has revitalized local handicrafts, eco-tourism, and the village economy, demonstrating how culture can drive sustainable development. Beyond its exhibitions, the museum serves as a research center, supporting studies in anthropology, art, linguistics, and regional history. Jahangiri views it as a project to revive rural cultural memory, showing that even small villages can foster creativity and innovation. Despite challenges such as limited funding and the need for restoration, the Kandolus Museum continues to expand its reach, with plans to digitize collections and enhance research and tourism facilities. The Cultural Heritage Organization of Mazandaran Province has endorsed the museum as a model for other rural private museums across Iran. Today, Kandolus Museum stands as a symbol of passion, perseverance, and community engagement, proving that cultural heritage can thrive even in the most remote villages — linking future generations to the art, history, and soul of their ancestors.



Pezeshkian says books offer Iran's 'way out' of present challenges

Arts & Culture Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian told a national book day ceremony in Tehran on November 15 that books remain Iran's "way out of problems", warning that societies fall behind when they abandon reading and the lessons of history. Speaking at Tehran's Vahdat Hall during the annual event marking Iran's National Book, Book Reading and Librarian Day, the president called books the "key to survival" in a fast-moving world, president.ir reported. He said Iran's present difficulties stem in part from ignoring the written record. "In times crowded with challenges, it is the book that carries the solution within," he said. A society that stops reading, he added, risks drifting away from global progress. Understanding earlier currents, he said, prevents error. "If we had kept the experience of those before us in front of our eyes, we would not face so many imbalances today," he noted, arguing that Iran has paid the price for overlooking its historical archive.

He warned that neglecting the environment and national resources carries its own repercussion. Nature "sends back trouble" when it is mistreated, he said, stressing that nations suffer when they fail to grasp the worth of their land, water or young population. Reading, he said, teaches how to confront such issues with precision rather than impulse. Turning to institutional reform, Pezeshkian said every public body needs a functioning evaluation system to keep pace with rapid global change. A "living organization", he said, is one that keeps learning. Translation of the best available sources and training staff continuously are essential for restoring efficiency and raising standards across government. He said librarians play a central role in guiding people toward the right material at the right stage of development, given the sheer volume of global publications. Public agencies, he argued, should maintain curated collections relevant to their missions and offer them to staff throughout their careers. Continuous reading, he said,



President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses the audience during a national book day ceremony at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on November 15, 2025.
● president.ir

nurtures a dynamic workforce. "There is no place where we can say we have arrived," he said, urging institutions to embed lifelong learning. The president conceded that Iran's current position "is not worthy of our people", but insisted the route upward still begins with reading. Books, he said, "can push us towards higher ground". He told librarians and publishers that their efforts leave a "lasting mark", while the government intends to draw up policies to strengthen organizational learning and improve the quality of publications used within ministries. Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi, addressing the same audience, warned that non-academic reading in Iran has fallen sharply over two decades. Surveys, he said, show a long decline in voluntary reading, driv-



en by social pressures and the shift to visual media. The trend, he cautioned, is "a fundamental warning" for society. He called for a tighter link between schools and libraries, arguing that a thinking, skills-based school system needs

reading teachers and reading cultures. "Civilization is built in books," he said. Secretary General of Iran's Public Libraries Institution Azadeh Nazarboland said the nationwide library network, with thousands of service points and

staff, can underpin a modern learning society if managed with clear, targeted policies. She said new approaches centered on diversity and access are being developed to bring libraries closer to communities, schools and universities.

45 cine works from nearly 40 countries to feature at Fajr Int'l Film Festival in Shiraz



Arts & Culture Desk

The Fajr International Film Festival will open in the southwestern city of Shiraz on November 26 after a four-year break, bringing 45 films from 30-40 countries and nearly 200 industry guests to its new host city, festival secretary Rouhollah Hosseini said on Saturday. Unveiling the poster of the 43rd edition at a ceremony beside Sa'adi's mausoleum, Hosseini said the organizing team had "pushed hard" to run this year's event to full international standards, stressing that quality and subject matter remained the festival's central criteria, IRNA reported. He called cinema the modern heir to Iran's classical literary tradition, saying Shiraz had long

"fed poetry and enriched cinema". Nine Iranian titles made the final cut, with the rest drawn from overseas submissions. Hosseini confirmed that delegations from 30 to 40 countries were due in Shiraz, adding that two Iranian women directors feature among the participants. The festival will also convene specialized workshops led by foreign instructors, including sessions on poetic cinema, the thematic thread of this year's program. The event marks the first time the international strand of Fajr is held in Shiraz. Hosseini said provincial and national funding streams had been coordinated and pledged full transparency over support from Tehran. The key question, he noted, was whether Shiraz could shoulder an undertaking of this scale. "Everyone must pull together so this festival stays in Shiraz," he said, calling the inaugural year "crucial". Local officials argue the city is ready. Mehdi Ranjbar, head of the Culture and Islamic Guidance Department in Fars Province, pointed to new, state-of-the-art theaters and said no other Iranian city was better suited to host a festival whose main competition centers on poetic cinema. The 43rd Fajr International Film Festival will run from November 26 to December 3, across venues in Shiraz.

Iran wins UNESCO backing for heritage network, cognitive sciences chair

Arts & Culture Desk

UNESCO signed off on two major Iranian proposals that will plug the country into global research circuits in architectural conservation and cognitive science, Iran's National Commission for UNESCO said on Sunday. The Paris-based agency cleared the launch of the first UNITWIN network devoted to structural restoration and architectural heritage risk management at the University of Isfahan, and approved a new UNESCO Chair in cognitive sciences at the Tehran-based Institute for Cognitive Science Studies, IRNA reported. The UNITWIN program brings Iran for the first time into UNESCO's interuniversity architecture network. The Isfahan hub will be led by engineering scholar Mehrdad Hejazi, with Krakow's AGH University of Science and Technology named as principal partner.



The consortium spans 11 countries in Asia, Africa, South America and Europe and includes ten universities, two intergovernmental bodies and one state organization. The network was set up to deal with immediate threats to historic sites exposed to earthquakes, floods, storms and rapid climate shifts. Such hazards, Hejazi said, have already put the "structural integrity" of numerous cultural assets at risk. The platform will blend restoration strategies with crisis management and will follow

principles of sustainability and transparency. It will also hold international conferences, publish research and run specialist workshops for conservation teams. Institutions from South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Japan, Italy, Spain, Chile and North Macedonia will contribute to joint field studies and training programs. Iranian officials say African participation is central because the plan matches UNESCO's long-standing commitment to development partnerships with the

continent. UNESCO has also endorsed a new chair titled Cognitive Sciences for Education, Innovation and Human Technology Interaction. It will be hosted by the Institute for Cognitive Science Studies and headed by Hafez Hajikarim Jabari. The institute, founded in 1997, has become a leading center for interdisciplinary work across neuroscience, artificial intelligence, psychology, linguistics and clinical applications. The chair aims to expand research on human and animal cognition, train specialists and push new cognitive technologies into mental health and industrial use. The program will work with hospitals, universities and industry to turn laboratory results into practical tools. The institute called the approval a step towards positioning cognitive science as a "driving force" for future technologies and improved wellbeing.

Iran's 'Mitosis' awarded at Karachi culture festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's short film 'Mitosis', directed by Raha Haji Zeinal, clinched an honorable mention for best film at the World Culture Festival Karachi in southern Pakistan, the event's organizers said on Sunday. The festival, now in its second year, has grown into Pakistan's largest cultural showcase. More than 1,000 artists from 140 countries converged on Karachi for a week of screenings, stage performances and exhi-

bitions spanning cinema, theatre, photography and visual arts, ILNA reported. 'Mitosis', written by Ali Safari and produced by Anahita Mogouei and Soran Karimi, has been making the rounds on the international circuit. It recently screened at the Norwich Film Festival in eastern England and at the Palooza Film Festival in Colombia. Iranian actors Mehdi Aboohamzeh and Farid Zangi lead the cast in the short film, which depicts, in the director's words, the "split-second choices" that reshape a life.

