

Araghchi: Iran ready for 'fair deal' on nuclear issue but rejects diktats

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From **Yalda** to **Nowruz**

Cultural diplomacy takes center stage in Tehran



● BORNA

1 **By Delaram Ahmadi**
Staff writer

The second night of events under the Sixth International Nowruz Diplomacy Conference was held Saturday at Sanglaj Hall in Tehran—the capital's oldest theater—coinciding with Iran's national celebration of Yalda, or Shab-e Chelleh, the longest night of the year. The evening featured the presentation of the Nowruz Plaque to a group of selected individuals in recognition of their contributions to cultural dialogue and social solidarity.

The Nowruz Plaque was created to provide a platform where elites from countries within the Nowruz civilizational sphere can exchange ideas, experiences, and narratives based on shared cultural, historical, and human commonalities. At the same time, the initiative is designed to open channels of dialogue with cultural figures from other parts of the world.

The symbol of the plaque is the "Nowruz Swallow," a bird that, in the cultures and beliefs of Nowruz-celebrating societies, carries messages of love, kindness, and empathy.

Abed Akbari, founder of the Nowruz Plaque, told Iran Daily that the idea emerged as a way to give these cultural dialogues a more engaging and sustained form. "We proposed the initiative to honor cultural and social activists in the Nowruz civilizational sphere who work to strengthen empathy among nations," he said. "We even went further, deciding to present this plaque to anyone, anywhere in the world, who contributes to solidarity among peoples."

Over the past five editions, the Nowruz Plaque has been awarded to prominent figures from more than 30 countries—individuals active in culture, art, thought, research, media, and social activism who have played meaningful roles in promoting dialogue, cultural peace, and closer ties among nations.

This year's sixth edition, however, took on a different format in light of the 12-day military conflict the country experienced in June and the challenges that followed. Organizers proposed holding the program as a series of events under the title "From Yalda to Nowruz." Akbari said the sixth edition places stronger emphasis than ever on the idea that culture is the shared language of nations and that cultural elites are its borderless ambassadors. "In this journey, the Nowruz Swallow is a messenger of a love that knows no borders and an empathy that can make the world, even if slightly, more humane," he said. He added that the secretariat has launched this new chapter with the hope that the message of Nowruz, like the swallow, will travel from heart to heart and open new horizons of dialogue and coexistence.

The first meeting in the series brought together scholars of culture and cultural studies to discuss the economics of festivals held across the Nowruz civilizational sphere, a subject that has received little scholarly attention.

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Araghchi: Iran ready for 'fair deal' on nuclear issue but rejects diktats



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks during an interview with Russia Today's Worlds Apart program published on December 21, 2025.

● IRNA

resolved following US-Israeli aggression against Iran in June when Tehran was in the midst of nuclear talks with Washington.

Israel carried out an unprovoked aggression against Iran on June 13, targeting several locations across Iran, including nuclear and military sites, killing senior commanders, nuclear scientists and civilians. On June 22, the US also joined the aggression and bombed three Iranian nuclear facilities – Natanz, Fordow and Isfahan.

"It was an unprovoked and illegal attack, and then the United States joined," Araghchi said. "So, it was very strange that in the middle of negotiations they decided to attack us. That became a very bad experience for us."

Despite the attacks, Iran announced its readiness for diplomatic engagement to resolve the standoff, but only based on respect and without pressure or threats.

Responding to a question about whether the current US administration can take an

approach consistent with Iranian policy, Araghchi said, "It depends if they come to the conclusion that negotiation is different from dictation. We are already ready for a fair and balanced deal, a negotiated deal, but we are not prepared for diktats."

Taking a question about Washington's demand for zero-uranium enrichment in Iran, Araghchi said under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), member states have the right to the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

"When you deprive a country of this clear right, you are in fact weakening the entire NPT," he said.

Araghchi emphasized that Iran upholds the right to the peaceful use of nuclear technology despite the fact that its nuclear facilities were damaged "seriously" in the June attacks. "We cannot give our right up, but at the same time, we are prepared to give full confidence that our program is peaceful and would remain peaceful forever," he said, noting that the United States should recognize Iran's right to enrich uranium.

On the possibility of a new war, Araghchi said Iran does not rule out another conflict but is fully prepared for it, even more prepared than during the June war, which he called a "failed experience."

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the Islamic Republic is ready for a "fair and

balanced" deal over its peaceful nuclear program, stressing, however, that he has not been in contact with US mediator in nuclear talks Steve Witkoff for

months. The Iranian foreign minister made the remarks in an exclusive interview with Russia Today's Worlds Apart program,

conducted during his trip to Moscow last week.

The interview focused on tensions over Iran's nuclear program, which remains un-

Israeli threats, media hype aim to mask 12-day war defeat against Iran: Vahidi

International Desk

Deputy Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi said on Saturday that Israel is resorting to threats, political maneuvers, and media campaigns to cover up its defeat in the June's aggression against Iran.

Vahidi made the remarks in an interview with Lebanon's Al-Mayadeen television after NBC News reported that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will present plans for a possible fresh assault against Iran to US President Donald Trump during an upcoming meeting in Florida.

Vahidi said Israel is using psycho-

logical warfare in a bid to distort reality after it failed to achieve any of its objectives in its 12-day war against Iran.

Israel is engaged in desperate attempts to survive amid growing isolation, as well as serious internal and strategic problems, while Iran continues to closely monitor regional and international developments. Vahidi, a veteran commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), further noted that Israeli statements and propaganda efforts are unlikely to produce results.

Between June 13 and 24, Israel waged its act of aggression against Iran, killing at least 1,064 people and targeting the country's civilian

infrastructure.

On June 22, the United States also joined Israel and bombed three Iranian nuclear sites. Two days later, the Islamic Republic managed to impose a halt to the criminal aggression through its successful retaliatory strikes.

Earlier this month, Israel's military intelligence directorate head Maj. Gen. Shlomi Binder reportedly admitted that Iran's ballistic missile program suffered less damage in the war than initially thought.

Iran has warned that any miscalculation or new act of aggression by the enemies against the country will be met with a deadly and firm response.



Ahmad Vahidi
● DEFA PRESS



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran, China enjoy significant potential to advance multilateralism: Envoy



Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli
● IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Ambassador to China Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli said Iran and China, as two independent Global South actors, hold significant potential for building up multilateralism within emerging institutions.

In an article published in China's People's daily, the Iranian ambassador said today's world is facing a deepening dearth of peace, development and governance. "In such a situation, the crisis of legiti-

macy and efficacy of the existing world order has not only limited the possibility of building global consensus but has also strengthened strategies which are based on containment and polarization, which have increased the costs of cooperation." Rahmani-Fazli said that in response to such conditions, the prominence of alternative models of pragmatic, multi-layered cooperation takes on strategic importance.

"In such an environment, close cooperation among Global South countries and other nations that emphasize the principles of mutual respect, independence, and shared development becomes increasingly important to put forward a genuine model for pragmatic, win-win cooperation," he said.

"Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization from 2023 has set up a new platform for cooperation in the areas of security, regional connectiv-

ity, and standing up to unilateral coercive measures. Furthermore, Iran's membership in BRICS from January 2024 has opened up a fresh opportunity for active participation in reforming the global economic governance structure and building up South-South cooperation."

In addition, the four global initiatives on governance, development, security, and civilization have also laid down a practical foundation for expanding strategic cooperation among all independent nations and have created the possibility for coming together on key issues, he concluded.

Referring to a recent trilateral meeting between Iran, China and Saudi Arabia in Tehran, Rahmani-Fazli described the meeting as a symbol of the practical realization of the Global Security Initiative. On December 9, Iran, China, and Saudi Arabia held the third meeting of their Joint Committee in Tehran.

NIPC unveils export incentives for petchem plants capturing flare gas

Economy Desk

The National Iranian Petrochemical Company (NIPC), in coordination with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), will provide export incentives to petrochemical plants that capture flare gases and convert them into exportable products, a senior Oil Ministry official said Sunday.

“We have spoken with the Central Bank so that export incentives are allocated, with the participation of the Central Bank, for petrochemical plants that produce products by collecting flare gases and export them,” NIPC chief Hassan Abbaszadeh was quoted as saying by Tasnim.

“The collection of flare gases is a serious priority for the petrochemical industry. Currently, 1,500 million cubic feet per day of flare gas is being captured by the industry,” he added.

The deputy oil minister elaborated, “About 1,500 million cu-

bic feet per day of flare gas is being collected through large-scale projects in Khuzestan and neighboring provinces. A significant portion of these projects came online this year, and so far, 14 major flare stacks out of 57 planned in the Bidboland Persian Gulf project have been shut down.”

“This initiative both protects the environment and prevents the waste of valuable national resources, returning flare gases to the economic cycle of the industry,” he said.

He highlighted the importance of energy efficiency, particularly gas consumption, noting, “Optimizing energy consumption, especially gas, is one of the most important issues in the country. Launching a campaign for consumption optimization, with petrochemical companies participating to use the saved gas for production, is a very effective and commendable approach.”

Abbaszadeh also pointed to

renewable energy development as a key component of Iran’s Seventh Development Plan (SDP). “One petrochemical company currently has a 2,500-megawatt renewable power expansion program underway, with 1,000 megawatts expected to come online by the end of the year,” he said.

He emphasized long-term production goals, saying, “By the end of the Seventh Development Plan (2028), we must reach an annual petrochemical production capacity of 131.5 million tons, and multiple projects are currently in progress to achieve this target.”

Regarding investment, Abbaszadeh noted, “So far, more than \$95 billion has been invested in the petrochemical industry, and under the Seventh Development Plan, approximately \$24 billion in new investments is projected.”

He also flagged a challenge related to gas allocation, stating, “The total investment in the



country’s petrochemical sector has exceeded \$95 billion; however, a challenge remains, as \$18 to \$20 billion of this cannot be utilized due to gas imbalances.”

Tehran-Beijing trade nears \$70b despite sanctions: *Joint chamber*

30% of Iran’s non-oil exports, 95% of oil shipments head to China

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

In recent years, China has solidified its position as Iran’s largest trading partner — a role that encompasses a significant share of Iran’s non-oil exports and nearly all of its oil shipments, playing a decisive part in sustaining Tehran’s economic activity despite US sanctions. Yet, economic ties between Tehran and Beijing have largely advanced in silence, with both sides avoiding media coverage of operational details, including implementation of their landmark 25-year strategic cooperation agreement. While trade volumes remain robust and even show upward momentum, banking restrictions, foreign exchange bottlenecks, and reliance on indirect trade routes continue to hinder deeper cooperation and raise transaction costs. Economic experts and business leaders see accelerated adoption of national currencies — particularly the Chinese yuan — as a key solution to reduce dependence on the US dollar and euro and blunt the impact of sanctions. In this context, Iran Daily spoke with Majid Reza Hariri, the chairman of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce, to examine the current state of bilateral trade, its strengths and weaknesses, the persistence of global currencies in transactions, prospects for national currency usage, and the low-profile but strategic implementation of the 25-year pact.

IRAN DAILY: Given China’s status as Iran’s top trading



partner, how do you assess the current state of bilateral trade relations?

HARIRI: Nothing particularly new has happened in recent months. China has remained Iran’s largest trading partner in recent years. It is still our top destination for non-oil exports — we send about 30% of our non-oil exports to China.

On the import side, China ranks as our second-largest source. The United Arab Emirates is first — but much of what we import from the UAE actually originates in China. This is due to sanctions since traders are forced to avoid labeling goods as destined for Iran, so products go first to the UAE and are then re-exported to Iran.

What share of Iran’s oil exports goes to China, and why aren’t the details of these transactions made public?

We sell approximately 95% to 96% of our oil to China. China has officially stated that it does not recognize the US’ unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, that does not mean we disclose the details of our trade. The

institutions and companies doing business with Iran face sanctions pressure, so granular information on these transactions is never released publicly.

There have been reports about using national currencies in bilateral trade. Has any concrete step been taken in this area?

So far, no significant progress has been made toward trading in our national currencies or settling accounts in local money. We still sell goods to China, receive payment, and later make purchases — always using major global currencies like the US dollar or euro. A key weakness in our trade relationship is that we rarely move toward using the Chinese yuan. This issue must be addressed in meetings with the Central Bank of Iran and relevant decision-making bodies to identify solutions and create conditions for implementation.

Why is there so little public information about the Iran-China 25-year strategic cooperation agreement?

Regarding the 25-year agreement, it has been mu-

tually agreed that discussions and details related to the contract will not be made public.

Iran and China signed a landmark 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement in March 2022 in defiance of unilateral sanctions imposed on the two nations by the United States.

The deal officially documents the Iran-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and sets the outlines of cooperation in political, cultural, security, defense, regional, and international domains.

What steps is the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce taking to facilitate trade?

The Joint Chamber is actively working to resolve trade-related issues faced by Iranian businesses, enabling them to engage in smoother commerce between the two countries. Trade delegation visits are proceeding as scheduled, consistent with past years, and Iranian traders and economic actors continue to participate in various exhibitions and seminars in China.

What was the volume of Iran-China trade last year, and what is your outlook for this year?

According to aggregate data, total trade between Iran and China in 2024 — including oil sales — reached approximately \$65 to \$70 billion. This volume reflects the efforts of economic actors and ongoing cooperation between the two countries. This upward trend is continuing this year.

Vietnam offers gateway for Iranian goods into Southeast Asia, officials say



The quarterly gathering of the Iran-Foreign Joint Investment Association is held at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture on December 21, 2025.

Economy Desk

Iran-Vietnam trade remains below potential despite over five decades of diplomatic ties, officials say, with construction materials, petrochemicals, agri-tech, and coffee being cited as key cooperation areas.

At the quarterly gathering of the Iran-Foreign Joint Investment Association held at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture on Sunday, Le Ba Ngoc, the deputy head of mission and representative of Vietnam’s Ministry of Industry and Trade in Iran, declared, “Vietnam is ready to serve as a gateway for Iranian products and technologies into Southeast Asian markets.”

Ngoc, alongside Vietnamese diplomatic and trade officials, highlighted the longstanding diplomatic relations between the two countries and Iran’s capabilities in petrochemicals, agriculture, and emerging technologies. They reaffirmed Vietnam’s willingness to facilitate Iranian entry into the broader ASEAN economic region.

The meeting emphasized that the Vietnamese Embassy and the Commercial Office of Vietnam’s Ministry of Industry and Trade in Tehran stand ready to provide necessary support and market information to Iranian companies seeking to enter the Vietnamese market.

In closing, members of the Iran-Foreign Joint Investment Association raised questions and shared views, and it was agreed that practical cooperation between the Association and the Vietnamese Embassy would be pursued to ease the entry of Iranian firms into Vietnam. The stated goal of this collaboration is to increase Iran’s market share in

Vietnam and strengthen sustainable economic ties between the two nations.

Structural trade challenges

Hadi Shahpar, a member of the Association’s investment committee, noted, “One of the weaknesses of Iran’s foreign trade is the episodic nature of economic relations. The Joint Investment Association seeks, based on regional agreements and economic blocs, to establish long-term and structured partnerships.”

He added that ASEAN countries—including Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore — are among the world’s key economic hubs. “Vietnam can play a pivotal role as Iran’s gateway to Southeast Asia,” he said, pointing out that despite more than 50 years of diplomatic relations and Vietnam’s sustained economic growth, bilateral trade volumes remain disproportionate to existing potential. Key current sectors of cooperation include construction materials, petrochemicals, technology, agriculture, and particularly coffee. Numerous opportunities exist to expand joint investment, officials said.

Meanwhile, Mehdi Azadvari, the chairman of the Iran-Foreign Joint Investment Association, outlined the body’s recent initiatives, “Cooperation with the Iran Financial Center, the World Business Organization, and several Iran-Vietnam and Iran-ASEAN joint chambers of commerce — with a focus on Iranian-foreign joint investment — is now on the agenda.”

He noted that in the past three months, the association’s new board has signed memoranda of understanding with domestic and foreign institutions, with the primary aim of delivering effective services to members.

Dariush Ashouri on role of language in Iran's underdevelopment

Dariush Ashouri



By Mokhtar Nouri

Professor of Political Science
at Razi University

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

The book "Dariush Ashouri's Account of Development and Underdevelopment in Iran," authored by Mokhtar Nouri, faculty member of the Department of Political Science at Razi University of Kermanshah, was written with the help of the Iranian non-governmental institution "Pooyesh Fekri Tose'e" (meaning: Intellectual Movement of Development) and published by Shargh Newspaper Publishing House. The book is dedicated to exploring the philosophy of a thinker who has devoted several decades of his life to reflecting upon the "troubled soul of Iran" and its intellectual, political, social, and cultural transformations. A well-known Iranian intellectual such as Dariush Ashouri, who, over the course of the recent decades, has traversed diverse intellectual, political, and cultural ascents and descents.

Ashouri commenced his intellectual endeavors, from the period of adolescence, in the proximity of a politician such as Khalil Maleki, and, with passage through diverse political and social actions on the stage of history, he now abides in the domain of language, or, in the words of Martin Heidegger, the "house of Being". Ashouri, in the manner of many contemporary Iranian intellectuals, is a man of the arena of modernity and its struggle with tradition. According to Ashouri, we Iranians entered the orbit of global issues from the 19th century onward. Therefore, Ashouri seeks to ascertain who we are and what has transpired for us Iranians over the past two centuries. With concentration upon modernity and its boundaries and contours, Ashouri intends to demonstrate how the West attained progress and subsequently, as a world-consuming discourse, embarked upon incursions into other cultures and nations, including Iranian society. Ashouri is an intellectual who observed the bipolar atmosphere dominant during the Cold War era and the ideological conflicts between capitalism and socialism, and their development-oriented outlooks. On the other hand, he is familiar with the literature and works of the field of development, in its conventional sense. Yet he rather quickly abandoned these conventional spaces of development sociology and began seeking his lost piece in the linguistic and cultural realms.

As is known, development possesses diverse political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, yet Ashouri, who from youth was inclined toward development in the Third World and Iran, reoriented himself from the economic and political aspects of development toward its cultural and social dimensions. In other words, although modernization and development constitute Ashouri's principal concern, he considers their pathway not through economic metrics but through language and culture.

By passing beyond the models and indices of the development field, Ashouri, in his works, has placed emphasis upon a more significant theoretical model. In fact, if we consider the principal crisis to be the underdevelopment of Iranian society in the contemporary period, the roots of the crisis, in Ashouri's view, reside in the linguistic and cultural sphere, and he regards himself as a researcher in pursuit of "language-therapy" and "culture-therapy."

The adoption of this type of linguistic and cultural approach to development has drawn him, on the one hand, toward understanding Western modernity, and, on the other hand, toward recognizing



ALEX SHIPPS/MIT CSAI

the historical, identity-based, linguistic, and cultural corridors of Iran and Eastern lands. Therefore, in his desired model, he links all aspects of modern life to language and believes that it is through exploring and reflecting within the linguistic space that one can grasp, at the very root of the matter, the fundamental differences between modern and traditional mentalities and between developed and underdeveloped worlds. It is from this perspective that Ashouri regards the Persian language as one of the fundamental factors that must receive special attention in order to attain comprehensive development. He believes that it may be possible, through imitation, to achieve accomplishments in industry and technology, yet for authentic modernization and being able to genuinely generate something new, the principal task is reflection upon the self and upon mental structures, through which reflection upon the Persian language, as the instrument of the formation of thought and the creation of new concepts, acquires undeniable importance.

As a result, Ashouri consistently regards himself as a seeker within the cultural arena, and his thought concerning culture becomes connected with science, literature, art, philosophy, and language. With regard to such concern, namely, the linguistic and cultural dimension of development, Ashouri turns toward

mentality, historical legacy, ancient structures, and our Iranian bottlenecks in confrontation with Western modernity. This matter, as his principal issue, has also become material for the production of diverse scholarly works. In Ashouri's own words, the further he has progressed, the more prominent the cultural dimension of development has become for him.

Ashouri believes that his understanding of issues has been profoundly altered as a result of living in the Western world. He maintains that the discourse of "Westoxication" (or, "Occidentosis") — which, in the pre-Islamic Revolution period, influenced him as well, in the manner of a multitude of Iranian intellectuals, and which required many years for him to cleanse its sediments from his mind — was indicative of a type of indigenous pathology that arose from our Third-World resentment and obstructed our understanding of diverse issues.

In Ashouri's view, Westoxication and the dialogue surrounding it constitute the discourse of a particular period in the history of our modern Iranian intellectual life. In Ashouri's perspective, Westoxication is a negative concept and bespeaks a pathological condition in our life and culture, and the portmanteau with "intoxication" itself signifies precisely this pathological nature of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, Ashouri, by passing beyond these types of intellec-



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tual resentments, has discovered other aspects in confronting modernity, and, in his own expression, has identified a "linguistic abyss" that has created a chasm between us and the foundations of modernity, a chasm that is, with great difficulty, fillable.

In formulating this type of linguistic gap, Ashouri invokes the "language of the adult" in contrast to the "language of the child". In his view, the adult human speaks with expansive words, prepared for the expression of innumerable concepts, whereas the child's language is crude and limited. Consequently, Ashouri states that the language of us Iranians today is an incomplete, childish, and deficient language, with which we cannot articulate profound concepts. This is not the language in whose use our predecessors displayed virtuosity in poetry and prose and manifested genius. They expressed their concepts and thoughts with a mature, refined, and complete language, whereas the language we employ is the language of children who wish to speak with the concepts of other complete and mature adults: with the language of Western civilization.

Within this framework, Ashouri divides languages into two categories, "developed" and "underdeveloped," and believes that underdeveloped languages, just as underdeveloped countries follow developed countries in their economic, social, and political systems, likewise become followers of developed languages in their regularities and capacities. It is observed that Ashouri associates the gap between us and the modern world with a linguistic gap and speaks of the globalization of modern Western civilization through a "linguistic revolution," and believes that this world-consuming model has also entangled us within itself.

Thus, in the essay "The Troubled Soul of Iran," he regards the modern world as a world that does not release us with its instruments and techniques, and we are compelled to clarify our position toward it. In any case, Ashouri's intellectual turn is evident, and he has arrived, through a passage beyond prior political and ideological issues, at a new outlook in confronting the modern Western world, in which, in this transition, the linguistic element has acquired great importance for him.

Examining the thought of a thinker who has devoted several decades of his life to intellectual labor, and considering how he regards issues such as modernization, development, and progress in human life, can undoubtedly be compelling.

Dariush Ashouri, language, and development

As stated, Ashouri's principal issue is understanding development and progress in the Western world and comprehending Iran's underdevelopment. For understanding this gap between us and the modern Western world, he has concentrated on the linguistic and cultural dimensions of development. For this reason, it is first necessary to elucidate, to the extent possible, Ashouri's principal issue, namely, the relationship between language and development.

In Ashouri's view, engagement with language and its issues is always exhilarating, and this exhilaration arises from the fact that every person senses an intrinsic and authentic belonging to his or her language, and one's language is one's "world," and the length, breadth, and depth of one's "world" correspond to the length, breadth, and depth of one's language, and every manipulation and transformation in language manipulates and transforms one's world.

From Ashouri's perspective, our relationship with our language in everyday



life resembles our relationship with our hands and feet. As long as our hands and feet perform their natural functions, we do not sense their existence; rather, they immediately connect us with the external world and accomplish what we desire. They do not need our attention toward their operation, and it is when the hand ceases to function, or the foot stops moving, that we become aware of their existence. At that point, we contemplate remedy and only then become conscious of their presence and importance.

From Ashouri's view, the condition of the relationship between human beings and language is the same. Language becomes an issue and attains "self-awareness" when it ceases to "function," at the point where it can no longer continue its natural operation. Therefore, Ashouri states that our linguistic sensitivities arise from the fact that we Iranians, in confronting the new civilization, whether from the material or the spiritual aspect, have encountered things that were not located within our historical-cultural experience, and, as a result, our language was "silent" regarding them. Then, when we attempt to express these things in our own language, we observe that our language exhibits numerous deficiencies and obscurities in expressing such matters, and, in this tension and effort, in many places it unravels.

Consequently, Ashouri believes that as long as we have not adequately provided the linguistic and intellectual means for dialogue with the new civilization, and have not correctly assimilated what must be assimilated, whether in philosophy, or in science, or in other domains, we cannot escape the vicious circle of the "Third World". In Ashouri's view, we have become "broken-tongued," and all this self-awareness that we today possess regarding language, and all this effort that is expended in its regard, signifies nothing other than that our language has struck a stone somewhere and has halted in its movement.

In other words, the disarray of our world has caused the disarray of our language, and the reconstruction, and perhaps the upheaval, of this world, and the severe ascents and descents of these transformations, inevitably generate severe ascents and descents in language.

Therefore, Ashouri, from a phenomenological standpoint, according to which language is regarded as the existential infrastructure of the human being and the possibility of the manifestation of the human world, through humans building a relation with Being as a whole, asks how the modern world has arisen from within modern "language," and what the modern human has done with language, and how linguistic tools have been prepared, or how modern languages, as "open" languages, have been fashioned and cultivated, and from within ancient "natural" languages have been grown and transformed into a "natural language".

The posing of such outlooks and questions regarding language by Ashouri leads us to the articulation of the view that the central core of Ashouri's intellectual discourse concerning the development of the Western world and our Iran's underdevelopment is grounded in the relationship between language and development. Consequently, according to Ashouri, careful reflection upon language and modernity provides a key to understanding many points and responding to difficult questions with which the developing world is confronted.

From his perspective, in the discussion of the confrontation between tradition and modernity, reflection upon language elucidates essential points, especially in a society such as contemporary Iran, where the discussion of tradition and modernity has become an intellectual obsession for religious intellectuals as well as secular intellectuals.

As a result, in Ashouri's view, we now stand before a "historical gap" and seek to fill it. It is evident that this gap between the West and us is the same unfilled gap of development that has occupied an intellectual such as Ashouri. In this sense, at present, science and



language have been constituted and have grown with great weight in other linguistic and cultural realms, and we, by virtue of the relation and connection that we have established with those realms, desire their science and language. Our language must newly adorn and refine itself so that it becomes efficient for the great task that we place upon its shoulders. And if our language is deficient and obscure in expressing what constitutes the subject or substance of science, this means that we still lack a genuine relation with science or with the substance and essence of its language. And if such a desire exists within us, and truly exists, the desire for science cannot, for us, be separated from the desire for its language and effort in its pursuit.

In general terms, Ashouri seeks to ascertain what occurs when we come into contact with the new world and its scientific foundations. That is, to what extent can non-Western peoples, peoples who were once designated as "Eastern" and later became "Third World," assimilate it? And why can they not assimilate it in its entirety? What obstacles operate in this interval? What motivation or need within us has caused the posing of the issue of the "language of science"? What relation has arisen between us and modern science that has rendered the posing of the issue of its language necessary for us?

It appears that understanding Ashouri's account of development and our Iranian underdevelopment requires the discovery of appropriate answers to these questions.

Darius Ashouri, linguistic modernization

In response to the aforementioned questions, the claim of the present account is that, in Ashouri's view, among various causes and factors, linguistic and cultural obstacles constitute the most significant barriers for us Iranians in attaining development and progress. In other words, the intellectual thread connecting Ashouri's views regarding our Iranian underdevelopment is embedded in language and culture, which he has articulated under the theory of the "open language".

Ashouri believes that, in the modern world, a "linguistic revolution" has taken shape parallel to other revolutions,

and that this linguistic revolution, on the basis of modern linguistic sciences, has created a linguistic industry and technology that has granted the leading languages of modernity, such as English, French, and German, the possibility of limitless development, a possibility that has been an unquestionable necessity for the relentless progress of the natural sciences and technology over the past two centuries.

Therefore, for Ashouri, the issue is why underdeveloped worlds inevitably become crumbs-eaters and ration-dependents of the leading languages of the modern world. In fact, he seeks to understand how they, namely, Westerners, were able, through linguistic development and the creation of an open language, to provide the grounds for their own development and their dominance over the non-Western world, while we remained trapped within our closed and limited language and fell outside the orbit of development.

The result is that, in Ashouri's view, the expansion of language and the empowerment of it, so that it can fulfill its new tasks, constitutes an unavoidable and extremely important part of any economic, scientific, and cultural "development policy". Hence, all countries that pursue programs of economic, social, and cultural growth, and seek to respond to the issues posed for them by confrontation with modern civilization and culture, have only two paths before them: one is to select one of the European languages, especially English, as their scientific and educational language, or to reorganize and cultivate anew their indigenous and national language so that it can function efficiently as a scientific and educational language.

Of course, Ashouri believes that this is an exceedingly difficult, delicate, and time-consuming endeavor, and that, for it, the barriers of psychological resistance, fear, and long-standing conservatism must first be broken. Since language bears a direct relation to the depths of the psyche and the personality and psychological characteristics of each society and each individual, from the standpoint of social and individual psychology, many issues exist along this path.

It appears that, among the two aforementioned paths, Ashouri prefers and proposes the second path, namely, the



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A depiction of the biblical parable of the
Tower of Babel
● ISTOCK



Ashouri states that the language of us Iranians today is an incomplete, childish, and deficient language, with which we cannot articulate profound concepts. This is not the language in whose use our predecessors displayed virtuosity in poetry and prose and manifested genius. They expressed their concepts and thoughts with a mature, refined, and complete language, whereas the language we employ is the language of children who wish to speak with the concepts of other complete and mature adults: with the language of Western civilization.

modernization and reconstruction of the national language, that is, the Persian language. Thus, Ashouri believes that, in order to mobilize the Persian language toward expressing what we demand from it today, namely, modern scientific, philosophical, artistic, and technical expression, and everything that arises from this form of life in all domains of social existence, not for issuing dogmatic and eternal judgments, but for obtaining theoretical guiding lines, we must examine how the Persian language is, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, how its particular capacities have been cultivated within its own historical context, from what it was nourished, which substances within it have been more nurtured and which have remained uncultivated, and, in other words, what its potential capacities are for expansion and cultivation in the direction of new and contemporary needs.

From Ashouri's perspective, the posing of such a question itself requires possessing a modern outlook toward history and language, and a traditional or tradition-worshipping mind, which has not encountered the essence of modern thought and has not benefited from it, is incapable of posing it because it is so dazzled and enamored with tradition and so unified with it that it cannot create a separation between itself and tradition and place tradition before itself as an object and examine it.

Conclusion

As stated, the present discussion, on the basis of the "theory of the open language," has concentrated upon the relationship between language and development in Ashouri's thought. The findings of the present discussion indicate that Ashouri perceives a close relationship between language and development, and the establishment of such a relationship has guided him toward the formulation of the theory of the "open language". From Ashouri's perspective, every world possesses its own language and constructs its own language, and the technological and modern world, just as it has constructed technology, has also treated its language in a technological manner. Therefore, in Ashouri's view, we Iranians, with the language that we have at our disposal, cannot contend with modern philosophy and science, and, consequently, with development and progress.

Ashouri believes that his linguistic studies concerning the English language, and to some extent French and German, demonstrate that a significant linguistic turn has occurred in those languages, and that this very turn has facilitated their process of development and transformation. In the languages leading modernity in Europe, there exists a linguistic word-production factory that operates continuously in order to respond to their needs in the natural sciences, the human sciences, technology, and all material and spiritual domains of modern life.

This is while we Iranians remain deprived of this type of linguistic turn and transformation, and, as a result, have been unable to have a voice in the process of development. In Ashouri's expression, the Persian language has, over centuries, become polluted and exceedingly darkened. This darkness prevents us from entering the space of the modern world and the modern mind, whose language is transparent and luminous. One of Descartes' points is precisely this: linguistic transparency. Words are like opaque glass that we hold before our eyes, through which the light of objects does not pass. We must construct a language that possesses complete transparency.

From this perspective, the present discussion, with concentration upon development and its various dimensions, has examined Ashouri's works and thoughts in the light of the linguistic transformation he envisions. Whether we agree with Ashouri or oppose his thoughts and views, we can in no way disregard the extensive knowledge and perspectives of this intellectual concerning the reasons and roots of development and underdevelopment.

Iran learns Asian volleyball schedule for 2026



Iranian middle-blocker Zahra Karimi serves the ball during a 3-0 victory over Afghanistan at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2025.
● volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Iranian men's and women's national teams have learned their schedules for the upcoming continental season after the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) unveiled its 2026 calendar and host cities on Saturday. The most anticipated event for Iranian volleyball will be the AVC Men's Asian Championship, which begins on September 4 in Fukuoka, Japan. Team Melli will be chasing its fifth title — and its third in four editions — at the continent's flagship tournament. As if Roberto Piazza's men needed additional motivation to make amends for their final setback against Japan on home soil in the previous edition, an Olympic berth will also be up for grabs in Fukuoka, with the champion earning a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

Meanwhile, the Iranian women's national team, fresh off a historic gold medal at the CAVA Championship and a bronze medal at the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games, will compete in the AVC Women's Championship, which will kick off in Tianjin, China. Iran, which qualified for the competition thanks to its CAVA triumph, will be looking to improve on its 10th-place finish at the previous Asian showpiece in Thailand in 2023. Both Iranian men's and women's teams will also take part in the volleyball competition at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in September, with Piazza's side aiming for a fourth successive gold medal at the multi-sport event. In age-group tournaments, record seven-time champion Iran — having fallen short against Japan and China in the 2022 and 2024 finals, respectively — will

bid for its first Asian Boys' U18 Championship title since 2014 when the tournament gets underway in Manama, Bahrain, on July 12. South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee's side, meanwhile, will look to build on its gold-medal campaign at last October's Asian Youth Games when the AVC Girls' U18 Championship is staged in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, from July 1. Iran achieved its best result in eight appearances at the event in the 2024 edition, finishing sixth after a straight-sets defeat against South Korea in its final match in Thailand. The continental season will begin with the AVC Women's Champions League in Goyang, South Korea, from April 26 to 30, followed by the Men's Champions League, which will get underway in Pontianak, Indonesia, on May 13.

FIDE World U9-U17 Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships:

Iran's Kakavand, Akbari win blitz golds in Antalya

Sports Desk

Iranian chess prodigies Ramtin Kakavand and Rosh Akbari captured two blitz gold medals in different age categories at the FIDE U9-U17 Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships in Antalya, Türkiye. Iranian FIDE Master Kakavand collected eight points from nine rounds to clinch the boys' under-15 open title, edging Suleyman Akhmet on tiebreaks after both finished level on points. Kakavand's victory over the Kazakhstani Candidate Master in the fourth round proved decisive. In the girls' under-15 category, Women FIDE Master Akbari defeated host representative Latife Yade Gunasti in her fi-

nal game to top the 18-player standings with 7.5 points from a possible nine. Kazakhstan's Asiya Assylkhan, also on 7.5 points, and Slovenian Candidate Master Anja Beber, who tallied 6.5 points, finished second and third, respectively. Akbari won seven of her games and drew against Assylkhan, with her only loss coming against Uzbekistan's FIDE Master Rukiya Olimova in the seventh round. The blitz competitions were held in open and girls' sections across five age groups — U9, U11, U13, U15 and U17. A total of 310 players, including 98 titled players and two grandmasters, registered for the blitz events.



Iran's Ramtin Kakavand (L) and Rosh Akbari are pictured during the FIDE World U9-U17 Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships in Antalya, Türkiye.
● FIDE



AFC Champions League Elite:

Tractor aiming to secure knockout spot against Al Duhail



Tractor will confirm its last-16 spot with victory against Al Duhail SC when the sides meet in the AFC Champions League Elite today at Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium. Iranian top-flight champion Tractor ended Matchday Five third in the West Zone standings with 11 points, four ahead of sixth-placed Al Duhail of Qatar. Having opened its campaign with two draws, a three-match winning run means Tractor is within touching distance of the round of 16 and Dragan Skocic's men will aim to maximize home ground advantage against Al Duhail. Defensive resilience has been the back bone of Tractor's campaign, with the Skocic's side having kept four clean sheets, but the Iranian outfit is winless in its last two meetings with Al Duhail. Al Duhail kept its hopes alive with a stunning 4-2 win against Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad Club on Matchday Five but will face a stiff test against a confident Tractor. The Qatari club's away form on the continent has been poor, with three defeats in its last four matches and walking away empty handed will leave Djamel Belmadi's team in a perilous position. Tractor will step into the contest fresh off a dramatic shootout victory over domestic foe Persepolis in the Iranian Hazfi Cup on Thursday, while Al Duhail — eighth in the QSL 12-team table — suffered a 2-0 away defeat against Al Shahaniya in the Qatari Stars Cup last Sunday.

Tractor players celebrate their goal during a shootout victory over Persepolis in the Iranian Hazfi Cup in Tabriz, Iran, on December 18, 2025.
● FFIRI

Iranian weightlifter Nasiri stands fourth in IWF Annual World Ranking

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifter Alireza Nasiri finished the 2025 season in fourth place in the IWF Annual World Ranking, thanks to his double-medal campaign at October's World Championships. The 19-year-old prodigy placed seventh in the snatch in the men's 110kg division in Førde, Norway, despite setting a new Asian junior record of 184kg. He then delivered a stronger performance in the clean and jerk,

setting a new world junior record of 231kg with his third attempt to claim the silver medal, before securing another silver in the total with 415kg. Armenia's Varazdat Lalyan, who completed a clean sweep of three world titles in the +110kg class, topped the rankings with a total of 461kg. Bahrain's Gor Minasyan — runner-up to Lalyan in all super-heavyweight categories in Førde — finished second with 447kg.

Uzbekistan's Akbar Djuraev, winner of three gold medals in the 110kg category in Førde, ranked third with 428kg, a new world record in his weight class. Djuraev's compatriot Ruslan Nurudinov (414kg), American Aaron Andrew Williams (411kg), Colombia's Rafael Cerro (410kg), South Korea's Song Yeong-hwan (410kg), Armenia's Garik Karapetyan (407kg) and Colombia's Santiago Sanchez Cossio (407kg) rounded out the top 10 in the senior men's rankings.



Iranian weightlifter Alireza Nasiri makes a snatch lift during the men's 110kg event at the IWF World Championships in Førde, Norway, on October 10, 2025.
● MNA

Mansour Castle bridges history, nature in Taleqan

Iranica Desk

Perched atop the towering cliffs of Taleqan in Iran's Alborz Province, Mansour Castle stands not only as a living testament to the architecture and lifeways of the past, but also as a multidimensional experience that blends history, culture, and nature. With its fortified walls, rock-carved cisterns, and sweeping vistas, the castle reflects the ingenuity and collective life of its former inhabitants, who endured the harsh conditions of the highlands. A visit to the site is a journey through both history and landscape, along a path that tells an unforgettable story. Alireza Tahmasebi, Head of the Taleqan Cultural Heritage and Tourism Department, described Mansour Castle as one of the region's most prominent heritage sites. "Its value is not limited to its historical architecture," he said. "This castle is part of the identity and collective memory of the local community. Every remaining stone, cistern, and wall narrates an era in which determined people stood firm against threats." Tahmasebi noted that the castle was officially registered on Iran's National Heritage List.

"This registration underscores the cultural and historical importance of the site," he added, "but listing is only the beginning of preservation, not the end." According to the official, efforts this year have focused on drafting a comprehensive research plan and implementing initial conservation measures. "Our goal is to preserve the site's authenticity while also harnessing its tourism potential," he said. One key initiative involves designing safe hiking routes equipped with visual guides, enabling visitors to engage with the historic site without risk, chtn.ir wrote. Addressing the challenges of conservation, Tahmasebi warned that tourism, while a valuable opportunity, can pose serious risks if left unmanaged. "Many visitors enter sensitive areas without awareness, move stones, or light fires. Such actions not only threaten the historical structure but also diminish the experience for others," he explained. Emphasizing the importance of public education, he added that installing informational signage, organizing specialized tours, and producing educational content play a vital role in raising



● chtn.ir

awareness. "By creating these infrastructures, we aim to turn tourism into a responsible and sustainable platform." Regarding the future of tourism at Mansour Castle, Tahmasebi said the vision is to transform it into a major mountain-historical tourism hub in Alborz

Province. "This potential stems not only from its natural beauty, but also from its deep historical and cultural value. By integrating local oral histories, archaeological data, and careful planning, we can offer visitors a unique experience — one that connects them to the history,

culture, and nature of Taleqan." He concluded by describing Mansour Castle as a symbol of the intersection between history and nature, recalling a time when people lived deep in the mountains and overcame hardship through skill and resilience. "With the cooperation of

local communities and cultural heritage enthusiasts, we hope this site will gain greater visibility, allowing future generations to experience it as well." Climbing Mansour Castle is a cultural, historical, and spiritual experience. The ascent, the towering walls, carved cisterns, and breathtaking views together bear witness to the lives of people who embodied resilience. The castle serves as a bridge between past and future — one that allows visitors to touch history, breathe in the mist, watch light fall on stone, and return to modern life with a deeper understanding of the value of cultural heritage. If conservation, public education, responsible tourism management, and community participation are properly realized, Mansour Castle could become a successful model for integrating cultural heritage with sustainable tourism development. Today, history rests quietly in the mist and wind of Taleqan, waiting to be retold by future generations who understand the value of heritage not only in the past, but in its connection to today's environment and life.

Gilan's handicrafts gain international attention



● IRNA

Iranica Desk

The deputy head of Gilan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization for handicraft affairs highlighted the rich diversity of traditional arts in the province, stating that Gilan's handicrafts — deeply rooted in local culture, lifestyle, and the natural environment — have attracted the attention of both domestic and international audiences. Mohammadreza Amirinejad said that despite certain limitations, particularly in suitcase exports to neighboring countries such as the Republic of Azerbaijan, Gilan's artisans and handicraft practitioners have continued to introduce and present their works beyond Iran's borders by relying on creativity, skill, and a deep cultural heritage, according to chtn.ir. He added that a wide range of Gilan's handicraft products has found its way to countries along the Caspian Sea and the

Persian Gulf region, especially Iraq. In some cases, thanks to the initiative and personal networks of artisans, these products have also been introduced to European markets. Amirinejad noted that Gilan's handicraft production includes a diverse array of traditional items such as Chadorshab textiles, Rashti embroidery, wicker weaving, bamboo crafts, kilims, mat weaving, pottery, and various wooden handicrafts — each reflecting the historical identity and inherited craftsmanship of the people of Gilan. Referring to export figures, he said that since the beginning of the current year, the value of handicrafts and traditional arts exports from Gilan Province has reached approximately \$385,000. He added that many handicraft products purchased by domestic customers are also taken abroad, indicating that the actual volume of exports is higher than officially recorded.

Artisans strive to preserve ancient Charoq craft in Zanjan Province

Iranica Desk

The production of handicrafts in any region reflects the rich identity and culture of that area, and in Zanjan Province, a variety of enduring traditional arts are created by dedicated artisans, capturing the attention of every passerby. Among these, one of the most authentic and historic crafts is the Charoq, a type of traditional footwear. Once widely produced and sold by skilled artisans, this craft has been passed down through generations. Today, however, enthusiasts fear that it is at risk of disappearing. Charoq shoes are crafted using cowhide leather, colored silk threads, and Golabtoon threads, produced in a range of styles. The roots of leather craftsmanship in Zanjan can be traced back at least two thousand years. The art of Charoq making likely originated in the Sassanid era, reaching its decorative peak during the Safavid period. Its beauty and the diversity of patterns and motifs continue to captivate anyone with

an appreciation for traditional arts, IRNA wrote. Historical records indicate that the origin of this craft in Zanjan Province was the city of Soltaniyeh, from where it later spread to the city of Zanjan itself. In past decades, the number of Charoq artisans in Zanjan reflected the growth and flourishing of this authentic craft. Today, however, experts warn that without careful attention and support, Charoq may vanish forever. One of the most renowned figures in this field is Mardali Heidari, a 70-year-old master of traditional Charoq making. He continues to teach enthusiasts at the Zanjan Museum of Laundry, known locally as Rakshouykhaneh. Heidari decorates different sections of Charoq shoes with Golabtoon thread embroidery, depicting historical landmarks of Zanjan, including the Soltaniyeh Dome, the Rakshouykhaneh building, the Mirbahaddin Bridge, and monuments from other cities. Reflecting on his early years, he recalled beginning work in one of Zan-

jan's market workshops as a child. Even at a young age, he straightened old and bent nails and waxed the threads used in shoe-making. Over six decades of dedication, he has trained approximately 500 students in this traditional art. Despite being officially retired, he continues to teach for three hours each day at the Rakshouykhaneh Museum. The artisan noted that the current state of this craft is far less vibrant than in earlier times. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic challenges have caused a sharp decline in its practice. Rising costs of raw materials due to economic fluctuations, combined with a decreasing number of students and enthusiasts, have made it increasingly difficult for Charoq making to survive. He added that despite repeatedly informing senior government officials that Charoq production no longer has buyers, previous efforts to establish a dedicated Charoq store have failed, leaving the craft without a commercial platform. The President of the Association of Handicraft



● IRNA

Producers and Exporters at the Zanjan Chamber of Commerce, Fatemeh Abdollahi, also highlighted the cultural and artistic value of Charoq. She noted that both domestic and international art enthusiasts are captivated by its abstract and authentic patterns. Abdollahi explained that in earlier times, Charoq shoes were sewn in a very simple form. The transformations and intricate designs seen on Charoqs today were first introduced by the late Asghar Khatibi. He was the first artisan to create a Charoq mold using clay coated with paper. She added that modern Charoqs have largely lost their original practical function and are now primarily decorative

items. Women and girls often use them as indoor or ceremonial shoes rather than everyday footwear. The Charoqs currently produced in Zanjan are delicate and decorative, significantly different from traditional Charoqs. The original Zanjan Charoq was made from raw leather, primarily worn by shepherds in villages. These shoes were usually heelless and fastened to the lower leg with straps. Abdollahi expressed concern that some traditional crafts, including Charoq, are struggling due to the lack of a stable market and insufficient branding. Without intervention, these crafts are at serious risk of disappearing entirely. She also pointed to ongoing efforts to promote Charoq for export. Through negotiations, the association hopes to implement measures to better introduce, market, and even export these shoes, aiming to preserve this important cultural heritage and prevent it from being forgotten.





Where rhythm meets roots in Persian music

Hejazi: Persian music speaks in its own voice



By Hamideh Hosseini
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iranian traditional music is deeply embedded in the culture, lived experience, and historical memory of a people who have kept it alive generation after generation. Kourosh Hejazi, a percussionist and leader of the Nava-ye Hengam ensemble, is among the artists who, emerging from a music-loving family and trained by distinguished masters, embarked on a professional path in Iran's classical music tradition. With extensive domestic and international performance experience, Hejazi has sought to serve as a worthy representative of Iran's traditional and folkloric music on global stages.

On the night of Yalda, Hejazi and his ensemble performed at a special ceremony held at the Iran Cultural and Press Institute, where they were guests of journalists and media staff from various departments of the institute. On the sidelines of the event, Iran Daily spoke with Kourosh Hejazi. In this interview, he reflects on his entry into music, the formation of Nava-ye Hengam, and his perspective on the international standing of Iran's traditional music.

IRAN DAILY: First, please tell us briefly about yourself and how you entered the world of music.

HEJAZI: My name is Kourosh Hejazi, born in 1991, and I am the director and leader of the Nava-ye Hengam ensemble. We are four brothers: the eldest plays the Setar (a stringed instrument with a small, pear-shaped soundbox

and four metal strings); the second is a member of the IRIB Symphony Orchestra and plays the violin; I play the tombak (Iranian goblet drum); and our youngest plays the Santur (hammered dulcimer).

Our passion for music comes from our parents. Though they were not professional musicians, they were discerning listeners. From childhood, authentic Iranian music filled our home, profoundly shaping our musical interests.

I began studying the tombak, the principal Iranian percussion instrument, around age 11 or 12. Today, as a percussionist, I would like to respectfully acknowledge my esteemed teacher, the late Master Bahman Rajabi, one of the great masters of percussion, with whom I had the honor of studying. I also studied in Qazvin under Master Mirza Ali-Akbar Khoram Qazvini, a distinguished figure of Iranian music, working on the instrumental Radif (a modal system composed of several Dastgahs (modes) and Gushehs (melodic fragments), each with its own tonal character, emotional color, and internal logic). He was both a poet and a Setar player, and one of the cultural luminaries of this land.

What led you to believe that you could form a music ensemble?

Forming an ensemble was always one of my aspirations; I intended from the start to work in group performance. My main profession is selling musical instruments in Baharestan Square, in the traditional instrument-makers' bazaar. Our shop was next to a very old workshop with a distinguished history in instrument craftsmanship. From around 2005, the area became a hub for music conservatory students, and many prominent masters, whom I knew personally, regularly visited our shop. My deep in-



Members of the Nava-ye Hengam ensemble perform during a Yalda Night cultural event at the Iran Cultural and Press Institute in Tehran on December 21, 2025, blending traditional Persian rhythms and melodies.

● IRAN DAILY

terest in authentic Iranian music, combined with this inspiring environment, sparked the idea of forming an ensemble, Nava-ye Hengam.

The group consists of eight musicians with complete instrumentation, including percussion, plucked strings, and bowed strings. I was about 24 or 25 when we gave our first formal performance, presenting our first official concert at Azadi Tower in 2015. Having studied music academically, I had a university professor, Rahman Moradi, son of Master Farman Moradi, one of Iran's great instrument makers. I dedicated my first performance to him. Since then, I have performed in numerous venues.

Have you also taken part in festivals and international performances?

Yes. Last year, my ensemble and I performed at the United Nations in the European cities of Bern and Geneva. We were invited by the Iranian Embassy in Switzerland to perform at one of the events dedicated to Iranian cultural traditions. I have also participated individually in various festivals. Last year, I performed at the Fajr Music Festival with the Nava-ye Aftab Orchestra. Together with different ensembles, we have had numerous international performances, including in Switzerland, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey.

Mr. Ali Haddadian, a Tar player and one of



the current members of Nava-ye Hengam, is the son of Mohammad Ali Haddadian, one of the country's eminent musicians. Amir Zamani, the ensemble's vocalist, is a student of Master Mirza Ali-Akbar Khoram Qazvini. My colleagues and I in Nava-ye Hengam have always taken pride in our Iranian identity. This land has produced great cultural figures and literary giants, and we have tried to be worthy representatives of our country on various artistic stages.

Why did you choose to work in traditional music? What makes Iranian traditional music stand out internationally?

Persian traditional music has much to say to the world. However, I am genuinely concerned about the current situation, because

much of our pure and authentic music has been marginalized, while music with no clear identity has become more prevalent. We have had great musicians who have been profoundly influential in the course of global music history. Iranian folkloric music is unparalleled worldwide, and in terms of diversity, it is incomparable to any other tradition. This diversity stems from the varied ways of life and the wide range of rhythms found across different regions of Iran.

Our folkloric music, both in its rhythmic structures and in its use of intervals, is highly appealing to international audiences. In our ensemble, we strive to represent Iran's traditional and folkloric music and to present it to audiences in the best possible way.

Last voice of Shajarian comes alive

By Alireza Sepahvand
Journalist

The unveiling ceremony of two previously unreleased albums by Master Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, 'Bang-e Dohol' and 'Sar dar Gariban', took place on December 20 at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Part of the 'Eternal Memory' project, the albums feature Shajarian's final live performance during his 2014 European tour. Homayoun Shajarian, alongside composers Majid Derakhshani and Saeed Farajpour, shared details of the project. Homayoun noted, "These albums feature works composed by Majid Derakhshani and Saeed Farajpour, arranged by Majid Derakhshani, and performed with the Shahnaz ensemble."

The music of these artists provided a foundation for my father's voice to reach its peak, making each performance a memorable moment."

He added, "One of the reasons for the delay in releasing these works was the difficulty of separating my father's voice from the orchestra with low-quality audio. With great effort and the collaboration of friends, we were able to prepare versions suitable for release."

Homayoun spoke about the significance of the release, "These albums capture a period of my father's artistic life, when he performed with unparalleled power. Their release is more than an album; it is a tribute to a legacy of love, suffering, and effort."

Homayoun explained that the reason for not releasing his father's collaborative albums with Sohrab Pournazeri was personal resentment.

He emphasized, "These decisions were



Homayoun Shajarian (L) unveils two previously unreleased albums by his father, Master Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on December 20, part of the 'Eternal Memory' project featuring the maestro's final live performance from his 2014 European tour.

● ISNA

not made out of hostility; Master Shajarian was always committed to quality and professional principles and wanted each work to represent the authenticity and artistic ability of his music." He further elaborated, "My father had grievances with the Pournazeri brothers, which is why some collaborative works were not released. Perhaps if he were alive today, these disagreements would have been resolved and the works would have been officially published."

Street concerts and women's singing

Shajarian spoke about his dream of holding street concerts, "As long as there are streets and people, this dream remains, but past experiences have shown that all aspects must be carefully considered."

Regarding the participation of women in music, he said, "Restricting women's activities is unacceptable, and conditions must be provided for them to present their works. I have published several works so far, and this path continues."

He also spoke about his meeting with Abdolhossein Khosropanah, Secretary

of the Council of Public Culture, saying, "The purpose of the meeting was to review restrictions and provide practical solutions to improve conditions for women's activities."

Production process

Saeed Farajpour explained the album details, "The album includes two CDs, and I composed the section 'Sar dar Gariban'. In 2014, Master Shajarian requested that these works be performed in Europe. The program was performed in 10 European cities. Afterwards, the program in Iran and Armenia was canceled, making these works the last tour of Master Shajarian."

Majid Derakhshani, composer of 'Bang-e Dohol', spoke about collaborating with the master, "We tried to include the master's opinion and vision in the work process. His students assisted in singing, focusing more on composition and instrumental performance. The master invested great effort in the instruments to create new works."

Homayoun added, "My father's motivation for creating new instruments was to emphasize the necessity of hearing new sounds so that audiences and in-

terested musicians could experience them."

Photo, instrument exhibition

Simultaneously with the album unveiling, an exhibition of Master Shajarian's photographs, taken by Afshaneh Shajarian, and his invented instruments was held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

Homayoun expressed gratitude for the museum's cooperation, "This exhibition provides an opportunity for the public to become familiar with less-seen aspects of the master's activities."

Future plans and Shajarian award

Homayoun spoke about future plans, "We are planning concerts in Iran, but venue capacities are limited. We intend to organize a grand outdoor event next year, accommodating 8,000 to 10,000 people per session."

Regarding an award in the master's name, he said, "We are exploring the idea of establishing an award to be given to young singers and artists."

Significance of works

Homayoun emphasized that these albums include the last live performance of his father and that their release was handled carefully and meticulously to maintain high quality. He added, "My father has many works that are not of sufficient quality, and plans for their release are also underway."

Saeed Farajpour and Majid Derakhshani stressed the importance of the Shahnaz ensemble's collaboration and the quality of performance, considering this project a complete example of the fusion of experience, passion, and skill of the artists.

From Yalda to ...

In the grand Yalda celebration, marking the second night of the series

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and the presentation of the Nowruz Plaque, Young women dressed in traditional costumes from Nowruz-region countries recited Persian poetry and stories around a table set with foods traditionally associated with Yalda night. Music groups from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan also performed. In her remarks, Mona Rahmani, executive secretary of the event, said participants had gathered to reflect on two ancient Iranian heritages, namely Nowruz and Yalda, that have transcended geography and traveled through history to the present day. "At first glance, these celebrations may seem like occasions for joy, gathering, and cultural rituals," she said. "But a closer look shows that both Nowruz and Yalda carry within them a form of cultural diplomacy and civilizational dialogue."

She concluded by emphasizing that this cultural legacy celebrates the continuity of life rather than destruction, praises the renewal of nature rather than ruin, and gives meaning to peace rather than the erasure of the other. "If every country, every nation, and every policymaker understood the message of Nowruz and Yalda, perhaps our world would fear violence less and look to the future with greater hope," she said. "Let us see Nowruz as the shared language of the region's nations and Yalda as a lesson in togetherness during times of darkness."

Professor Balram Shukla, cultural attaché of the Indian Embassy, spoke about commemorations of the longest night of the year in the Indian subcontinent and concluded his remarks by reciting a verse from Hafez, the Iranian poet whose works are read on Yalda, along with its translation into Sanskrit.

Renowned Iranian musician Keyvan Saket spoke about the beauty of Yalda night before performing a solo piece. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Nowruz Plaque was awarded to ten social activists in recognition of their efforts during the 12-day war, as a symbol of empathy and solidarity. Among the recipients were a music producer and documentary filmmaker, a journalist and documentary director, a child rights activist, and a rescue and relief pilot.

