

World's first Rafugari museum to open in Babolsar

Iranica Desk

The Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Mazandaran Province announced that a license has been issued for the establishment of the world's first Rafugari (traditional mending) museum in Babolsar. The museum is scheduled to open in May 2026, coinciding with Cultural Heritage Week.

Hossein Izadi said the Babolsar Rafugari Museum has been established with the aim of safeguarding the authentic and ancient art of Rafugari, highlighting its place within Iran's handicrafts, and transferring the knowledge and experience of master craftsmen to future generations. He noted that the museum will showcase tools, works, traditional techniques, and the historical evolution of this tra-

ditional art, according to IRNA. He added that the launch of the museum will not only play an important role in preserving and promoting traditional arts, but can also develop into a center for education, research, and cultural tourism in the province, attracting art and cultural heritage enthusiasts from across the country.

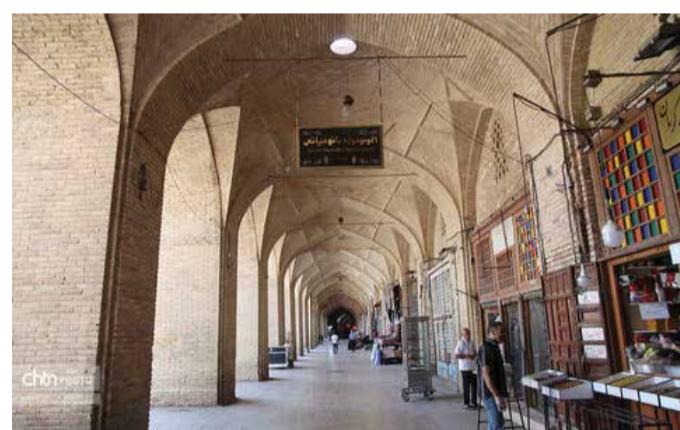
Describing the creation of the world's first specialized Rafugari museum as a valuable step toward protecting intangible cultural heritage and reviving traditional arts, Izadi said Rafugari is an integral part of Iranian cultural identity. He emphasized that the museum can further enhance Mazandaran's cultural standing at both national and international levels.

Izadi also stated that the issuance of the museum's operating license aligns with efforts to support specialized and thematic museums,



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Comprehensive revitalization planned for historic Kerman Bazaar



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Kerman's historic bazaar is poised for a comprehensive revitalization, with initiatives focused on organizing its historical and cultural axis to enhance urban tourism, preserve the city's rich heritage, and strengthen the local economy, the Director General of the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization said during a field visit. Seyyed Moayed Mohsenzadeh, while assessing the current conditions and physical state of this valuable complex, emphasized that the historic Kerman Bazaar, as one of the oldest and most prominent historical and cultural axes of the city, plays an irreplaceable role in shaping urban identity, fostering

social vitality, and supporting economic prosperity. He noted that revitalizing the bazaar is an essential step toward achieving sustainable tourism development, according to chtn.ir. Referring to the objectives of the field visit, Mohsenzadeh explained that it was conducted to carefully evaluate existing conditions, identify challenges, damages, and specific needs, and assess service provision, urban landscape quality, and the utilization of historical and cultural assets. The insights gathered, he added, will form the basis for drafting and implementing a comprehensive, phased plan aimed at improving the historical and cultural axis of the Kerman Bazaar. Highlighting the importance of

coordination among relevant authorities, Mohsenzadeh stated that successfully organizing the historic bazaar requires synergy among responsible institutions, urban management bodies, trade guilds, and shopkeepers. He stressed that achieving these goals will not be possible without active social participation and the collaboration of all stakeholders, while simultaneously preserving historical authenticity, safeguarding architectural and cultural values, and enhancing the overall environment of the bazaar. Mohsenzadeh also underscored the bazaar's role in shaping tourists' experiences, describing it as one of the city's most significant tourist destinations. He noted that a well-planned revitalization could improve

visitor experiences, increase the length of tourist stays, and strengthen Kerman's image at both national and international levels. Such initiatives, he emphasized, will not only promote tourism but also foster economic growth, support local businesses, and revive the cultural and social functions of the bazaar.

He affirmed that the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, taking a participatory and forward-looking approach, is committed to revitalizing the Kerman Bazaar so that this historic complex — considered the beating heart of the city — can play an even more effective role in sustainable tourism development and in improving the quality of life for the city's residents.

Reading Room

Enduring value of book in digital age



By Amirreza Asnafi

Associate Professor of Information and Knowledge Studies

At a time when the world is moving at an unprecedented pace through technological, informational, and communicational transformations, reflection on the foundational values of human culture appears more essential than ever — particularly as our attitude toward books, this civilization-shaping phenomenon, is increasingly being challenged. Recently, I read an article by a respected academic asserting that encouraging traditional reading is equivalent to promoting backwardness. As a librarian, an educator in this field, and someone who trains young librarians in this country, this claim prompted serious reflection. First, it remains unclear what is meant by "traditional books" or "traditional reading." A book is fundamentally a medium of information; it is neither traditional nor modern. At most, one can distinguish between its physical and electronic formats. In no library anywhere in the world is the physical

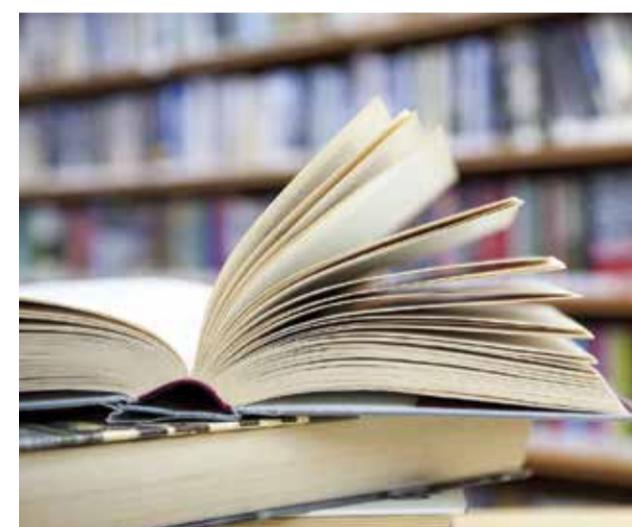
book — or the act of reading it — described as "traditional," not even in societies that pioneered electronic book technologies. The notion of "traditional books" or "traditional reading" is a claim that is not only scientifically and culturally inaccurate, but also potentially harmful. Such framing can foster misconceptions within society and weaken the standing of books, reading, and the circulation of ideas. Books are neither symbols of backwardness nor relics of a pre-industrial era; rather, they have served as the axis of intellectual transformation, the foundation of civilizations, and the source of major innovations throughout history — and they continue to do so today.

Inviting people to read is an invitation to think, to understand deeply, to analyze, and to reflect — qualities that are more vital in the digital age than ever before. Technology may accelerate our movement, but it is thought that gives that movement direction. If reading books is labeled as backwardness, then we must also accept that human civilization itself — science, philosophy, law, civil liberties, academic achievements, and even contemporary technologies — has

been built upon this so-called "backwardness."

Books carry civilization and preserve collective memory. History clearly demonstrates that no society has progressed without the transmission of written knowledge. The book was the first medium that allowed thought to move beyond geographical boundaries and across generations. If we speak of tradition, we must recognize that tradition signifies continuity in historical wisdom, not intellectual rigidity. In fact, reading is a means of overcoming stagnation and entering the domain of active human thought.

All major scientific and intellectual revolutions have emerged from books. Galileo, Kant, Avicenna, Farabi, Descartes, Newton, Marx, Darwin, Russell, Popper, Habermas, Hannah Arendt, Morteza Motahhari, Allameh Tabatabaei, and hundreds of other thinkers transformed the modern world through their books — not through social media posts. This observation does not imply rejecting or ignoring new media; rather, it underscores the fundamental distinction between technological bias and human-centered thinking.



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Technological transformations are both valuable and necessary. However, a common error in the digital age is technological obsession and the illusion of knowledge created by immersion in technology — the belief that technological tools can replace thinking itself. Such a misconception can intensify information gaps and lead to a burdensome form of ignorance. Reading books, whether in print or digital form, remains a gradual and profound process that fosters structured and meaningful understanding.

Information consumption on social media is largely superficial, fragmented, and emotionally driven. While technology can increase the speed of information transmission, it cannot guarantee the quality of comprehension. For this reason, UNESCO, the International Federation of Library Associations, and even global forums focused on artificial intelligence continue to recognize reading literacy and deep reading as essential skills for the twenty-first century. Reading books is, ultimately, an exercise in thinking. From

the perspective of cognitive science, sustained reading enhances concentration, strengthens memory, deepens conceptual analysis, and improves problem-solving abilities. Such depth of understanding cannot be achieved through hurried and fragmented information consumption. In a world where information is fluid, rapid, and often shallow, a call for deep reading is, above all, a defense of intellectual independence.

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