

# Iran posts €224m in annual handicrafts exports

## Anbaran kilim drive underpins push towards €1b target

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran exported €224 million worth of handicrafts over the past year, with an equal volume carried out through so-called suitcase trade, lifting the sector's total overseas sales to nearly €500 million, the tourism minister said on Saturday during a provincial visit to northwest Iran.

Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks while touring the permanent handicrafts exhibition in Anbaran, a town in Ardabil Province designated as Iran's national center for kilim (a flat tapestry-woven carpet) weaving, IRNA reported.

He added that the government had set an ambitious target under the Seventh Development Plan (2023-2027) to raise annual handicrafts exports to €1 billion and create 100,000 jobs each year across the sector.

During the visit, the minister said 60 trillion rials in funding and concessionary facilities had been earmarked nationwide for handicrafts and eco-tourism,

stressing that the resources were legally allocated to the public and that banks were obliged to disburse them.

He also acknowledged persistent bottlenecks, including access to raw materials, high insurance premiums and weak market linkages, saying talks were under way with the Social Security Organization and Parliament to resolve artists' insurance coverage.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted Anbaran's bid to secure global recognition for its kilim weaving, saying the town's existing national status and production capacity justified pursuit of registration as a World Crafts City.

Such recognition, he said, would position Anbaran as a major hub for the manufacture and distribution of Iranian handicrafts in regional and international markets.

He singled out the role of local women artisans in sustaining the industry, saying their work met global quality standards and formed a backbone of the local economy. Strengthening the town's visual identity, including the installation of a signature handicrafts



Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri speaks on the sidelines of his visit to the permanent handicrafts exhibition in Anbaran, Ardabil Province, northwestern Iran, on February 7, 2026.

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monument, was also on the agenda, he added.

The comments came during a two-day visit to Ardabil Province on February 7-8, during which Salehi-Amiri also inspected a privately funded four-star hotel under construction in Namin county and held meetings with lawmakers and private-sector investors.

He said Ardabil's economy, heavily reliant on tourism and handicrafts, required targeted investment support to unlock growth.

The minister announced that 15 trillion rials in financing would be made available to tourism investors in the province, describing the move as part of a broader effort to address infrastructure gaps in cultural heritage, tourism and



handicrafts. He apologized for what he called long-standing shortcomings in public service delivery across the three sectors.

Ardabil Province, with a population of about 1.3 million, lies in north-western Iran and is known for its rich craft traditions and tourism assets.

## 'Somewhere at the End of the Street', portrait of Iran's first martyred nuclear scientist

From European classrooms to Lebanese battle lines on the stage



● theater.ir

 By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

### INTERVIEW

The stage production 'Somewhere at the End of the Street,' written by Mohsen Alemzadeh and co-directed by Ahmad Nadafi and Sadegh Nasiri, hails from the city of Yazd in central Iran and takes up the life of Martyr Mohammad Hossein Ramezankhani, a figure whom the director describes as Iran's first martyred nuclear scientist.

'Somewhere at the End of the Street' is not merely a historical reenactment. It is a dramatic re-reading of the life of a lesser-known yet deeply consequential figure in contemporary Iranian history. Centering on the life of Martyr Mohammad Ramezankhani, the play sets out to restage the bond between science, struggle, and resistance in theatrical form, a bond that stretches from European universities to the tangled arenas of Lebanese politics and civil war.



Ahmad Nadafi

With a multi-layered narrative, the production carries the audience back to the turbulent years of the 1970s, when political struggle, academic pursuit, and the early formation of resistance networks across the region were tightly interwoven. The dramatic spine of the play is built around Ramezankhani's year-long disappearance and a cryptic letter his companions receive, an entry point into revisiting his life, his ideas, and the intricate power dynamics at play in Lebanon.

The play was staged at the 44th Fajr International Theater Festival, with public performances scheduled to continue in theaters across the country. Speaking to Iran Daily, director Ahmad Nadafi discussed the subject matter and the production's genesis, explaining that the core focus is the life of Martyr Mohammad Ramezankhani, a nuclear scientist assassinated in Lebanon. Since Ramezankhani was originally from Yazd, and the theater group is also based in that province, this shared geography became a driving force behind the choice of subject. Nadafi noted that the play, in part, traces the formation of resistance

forces, forces whose early nucleus included Jews, Muslims, and individuals from various countries. These figures would gather in a café during the evenings, hashing out plans to establish and strengthen resistance cells. Even so, the central axis of the work remains Ramezankhani's life. Reflecting on an earlier staging, Nadafi explained that roughly four years ago the play was performed for the resistance festival, but in a very different form. It ran for a single performance and then stalled. Afterward, the team rewrote the script from the ground up and relaunched the project with a stronger ensemble. This version, he emphasized, differs radically from the previous one, everything from the staging and set design to the rewritten text, altered narrative lines, and reworked story segments marks a complete overhaul.

Nadafi added that a book and a film on the subject had previously been produced in collaboration with the Art Bureau, and the theater team drew on years of research conducted there. Considerable time was spent shaping the script so that Ramezankhani's activities and struggles would take center stage more forcefully. The 12-day war also served as a catalyst to deepen the play's engagement with themes of war. In the initial version, Ramezankhani's academic field and nuclear work received little emphasis, but in the current production, that dimension comes sharply into focus.

Playwright Mohsen Alemzadeh elaborated on the segments of Ramezankhani's life highlighted in the play, noting that a significant portion unfolded in Lebanon. Ramezankhani studied in Austria before being introduced, through Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, to Mostafa Chamran in Lebanon. The play concentrates on his years in Lebanon between 1974 and 1980. Alemzadeh explained that during

this period, Ramezankhani was engaged in militant activities, which placed him under suspicion by SAVAK and ultimately led to his abduction. Using the episode of his kidnapping as a narrative pretext, the play probes power relations and the underlying causes of Lebanon's internal wars, conditions that paved the way for the emergence of what came to be known as the resistance, with the Islamic Republic at its helm and Ramezankhani as part of that current. Tracing Ramezankhani's path, Alemzadeh said that in the mid-1960s, escalating threats and pressure from SAVAK prompted senior figures to advise him to leave Iran and continue his studies in Austria. Alongside his education, he remained active in political and revolutionary work through the Islamic Students Association of Austria. After earning a bachelor's degree in atomic physics, he relocated to Lebanon, enrolled in a doctoral program in atomic physics at the University of Beirut, and took part in founding the Islamic Union Association in Lebanon and the Middle East.

According to Alemzadeh, SAVAK's reach extended into Austria and Lebanon, subjecting Ramezankhani to threats and torture. Beyond Lebanon, he also traveled through Syria and neighboring countries, playing an influential and clarifying role in the struggle against the Pahlavi regime. During his time in Lebanon, Ramezankhani worked closely with Martyr Chamran, tending to orphans and those in need whenever possible and striving to build unity and cohesion within the resistance front.

Describing the play's narrative structure, Alemzadeh explained that before the Revolution, Ramezankhani is abducted by SAVAK and disappears for a year. During this absence, members of his militant circle receive a letter from him, its origin unknown. The letter becomes the dramatic device through which his life is revisited,

while the factional wars and internal party conflicts of Lebanon are examined in parallel.

On the portrayal of Ramezankhani's martyrdom, Alemzadeh said that through his efforts, alongside Iraqi students, several operations were planned against Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime. His calculated and revolutionary actions against the interests of global arrogance and the Zionist regime placed him squarely in the crosshairs of the imperial-Zionist front. Ultimately, on July 3, 1980, as he was returning from his final university exams, this scientific and militant elite was gunned down by Ba'athist mercenaries and attained martyrdom.

Alemzadeh clarified that Ramezankhani had been in Lebanon prior to the Islamic Revolution and was martyred in 1980, four months before the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). The main body of the story is set in 1974 and unfolds through flashbacks. Years after his death, the narrative loops backward to examine his period of disappearance, the roots of Lebanon's ethnic, party-based, and political conflicts, and ultimately the reasons behind his assassination. A doctoral student in nuclear physics, Ramezankhani was killed by the Iraqi Ba'athist regime after an exam session, following his move from Austria to Lebanon. In the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and ahead of its invasion of Iran, the Ba'athist regime, working with Israel, resolved to assassinate active Iranian figures across different countries.

According to both the director and the playwright, 'Somewhere at the End of the Street' will continue its run following its appearance at the 44th Fajr International Theater Festival, with public performances planned in Tehran and other cities. The production is also being prepared for participation in the resistance festival.