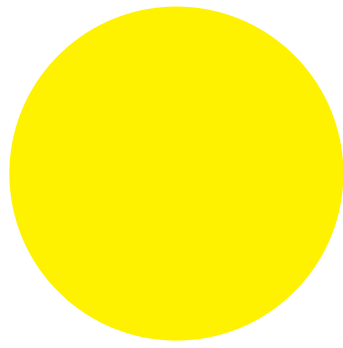


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# Iran Daily

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## Iran's foreign policy challenges in Mideast; convergence vs. competition



By Parham Pourramezan  
Political science researcher

OPINION  
EXCLUSIVE

Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East has long carried particular weight, as the region not only forms Iran's immediate geopolitical neighborhood but also serves as a critical arena for Tehran's political, security, and economic influence. From the crises in Syria and Iraq to the conflict in Yemen and tensions in the Persian Gulf, Iran's decisions have a direct impact on regional stability and prospects for cooperation.

At the same time, Tehran faces a set of challenges. On one hand, there is a clear need to build alliances and work with neighboring states to ensure security and promote economic development. On

the other hand, competition over political influence, energy resources, and security interests has created a complex environment. As a result, Iran's Middle East policy has consistently swung between two paths: convergence and rivalry.

Efforts toward convergence have focused on establishing durable diplomatic ties, expanding economic cooperation, taking part in regional security mechanisms, and playing a mediating role in regional crises. Competition, by contrast, has largely stemmed from historical and sectarian differences and from geopolitical rivalries with certain states, notably Saudi Arabia, as well as political structures such as Israel. This duality has turned the management of Iran's foreign policy into a demanding task, requiring Tehran to expand avenues for cooperation while handling regional rivalries with care. Against the backdrop of rapid geopolitical shifts and mounting international

economic and political pressure, reassessing Iran's foreign policy challenges in the Middle East has taken on renewed importance. Examining the dynamics of convergence and competition can help clarify the opportunities and risks facing Iran and offer a framework for future policymaking. Over the next four years, Tehran's ability to strike a balance between engagement with its neighbors and the management of regional rivalries will play a decisive role in shaping Iran's standing and influence in the Middle East. Based on this assessment, I outline five possible scenarios for Iran's regional policy over a four-year horizon.

### 1. Escalation of tensions & isolation

In this scenario, Iran and key regional actors, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are drawn into intense power competition, with diplo-

matic cooperation effectively grinding to a halt. Regional interventions, support for proxies, and limited military confrontations drive tensions higher, while Iran's economic ties with its neighbors and Western countries are sharply curtailed. The main drivers include competition for influence in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, sustained Western sanctions, and a weakening Iranian economy. Limited opportunities may emerge through closer ties with less competitive neighbors and the formation of narrow security blocs, but the challenges are significant, including rising military costs, shrinking diplomatic influence, declining investment, and heavier domestic and regional burdens.

### 2. Limited & fragile convergence

Here, Iran seeks to preserve a degree of regional cooperation, but deep mistrust and conflicting interests make such engagement fragile and short-lived. Poli-

cal and economic convergence remains limited, and any regional agreement requires prolonged and difficult bargaining. Key drivers include leadership changes in neighboring states, continued sanctions pressure, and the active role of external players such as Russia and the United States. Opportunities lie in using limited agreements to boost Iran's economic and security footprint, while challenges include the risk of failed negotiations, widening rifts with neighbors, and restricted prospects for long-term convergence.

### 3. Balance between competition & cooperation

In this scenario, Iran manages to strike a relative balance between rivalry and engagement. Economic and security cooperation continues with some neighbors, even as competition over political influence persists in flashpoints such as Iraq and Syria.

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# Leader: National power related more to will of nations than to missiles

## National Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Monday that national power is related more to the will of nations and their steadfastness than to missiles and aircraft. Unity, strong will, motivation, and resistance to the enemy's temptations are the pillars of national power, Ayatollah Khamenei said in a televised message ahead of the February 11 rallies marking the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. His remarks came as tensions between Iran and the United States have worsened in recent weeks after Washington threatened to attack Iran on the pretext of Tehran's response to recent riots which were triggered by protests over economic problems in the country. The Leader in his message called on the Iranian nation to demonstrate its will and steadfastness on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, saying such unity would frustrate the country's enemy.



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei issues a televised message on the occasion of the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran on February 9, 2026.  
● khamenei.ir

"Disappoint the enemy," the Leader stated, arguing that a nation remains exposed to harm as long as its enemies are not disappointed. He also urged the people to continue showing their resolve in various arenas. Ayatollah Khamenei described Bahman 22<sup>nd</sup> (February 11) as a manifestation of the Iranian nation's power and dignity. "Bahman 22<sup>nd</sup> (February 11) every year is the day of unveiling the power and dignity of the Iranian nation," the Leader said, describing the nation as motivated, resolute, steadfast, appreciative, and aware of its own situation. He said the Iranian people achieved a "great victory" on February 11, 1979, by freeing themselves and their country from "foreign interference," adding that foreign powers have sought ever since to restore the previous circumstances. "The Iranian nation is standing firm," Ayatollah Khamenei asserted. "The symbol of this steadfastness is Bahman 22<sup>nd</sup>." He called the annual rallies "unparalleled" in the world,

saying there is no other example of a nation marking its independence every year with such massive nationwide participation. The demonstrations "force those who covet Iran and its interests to retreat," Ayatollah Khamenei said. Ayatollah Khamenei also expressed hope that Iran's youth would advance in science, action, piety, ethics, and material and spiritual progress, creating pride for the country. He said February 11 reflects all these qualities, as people take to the streets to express unity, loyalty to the Islamic Republic, and commitment to the nation. He voiced hope that this year's rallies would further amplify the Iranian nation's grandeur, as in previous years.

## Iran says may dilute highly enriched uranium if all sanctions lifted

### International Desk

Iran may water down its stockpile of highly enriched uranium in return for the lifting of all US sanctions, the country's atomic chief said on Monday. Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, was responding to a question about the possibility of diluting uranium enriched to the purity of 60%. "This issue depends on whether, in return, they lift all the sanctions or not," Eslami told reporters in Tehran, according to ISNA. Iran began a new round of talks with the United States on Friday in Muscat, the capital of Oman, over its nuclear program, amid a US military buildup in the Persian Gulf.



Washington reportedly has put forward several demands, including a halt to Iran's uranium enrichment, the removal of Iran's stockpile of 60% enriched uranium from the country and a curb on the range of Iran's missiles. Iranian officials have repeatedly rejected the demands. Eslami also flatly denied reports that Iran had agreed to hand over the 60% uranium to a third country,

describing them as speculation produced by "pressure groups." "Such a thing has not been on the agenda, and even if it was, [certain] countries made proposals to contribute to the talks. Such a thing has not been discussed in the negotiations," he said. The latest talks resumed after a seven-month hiatus since June, when Israel attacked Iran during exchanges between Tehran and Washington. The strikes resulted in the deaths of more than 1,000 military personnel and civilians, including senior commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and nuclear scientists. A few days after the Israeli aggression, which lasted 12 days, the United States bombed three Iranian nuclear sites.

## Iran's foreign policy ...

This approach allows Iran to maintain a minimum level of regional influence. Its drivers include shared security and economic needs and international pressure for regional stability. Opportunities include consolidating a foothold in energy markets, maintaining diplomatic channels, and leveraging a mediating role in crises. The challenges, however, are a fragile equilibrium between competition and cooperation, the risk of sudden crises, and a degree of reliance on external powers.

### 4. Expanded regional cooperation

Under this scenario, Iran forges meaningful strategic and economic partnerships with several Middle Eastern countries, particularly Iraq, Oman, and Turkey. Rivalries are largely confined to secondary issues, and through active diplomacy Iran works to solidify its regional position. Drivers include neighboring states' desire to lower tensions, energy security concerns, and the need for economic development. The opportunities range from expanded joint investment and sustained diplomatic influence to reduced military threats and greater regional credibility. The main challenges involve limits on cooperation with rival states and the need to carefully manage long-standing historical and sectarian rivalries.

### 5. Full convergence & regional leadership

In the most optimistic scenario, Iran achieves comprehensive convergence with Middle Eastern countries in security, economic, and energy domains. Tehran's role as a mediator and regional power is firmly established, past rivalries are reduced to a minimum, and durable regional agreements pave the way for economic growth and lower international pressure. Drivers include the need for collective energy security, shifts in regional perceptions, and a reduction in sanctions and political pressure. Opportunities include regional leadership, higher energy and goods exports, strong diplomatic influence, and diminished military and security threats. The challenges lie in sustaining convergence over time, preventing exploitation by rivals, and maintaining a high degree of diplomatic flexibility. In conclusion, an analysis of Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East shows that Tehran has consistently navigated between convergence and competition. Efforts to build alliances with neighbors, engage in security frameworks, and pursue economic development offer a path to stabilizing Iran's regional influence. Yet geopolitical, sectarian, and historical rivalries continue to impose serious constraints and complexity, turning the management of foreign policy into an ongoing strategic challenge.

Despite these obstacles, Iran retains significant capacity to capitalize on regional opportunities. Engagement with aligned states, mediation in regional crises, and the expansion of economic and energy cooperation can help strengthen Tehran's regional position. Building shared security networks with neighbors and easing historical tensions could also foster greater trust and more durable convergence. At the same time, Iran faces substantial threats and limitations. Regional rivalries with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel, sustained Western sanctions, and political volatility in neighboring countries all have the potential to narrow the space for cooperation. Long-standing mistrust and misunderstandings between Tehran and some regional actors further complicate efforts to balance rivalry and engagement. To achieve a stable and effective foreign policy in the Middle East, Iran will need to adopt a calibrated approach that expands cooperation while managing competition. Strengthening economic diplomacy, making use of mediation opportunities, and easing tensions with rival states will be critical to Iran's success over the next four years. Ultimately, Tehran's ability to balance convergence and competition will determine its strategic position and long-term influence in the Middle East.

## President: New talks good chance for 'logical' resolution of nuclear issue

Top security official to visit Muscat today



### International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian described the new round of negotiations with the United States as a very good opportunity for a "logical" and "fair" resolution of tensions over Iran's nuclear issue.

"We seek to secure our rights under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including on the issue of enrichment, and the lifting of unjust sanctions", Pezeshkian said in a ceremony held in Tehran on the occasion of the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Islamic Revolution.

Iran, for its part, will make its efforts for the success of the negotiations and hopes the other side would also commit to this goal without making excessive demands, Pezeshkian said.

"Our message to the world is clear; Iran is a country that honors its commitments, if it sees sincerity and adherence to obligations from others as well. The Islamic Republic of Iran extends a hand of friendship to all countries that are interested in sincere cooperation". Iran and the US have launched a new round of negotiations, mediated by Oman, to resolve a decades-long dispute over Iran's nuclear program. The two sides described the first round of the negotiations as a good start, which were held in Oman's capital, Muscat, on Friday.

Iran had held five rounds of talks on a replacement for the 2015 nuclear deal prior to the US-Israeli airstrikes on the country and its nuclear facilities in mid-June.

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Larijani is scheduled to travel to Muscat today amid preparations for further talks between Tehran and Washington.

"During the visit, Larijani is set to meet with senior Omani officials and hold talks on the latest regional and international developments, as well as bilateral cooperation," Fars News Agency reported on Monday.

### International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting with foreign ambassadors and representatives of international bodies in Iran on the occasion of the 47th anniversary of Islamic Revolution in Tehran on February 9, 2026.  
● president.ir

### Iran serious in talks

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who is leading Iran's negotiating team, said on Monday that the Islamic Republic is taking nuclear negotiations seriously and is seeking genuine, result-oriented talks.

Nonetheless, the Iranian minister said, progress depends on the other side demonstrating an equal degree of commitment and seriousness.

He said Iran is approaching the negotiations with seriousness, and is pursuing real talks aimed at achieving results, provided that the other side also shows seriousness and preparedness for negotiations focused on outcomes.

Araghchi said the Iranian people resist when addressed in the language of force but respond positively when treated with respect.

### Distrust between Iran, US

The top Iranian diplomat further said there is a large wall of distrust between Iran and the US, stemming from the behavior of the latter in past years.

He also voiced hope that trust could be established to enable negotiations to achieve tangible results.

He emphasized that Iran's policy relies on strong collaboration with neighboring countries, hoping that all parties would unite to maintain peace and stability in the region while avoiding any escalation or confrontation.

Iran insists on its legal right to enrich uranium on its own soil, describing the issue as a red line in the talks. Tehran says any technical measures can only be considered within a framework that recognizes this right, warning that preconditions beyond it would be viewed as a sign of bad faith.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

### CARTOON





# Pezeshkian launches Tous gas field project, highlights flare gas collection

## Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian officially inaugurated via videoconference on Monday the launch of the Tous gas field development project aimed at strengthening the stability of the gas supply network in the country's northeast.

The project is also to supply feedstock to the Shahid Hashemi-Nejad Gas Refinery, the Tous gas field is considered one of eastern Iran's key gas fields, with estimated gas-in-place reserves of about 58 billion cubic meters.

The field was discovered in 2003, and development operations began in 2023. The project, as reported by the Iranian Oil Ministry's news service Shana, was implemented with an investment of 120 million euros, financed through domestic resources. In its first phase, the field has a daily production capacity of 3 million cubic meters of natural gas, with the potential to increase output to 5 million cubic meters per day. Key objectives of the project include partially offsetting the feedstock shortfall at the Shahid Hashemi-Nejad refinery, improving the reliability of the gas distribution network in north-

eastern Iran — particularly during peak winter demand — and reducing dependence on gas import contracts with Turkmenistan.

The project is expected to play a significant role in enhancing energy security and ensuring stable gas supplies for Iran's eastern provinces.

The development has also contributed to job creation, providing direct employment for about 1,200 workers during the construction and installation phase and 180 jobs during the operation phase.

The launch of the Tous gas field development project is considered a key step toward balanced growth in Iran's gas industry, increased domestic production and greater resilience of the national gas network, particularly in the cold northeastern regions.

The president also ordered the launch of the first phase of the Dehloran pressure boosting station, valued at 125 million euros.

Speaking at the ceremony, Pezeshkian underlined that the revenues generated from collecting associated gas and reducing flaring should be spent on the development and prosperity of host regions.

Placing a premium on the need to safeguard the country's foreign exchange resources, Pezeshkian said about 5 million cubic meters of gas are flared daily in Iran's oil and gas fields, which amounts to the loss of roughly



\$17 million in national wealth each day.

"Not even an hour should be lost in protecting this wealth and that all

available capacities must be mobilized to accelerate the collection of associated gas," he said.

Referring to the figure, the president

said such resources could bring about major changes in the country's development and should not be allowed to go to waste.

## Agriculture minister declares self-sufficiency in white meat production

### Economy Desk

Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljah announced on Monday that Iran has become one of the top five countries in the poultry industry, and by relying on domestic capabilities has achieved complete self-sufficiency in white meat production. Pointing to the significant progress



Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljah speaks at the inauguration ceremony of a livestock, poultry, and aquatic feed production factory in Zanjan on February 9, 2026.

● IRNA

in productivity across the country's poultry farming units, Nouri-Qezeljah was reported by IRNA as saying, "Currently, the feed conversion ratio in some units has reached 1.4, which indicates the high technical capability of Iranian producers."

The minister stressed that a portion of the country's demand for day-old chicks and parent stock used to be met from abroad, but self-sufficiency has been reached in the entire production chain, and dependencies have been minimized.

"700 trillion Tomans are allocated to support agricultural and livestock producers, and Bank Keshavarzi has

been given a special mission to provide resources and cover digital commitments for purchasing inputs," he said.

"The government's new policy of liberalizing the export and import of livestock products will drive producers towards competition and increased productivity."

Referring to the country's high capacity in natural resources, climate, and technical knowledge, Nouri-Qezeljah underlined that, "Iran's poultry, dairy, and meat industries will be able to fully meet domestic demand and will have a strong presence in the markets of neighboring countries in the near future."

## RAI: Number of EU-bound transit trains from China to Iran exceeds 60

### Economy Desk

Jabbar-Ali Zakeri, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI), said on Monday that as many as 60 trains from China destined for Iran and the European Union have entered our country.

Touching on the increase in the number of the Chinese trains passing through Iran, Zakeri emphasized the need to reduce transportation costs between Iran and China in order to boost exports. "To date, 60 trains from China to Iran and the European Union have entered our country, and today, three trains are on the verge of entering the country at the Incheh Borun border," he said. Zakeri referred to the signing of six-party



memorandums of understanding to define a common tariff in the countries along the route and said such measures would make the southern branch of the East-West Corridor and the Iranian route more active.

The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, pointing to his recent trip to China with the Minister of Roads and Urban Development in Xi'an, said Xi'an is a cargo hub for connecting Chinese cargo to Eu-

rope, and by 2030, trade between the European Union and China will reach 530 million tons annually, which is currently less than 100 million tons.

"Currently, the Chinese government provides subsidies to countries along this route for the development of rail transport, paying between 100 and 150 million dollars annually to Kazakhstan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and other CIS countries

for the development of rail infrastructure; this has led to an increase in rail transport on this route from zero to 3% in the last 10 years," he said.

"In this regard, we also need to take steps to gain a larger share of the transit and cargo transport on this route, and among these activities is the development of logistics centers in the country and establishing connections between them." Zakeri underscored efforts aimed at developing transportation activities across the country, including the development of logistics centers and their interaction with similar centers in neighboring and adjacent countries, which will boost the economy of this sector.

## SATBA says renewable power plants capacity surpassed 4200 megawatts

### Economy Desk

The head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) announced on Monday that the capacity of the country's renewable power plants exceeded 4,200 megawatts. Addressing the inauguration ceremony of 750 megawatts of renewable power plants, which was held in the presence of President Masoud Pezeshkian in the capital Tehran, Mohsen Tarzatab said 750 megawatts of new capacity will be added to the previous capacities.

"By the grace of God and with the support provided by the president, today we will cross the 4,200 megawatts mark," Tarzatab said, expressing hope that the capacity would reach 5,200 megawatts by the end of the Iranian calendar year (March 20).



The SATBA chief noted that this capacity would reach 7,600 megawatts by early summer and 11,000 megawatts by the end of summer. "The projects inaugurated today are located in 148 sites across the country, and 24 provinces are involved in implementing these large-scale projects."

Tarzatab added that 31

provinces were also involved in implementing small-scale projects, and out of the 750 megawatts, about 30 megawatts were small-scale. Stressing that the government and the Energy Ministry have not invested in such projects, he said nearly 1.07 million panels have been installed, and four thousand people have worked on it.





# Legacy of a revolution

## PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

Iran is on the eve of the 47th anniversary of its Islamic Revolution—a revolution that swept away 2,500 years of monarchy on the land of Iran and established a government based on authentic Islam under the leadership

of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In his speeches and books, Imam Khomeini outlined the foundations of a government based on Islam and clearly explained the characteristics of an Islamic government in the modern age, as well as the necessities for its establishment.

What follows are four articles, provided by the Department of International Affairs of the Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, that shed light on parts of the late leader's thought regarding the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic government.



Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (c), the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, greets supporters at an unknown location in Tehran in the early days after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.

● JAMARAN NEWS

## Objectives of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution; a scientific & philosophical framework

Every single social and political movement, defining objectives, goals and a foundational set of values is considered the first step of bringing about everlasting change and transformation. Such objectives not only set movements as such upon a certain path, they also will eventually form the ideological and spiritual foundation of said movements. Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran, which was founded upon certain moral, social and political building blocks, is an objective-driven and multidimensional apparatus encompassing overarching goals down to segmental operational details. From Imam Khomeini's perspective, the revolution was not just a simple political upheaval; it was a transformative cultural and spiritual experience seeking the realization of an ideal Islamic society, national sovereignty, social justice and the purification of society as a whole.

### Islam & theocracy

The core objective and the main goal of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was the revitalization of Muhammadian Islam and the mastery of religious teaching over all aspects of social life. Imam Khomeini described the revolution not as a simple political transformation but a continuation of the path set forth by prophets and Ahlulbayt (the Household of Islam's Prophet); that being the divine leadership centered around the Muhammadian traditions set forth by the Prophet himself. Such an objective, unlike political and economic analysis of the day, focused on religious, spiritual and subjective aspects of the revolution. Imam Khomeini therefore defined this religious establishment as a political system based on traditions, logic, justice and moral values permeating Islam. Such an establishment thereby will not only bound by its dedication toward the implementation of religious principles, it would have also been forced to define its efforts toward the realization of collective good (justice, freedom, independence, humanity, progress and ...) within an Islamic framework. Within such framework, any effort toward the establishment of a "theocracy" is not simply a political choice on people's part; it is in fact a moral, spiritual and logical imperative. From Imam's point of view, the establishment of an Islamic government is based on monotheism itself and its ultimate goal is none other than union with Allah, Islamic spirituality and the establishment of absolute justice.

*"The main issue Islam has been pursuing since its advent till now, the main goal of prophets from the first to the last one, the goals of the saints of Islam to their last is the spiritualities,*

### mysticism and the gnosis of Islam."

(Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 20, P280)

The Islamic government has a grand plan for all aspects of human life, that being humanity's salvation in both the world and afterlife in addition to the eradication of tyranny and corruption from the earth. He considered the codification of laws and freedom within the Islamic framework to be of highest importance to an Islamic government. With regards to such a government responsibility, Imam prioritized righteous justice, the spread of Islam throughout the world and the establishment of a global Islamic government whilst emphasizing Muslim's role in revitalization of the Islamic identity. Imam Khomeini furthermore stressed the preservation of democratic and humanitarian ideals of a nation within the Islamic framework of thought, believing that their observance of said principles and guidelines provide by Islam shall guarantee the progression of a society toward greater good.

### Education of future generations & cultural restoration

Another one of the core objectives of the Islamic revolution was the restoration of culture and correct education of future generations. Imam Khomeini stressed that without cultural change, values ingrained in a society shall remain unchanged and any political and social change shall not be sustainable for long. Towards the fulfillment of such a goal, Imam emphasized the priority of educating Iranian youth based on Islamic principles and humanitarian values along with a greater focus on the education provided by seminaries and religious establishment. Such an education must not be limited to school, universities, seminaries and madrasahs; It is necessary to consider families and the whole society as well. Cultural restoration in Imam's thought meant the total transformation of conceptual frameworks, societal values and political viewpoints. Such a change was focused on battling a materialistic culture, societal irresponsibility, consumerism and western-oriented thought sponsored by the Pahlavis. Islamic revolution sought to create a culture based on Islam, humanitarian values, justice and independence. Such a culture, not only contributed toward the formation of a national and religious identity, it also played an important role in resisting any attempts by the superpowers at colonization of the country and forced dependency on either of them.

### Spiritual purification & fighting corruption

Another one of the core objectives of

the Islamic revolution was what Imam referred to as liberation from self. Imam emphasized that humans need not only be liberated from the tyranny of foreigners and the so-called global arrogance, they also need to be liberated from their self as well. Spiritual purification (meaning self-improvement and purification from all darkness) is a necessity for the realization of social justice and the formation of a civilized society along with achieving spiritual perfection. Spiritual purification therefore not only needs internal transformation, it does also depend on social and political change as well. In other words, spiritual purification is only achieved through the establishment of a society based on Islamic values.



Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (c) is seen seated in Tehran's cemetery on February 1, 1979, the day he returned to the country from exile.

● JAMARAN NEWS

Such a perspective provided the much-needed theoretical ground to combat corruption and social indecency on all cultural, social and political fronts. From Imam Khomeini's view, one of the key philosophical principles of establishing an Islamic government revolved around the extermination of institutes responsible for spreading corruption and indecency, thereby preventing the spiritual growth of the youth as a consequence. Thorough implementation of Islamic laws in cultural, political and economic arenas would protect the society from corruption and providing the ground for spiritual growth. Therefore, Iran's struggle led by Imam Khomeini was not just limited to political and bureaucratic levels; it had to be extended to culture and society as well.

### National independence & rejection of dependency

Yet another core value of the Islamic revolution was achieving independence from the imposed structure of dependency on the West by the Pahlavi regime. Such a dependency was often multi-faceted: Economic (control of national resources by the foreign powers), military (imposed security doctrine), political (following US international policies), cultural (ideological influence and theoretical alienation). From Imam Khomeini's perspective, true independence was not necessarily limited to geopolitical realities; it also meant independent and self-sustaining thought. To fulfill this end, the Islamic movement appropriated unduly privileges granted to the foreigners on the economic front and curtailed their domination of national and religious spheres on a political front. Imam Kho-

meini defined colonization in different economic, cultural and political spheres, arguing that only through the downfall of Pahlavi's tyranny can meaningful societal transformation take place. The ultimate goal was to replace internal tyranny and external influence with an Islamic-democratic system – the Islamic Republic. Such an effort required the achievement of political freedom through active participation of masses and the establishment of a system capable of fulfilling the trinity of independence, freedom and justice within the framework of Islam.

### Social justice & rule of law

Imam Khomeini saw the realization of social justice and the establishment of the rule of law as two chief principles of the Islamic revolution. Among his first priorities were the implementation of laws centered around divine justice. From his viewpoint, the con-

cept of justice went beyond the equitable distribution of goods and included what was referred to as the adulation of humanity's high qualities and preparation of an immaculate life. Such an approach demanded the rejection of structural poverty, innate corruption of the government and prejudices not only common to economic sectors but also social and cultural spheres. Only through this path the roots of injustice could have been uprooted. Salvation and spiritual purification were the ultimate goals of Imam Khomeini with regards to such structure. He stressed that a desirable and fulfilling existence is only achievable through a combination of providing material necessities as well as achieving spiritual perfectionism. Such an endeavor demanded a restructuring of common legal and social understandings, including but not limited to the protection of disadvantaged groups and their rights against power and institutionalizing the rule of law so that no individual or group could stand above it. In simple terms, such legal and social goals complemented those ideals of independence and liberation from tyranny which guaranteed the formation of a just and free society based on Islamic law. From a legal perspective, such an emphasis on the rule of law translated into the absolute authority of Islamic teachings which necessitated the independence of judicial branch. Such a law had to be codified in consideration of public good as well as the tenets of religion. This encompassing approach regarded justice not only as a simple slogan but a systematic process focused on remedying material injustice and elevation of citizen's spiritual standing.

### Conclusion

It is thereby gathered that the Islamic revolution of 1979 benefits from a clear and encompassing set of objectives that covers both macro-level goals of the revolution down to its smallest operational details. Such objectives were not solely limited to the implementation of religious laws; They sought the fulfillment of ideals such as justice, humanity and freedom through them. Imam Khomeini continuously insisted that this revolution was not merely a political upheaval, it was in fact a cultural and spiritual change seeking the establishment of an Islamic government, national independence, social justice and spiritual purification. Such goals, in line with the core values of the revolution, were always considered the foremost priorities of the Islamic movement.

## Foundations of Imam Khomeini's revolutionary movement; a mystical & Islamic perspective

The driving force behind Imam Khomeini's movement in the formation of the Islamic Revolution transcended mere sociological or political analyses; it was rooted in his profound mystical, philosophical, theological, and jurisprudential foundations. A precise anal-

ysis of this Islamic and mystical backing rests upon fundamental concepts of his thought, which we will briefly outline:

### 1. Mystical & philosophical foundations: Pure monotheism

### & rejection of non-divine authority

The core foundation of Imam Khomeini's movement was his mystical thought, reflected in his prominent mystical, philosophical, and ethical works.

**Monotheism of actions (Tawhid-e Af'ali) & rejection of domination:** Islamic mysticism, particularly in the Shiite approach, places immense emphasis on the principle of Tawhid-e Af'ali. This principle asserts that the only true and effective agent in the universe

is the Sacred Essence of God. From this perspective, any domination, power, or legitimacy built upon non-divine foundations (Taghut, material powers, the East or the West) constitutes practical polytheism and invalid dominion. This view provided Imam Khomeini's revolutionary



movement with a robust mystical and religious theoretical base. From this vantage point, the sovereignty of the Shah's regime, which arose from foreign support (America), possessed no legitimacy against the infinite power of the Divine and the will of the people connected to the Truth.

*"The most important and valuable of our beliefs is the principle of Monotheism (Tawhid). According to this principle, we believe that the Creator of the universe, of all realms of existence, and of humanity, is solely the Sacred Essence of God Almighty, who is aware of all truths, capable of all things, and the Owner of all things. This principle teaches us that man must submit only to the Holy Essence of the Truth and must not obey any human being unless that obedience is, in effect, obedience to God."*  
(Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 5, p. 387)

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Imam Khomeini regarded his movement not as an ordinary political change, but as a repetition of Imam Hussein's uprising in Ashura. In the Imam's view, this historical model was not an event of the past, but an eternal Islamic archetype for fighting oppression and tyranny. From this perspective, the world is characterized by a constant, objective duality of the confrontation between the front of Truth and Falsehood. The Shah and the despotic Pahlavi system were introduced as the representatives of the Taghut of the time, and fighting them was defined as a continuation of obedience to the Lord of Martyrs (Imam Husayn). Disregard for apparent defeat & importance of steadfastness: In Islamic thought, failure has no place in the struggle against tyranny and the fulfillment of divine duty. Steadfastness to the point of death, self-sacrifice,

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The concept of government can be examined on both a theoretical and operational ground. From a macro-level perspective, the ultimate goal in Imam's mind was the creation of an encompassing global Islamic government; a world government where divine law reigns, not individual's opinions and decisions. Imam was deeply opposed to all nationalistic, racial and tribal movement resulting in the formation of nation-states. He considered such conspiratorial ideas to be a ploy by the enemies in order to weaken the Islamic nation (Ummah). He believed that the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire following the World War I to be a colonial endeavor, aiming to break down the power of Islam. Therefore, Imam Khomeini constantly stressed notions such as "Islamic Nation", "Islamic Heartland" and "Ummah"; considering the formation of a unified Islamic world government to be among highest priorities of the Islamic revolution of Iran (1979). Nevertheless, on an operational level,



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of progress with regards to the other nations, arguing that unity around the axis of Islam and fulfillment of Islam's original promises would address all problems plaguing the Islamic world. The formation of an Islamic government was composed of three stages:

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Imam Khomeini first introduced the concept of an Islamic nation as an overarching ideal, considering the rule of Fuqaha (P. Faqih/Scholar) during the time of occultation to be the best form of government which would seek to implement divine laws in the society. Whilst defining such a form of government as an ideal one, Imam, as a matter of expediency, cautioned his followers about any form of public opposition to the government until certain conditions for the realization of such a dream was met.

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around 1960s, Imam proposed the Islamic form of government as an alternative to the monarchical system, which he fiercely opposed and criticized. He believed that elucidation of political and social aspects of Islam would inevitably lead to public awareness and mass support. Such an effort however could only be realized through the support of religious scholars who would see this divine charge through.

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On the eve of 1979 Islamic revolution's victory, Imam Khomeini sought to defend and demonstrate different aspects of the Islamic republic in an effort to legitimize the establishment of such a form of government in Iran. He therefore only accepted the establishment of such a government on the condition of codifying the new constitution based on Islamic law and public vote.

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stratagems, knew well that the root of foreign domination over nations lies in stripping them of their identity and self-belief. He consistently emphasized the boundless richness of culture, literature, and the deep roots of Islamic-Iranian civilization. In his Divine Will and Testament, referring to the engineered plans of colonialism to alienate regional nations from their own authenticity, Imam Khomeini stated: *"The Aryan and Arab races are no less than the European, American, and Soviet races. If they find their true selves,*

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lost and the fundamental values of the nation are buried under layers of Western influence, achieving true independence and liberation from the comprehensive domination of enemies will be impossible. Thus, while pursuing the realization of an Islamic government and the revival of religious identity, the Imam paid special attention to development and progress. However, this development had to be defined within the framework of Islamic and national identity—a development that is self-sufficient and reliant on internal assets.



movement with a robust mystical and religious theoretical base. From this vantage point, the sovereignty of the Shah's regime, which arose from foreign support (America), possessed no legitimacy against the infinite power of the Divine and the will of the people connected to the Truth.

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## UWW Ranking Series:

Iran bags seven medals,  
claims Greco-Roman crown at Zagreb Open

## Sports Desk

Iran captured the Greco-Roman team title at the Zagreb Open on Sunday, finishing with seven medals, including three golds, at the opening United World Wrestling Ranking Series event of the season. Mohammad Hosseinvand capped Iran's campaign on Sunday by winning gold in the 55kg category. The unheralded wrestler edged his high-profile compatriot Pouya Dadmarz – the 2024 world silver medalist – on criteria (1-1) in the semifinals before defeating Uzbekistan's Ikhtiyor Botirov 2-0 in the final. Hosseinvand earned both par terre advantages in the gold-medal bout. Although neither wrestler scored, Hosseinvand defended effectively and conceded no points to secure the victory.

With the tournament also serving as the second phase of Iran's team selection process, Hosseinvand has emerged as a contender for major events later this year, including the World Championships in Manama this October. However, he still faces strong domestic competition, notably from Payam Ahmadi, who claimed U20 world gold and senior-level silver in 2024. Dadmarz rebounded from his semifinal loss to claim a bronze medal, defeating India's Lalit Lalit 5-3 in the consolation bout. Mohammadreza Mokhtari (82kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Seydi



Iran's Ali Oskou (blue) lifts Georgia's Temuri Orjonikidze during the Greco-Roman 77kg final at the Zagreb Open in Zagreb, Croatia, on February 7, 2026.

(97kg) also earned bronze medals on the final day of competition. Mokhtari registered an impressive 3-1 victory over reigning Olympic silver medalist Demeu Zhadrayev of Uzbekistan but was edged on criteria (3-3) by Moldova's Mihail Bradu in the semifinals. He then defeated

American Beka Melelashvili by technical superiority (10-1) in the bronze-medal match.

Seydi, a world junior silver medalist last year, suffered a 5-1 loss to eventual gold medalist Alex Szoke of Hungary in the round of 16. He recovered in repechage with a 4-1 win over Austria's

Daniel Gastl before securing bronze with a criteria victory (1-1) against Kazakhstan's Iussuf Matsiyev.

Earlier in the tournament, Ali Oskou captured gold at 77kg on Saturday with a dominant technical superiority win (10-1) over Georgia's Temuri Orjonikidze in

the final.

Iran's Greco-Roman campaign began on Friday with Erfan Jarkani's gold medal in the 63kg division, following an 8-4 victory over India's Chetan Chetan. The result secured Jarkani – a 2024 world junior and U23 bronze medalist – a place in Iran's

squad for April's Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Former world champion Meisam Dalkhani settled for bronze in the same weight class. After a 14-5 semifinal loss to Chetan, Dalkhani rebounded with an 8-0 technical superiority victory over Kazakhstan's Dastan Zarlykhanov in the third-place bout.

Iran topped the Greco-Roman team standings with 125 points, finishing five clear of Uzbekistan, which earned one gold, two silver medals, and three bronzes. Kazakhstan placed third with 108 points.

The Greco-Roman success followed a mixed freestyle showing for Iran, which finished second in the team standings with 10 medals and 180 points, 45 behind the United States.

Sina Khalili (70kg) and Mohammad-Mobin Azimi (92kg) claimed Iran's freestyle gold medals, while Olympic and world champion Hassan Yazdani endured a disappointing debut at 97kg, suffering a technical superiority loss (13-3) to American Stephen Buchanan in the final.

Peyman Nemati (65kg) won silver, while Milad Valizadeh (57kg), Reza Momeni (61kg), Ali-Akbar Fazli (74kg), Adel Panahian (79kg), Ali Savadkouhi (86kg), and Mohammad Janmohammadzadeh (125kg) each earned bronze medals.

The UWW Ranking Series resumes with the Muhamet Malo tournament in Tirana, Albania, on February 25.

## Asian Indoor Athletics Championships:

Dastarbandan takes  
800m bronze as Iran finishes  
with four medals

Iran's Toktam Dastarbandan (r) poses with her women's 800m bronze alongside Chinese gold medalist Wu Hongjiao (c) and Uzbekistan's Sabokhat Samijonova at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tianjin, China, on February 8, 2026.

## Sports Desk

Iranian middle-distance runner Toktam Dastarbandan claimed a bronze medal in the women's 800m final as Iran concluded its Asian Indoor Athletics Championships campaign with four medals in Tianjin, China, on Sunday. Dastarbandan clocked 2:09.576 in the final and narrowly missed silver, finishing just one millisecond behind sec-

ond-placed Sabokhat Samijonova of Uzbekistan. China's Wu Hongjiao won gold in 2:08.56. Dastarbandan's bronze proved to be Iran's only medal on the final day of competition. Sobhan Ahmadi finished fourth in the men's 800m final, while Amirfarzam Safari and Hossein Nouri placed sixth and seventh, respectively, in the men's 1500m.

Nouri, however, left China with a medal after secur-

ing bronze in the men's 3000m on Saturday. Hassan Ajami, meanwhile, narrowly missed the podium in the men's shot put, finishing fourth with a best throw of 19.39 meters. The Iranian, who was only handed a place in the final after a Chinese sprinter was forced out through injury, registered a career-best 47.59 seconds, finishing behind Qatar's Bassem Hemeida (47.27 seconds) and China's Chiyu Zheng (47.34 seconds).

## Persian Gulf Pro League wrap-up:

Persepolis undone at Malavan,  
misses out on top spot

## Sports Desk

Persepolis missed the chance to go top of the Persian Gulf Pro League table after suffering a 1-0 away defeat to Malavan FC at the Sirous Qayeqran Stadium on Sunday.

A win would have given the Tehran Reds a two-point lead over Tractor, Esteghlal and Sepahan, but a third defeat in five matches left Omar Vieira's side fourth in the standings on 34 points. Mohammad-Javad Mohammadi scored the decisive goal for the hosts in the 79th minute, sending Persepolis goalkeeper Payam Niazmand the wrong way from the penalty spot after Malavan midfielder Farhan Jafari was brought down in the area by Soroush Rafiei.

The victory lifted Malavan to seventh place on 28 points.

Elsewhere, Golgozar Sirjan saw its seven-game unbeaten league run ended with a 3-1 defeat away to Foolad Khuzestan in Ahvaz.

Amir Jafari gave Golgozar an early lead in the fifth minute, but the match swung in the first half through goals from Ehsan Mahrouqi and Mohammadreza Soleimani. Abolfazl Razzaqpour sealed the win



Malavan Farhan Jafari (88) is fouled by Persepolis captain Soroush Rafiei in the penalty area during a Persian Gulf Pro League game at the Sirous Qayeqran Stadium, Bandar Anzali, Iran, on February 8, 2026.

eight minutes from time with a low finish from inside the box.

Golgozar remained fifth with 33 points, while Foolad moved up to ninth on 25 points after a second win in four matches since Hamid Motahari took over as head coach.

In Yazd, Reza Dehqan and Paraguayan fullback Mario Otazu scored late in each half as Chadormalou beat Paykan 2-0 at home to climb to sixth on 29 points.

Paykan stayed 11th with 22 points.

Earlier in the round, Haiti international Duckens Nazon struck a 96th-minute winner as Esteghlal edged 10-man Shams Azar 3-2 at home on Thursday, despite surrendering a two-goal lead late in the match.

On Friday, Tractor fell 2-1 away to Fajr Sepasi in Shiraz, with Meisam Moradi scoring the decisive goal in the 82nd minute. Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi's

36th-minute header earned Sepahan a hard-fought 1-0 home victory over Khaybar, ending a five-match winless league run for Moharram Navidkia's side.

Iralco defeated nine-man Zob Ahan 1-0 in Arak on Saturday thanks to Sasan Hosseini's 79th-minute strike. The same scoreline was recorded in Rafsanjan, where Mes lost at home to Esteghlal Khuzestan and remained rock-bottom of the 16-team table.



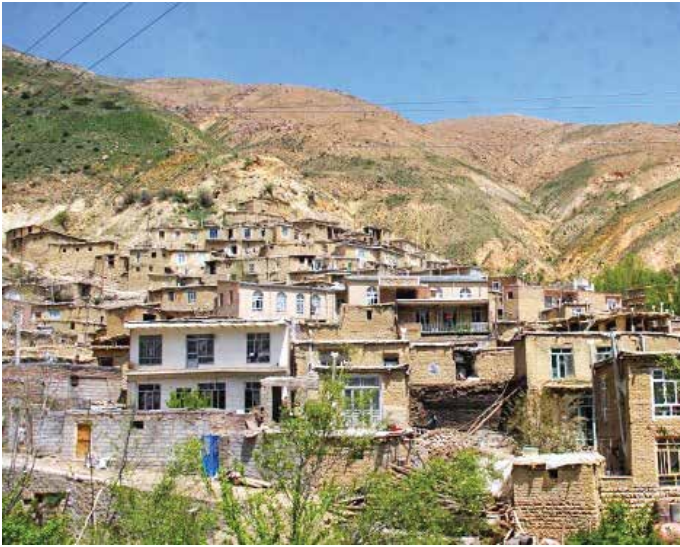
# Golakhor village captivates visitors with nature, tradition

Iranica Desk

Nestled in the lush forests of Arasbaran, the village of Golakhor, with its traditional stepped architecture, is considered one of the most beautiful yet lesser-known tourist destinations in East Azarbaijan Province. Located 60 kilometers west of Varzeqan, on the western slopes of Kasabeh Mountain, Golakhor is surrounded by verdant Arasbaran woodlands. The village, with its scenic hot springs, is 160 kilometers from Tabriz and 70 kilometers from Marand. The natural springs in the area are rich in calcium, which creates unique and visually striking formations that captivate visitors, according to chtn.ir.

The village comprises approximately 250 houses built in a stepped arrangement along a valley. Constructed using sun-dried bricks and clay, each home rests on roughly one-meter-high stone foundations. Residents primarily engage in livestock farming and agriculture, with walnuts, cherries, and apricots representing the main agricultural products of the village.

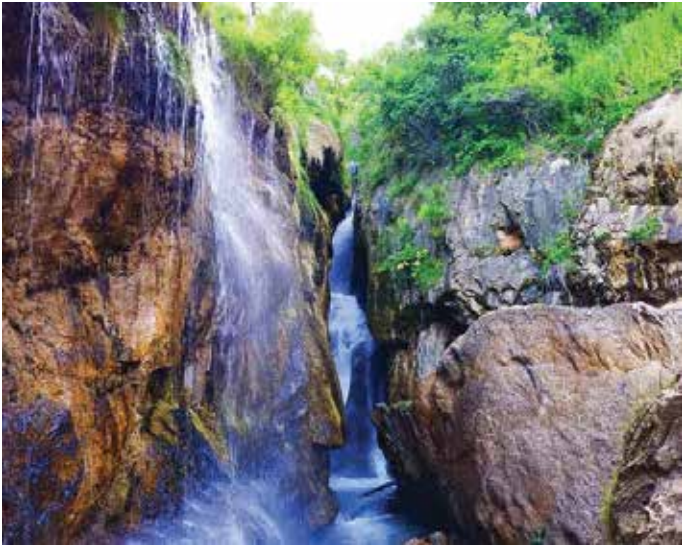
Dairy products such as cheese, Kashk (a dish of dried buttermilk that can be crumbled and turned into a paste with water), yogurt, and milk are also locally produced. Women actively participate alongside men in farming and animal husbandry, and in their spare time, they weave carpets, particularly



in the traditional Heris style. Golakhor also preserves centuries-old culinary traditions. The art of preparing handmade noodles, has been practiced in the village for generations and continues to this day. Women still follow traditional methods to prepare the noodles for local soups and other dishes. Another cultural highlight is the traditional grinding of Kashk in special containers, which is then used in local cuisine. The village celebrates Nowruz (Persian New Year) with a unique ritual. Residents gather in the village mosque to prepare wheat and saffron water, recite Surah Yaseen of the Holy Qur'an collectively, and distribute the blessed mixture among attendees. Afterwards, villagers visit homes where grievances



have occurred over the past year to reconcile and restore harmony.



Other local customs include the observance of Tasua Day (9th day of Muharram, marking the anniversary of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his companions), when women bake traditional bread, which is then placed at the center of the village in front of the religious banner (Alam). Villagers hold mourning ceremonies around the bread, which is later distributed among participants. The nationally registered Al-Atash Ashura (the tenth day of Muharram) is another long-standing ritual performed in the village with its unique style. For nature enthusiasts, Golakhor offers spectacular outdoor attractions. An ancient cave near the Aq Su Spring and waterfalls provides breathtaking scenery, particularly in spring. Reaching the cave requires about an hour of hiking from the village toward the spring

and waterfalls. The cave entrance sits atop a rocky hill, and inside, visitors find a network of interconnected limestone chambers, making it one of the registered tourist attractions of the county. The climate of Golakhor and its surrounding region further enhances its appeal. The village enjoys a temperate mountainous climate, characterized by mild summers, cool springs, and crisp autumns, while winters can bring occasional snowfall, blanketing the valley in a serene layer of white. This seasonal variation allows visitors to experience the village in different atmospheres, from the vibrant greenery of spring to the golden hues of autumn. The surrounding Arasbaran forests are home to diverse flora and fauna, including oak, hornbeam, and wild cherry trees, as well as native wildlife such as foxes, boars, and various bird species. In addition, the nearby villages and natural sites — such as the Varzeqan forest trails, Kasabeh Mountain peaks, and the rivers and waterfalls of the Arasbaran Protected Area — offer hiking, bird-watching, and eco-tourism opportunities, making Golakhor an ideal base for exploring the rich cultural and natural heritage of the region. Visitors can also enjoy scenic drives and local markets in nearby towns, allowing a deeper connection with the traditions and landscapes of East Azarbaijan Province.

## Reading Room

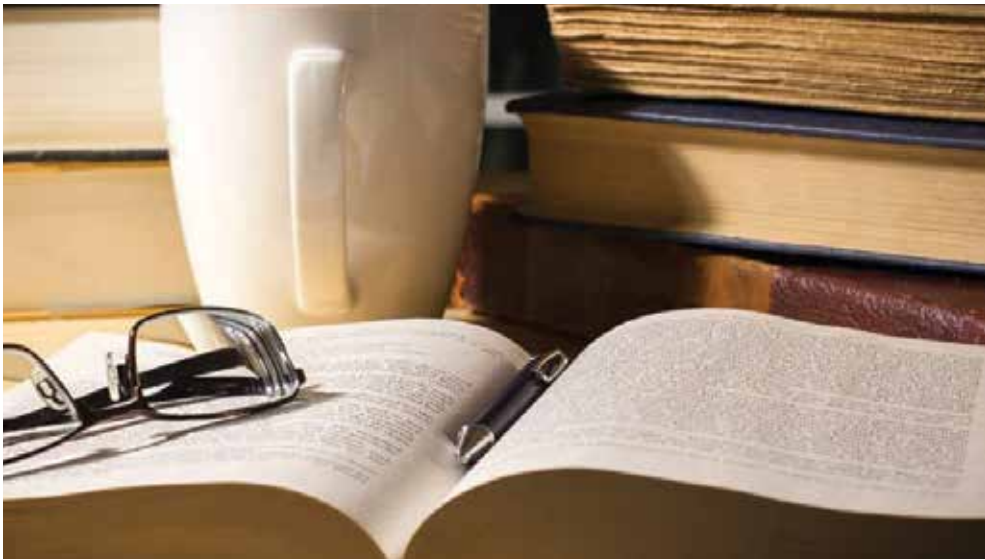
### Books as medicine for minds, communities

Iranica Desk

Bibliotherapy, an old yet newly rediscovered concept, now stands at the intersection of literature, mental health, and social action. According to Iran Book News Agency (IBNA), citing LitHub, Jess Décoursey Hines, a librarian and author, explores in a recent essay how reading can serve both as individual relief and as a collective force against anxiety, grief, and the burnout of the contemporary world. “I have often felt like a part-time therapist as a librarian,” she writes. People share their secrets with librarians. We build relationships with regular visitors, listen to their struggles, and deliver something beyond the books themselves. Twenty years ago, during my library studies, I first encountered the term ‘bibliotherapist,’ and I was curious: is bibliotherapy simply a calming reading experience, or does it require a mental health professional?” While arts, music, and drama therapy have long held formal places in academic programs and the mental health system, bibliotherapy remains less widely recognized. Hines

recalls wondering when the “medicine of books” would reach its peak — perhaps that moment is now, with the emergence of figures like Emily Ramble, a clinical social worker and author of Bibliotherapy in the Bronx (2025). Ramble’s book is not a technical academic text limited to professionals but a poetic, accessible guide for book lovers. She reminds readers that bibliotherapy is far from new: in ancient Egypt, one of the earliest libraries welcomed visitors with a sign reading “House of the Healing Soul.” The term bibliotherapy first appeared in 1916 in a humorous article in The Atlantic. During World War I, the Library of Congress and the American Library Association distributed hundreds of books for therapeutic purposes to soldiers. At the time, debates arose over whether patients should avoid books related to their illness or whether reading should serve as an escape from — or reflection on — reality. Hospital librarians even wore medical uniforms and “prescribed” books alongside doctors and nurses. Ramble views bibliotherapy as an accessible tool for

groups with limited access to formal mental health services. She distinguishes between developmental bibliotherapy, which takes place in schools and libraries, and clinical bibliotherapy, which is confined to psychotherapy. According to her, general advice for grief or heartbreak is rarely effective, as every experience is personal. Ramble begins with a “reading interview,” reads the book alongside the participant, and uses the text as a platform for dialogue about family, relationships, anxiety, and trauma. In contrast, other approaches rely on curated reading lists, such as those promoted by the School of Life in London. In these models, readers engage independently with books over time. While this method may not suit acute crises, it can illuminate deeper human questions. Research published in media such as Time and NPR shows that reading fiction can increase a person’s capacity for empathy. But is this empathy guaranteed? Sigrid Nunez wryly notes in her novel The Friend that while reading may enhance empathy, writing might slightly diminish it. This



caution serves as a reminder that books are not miraculous, but they can sharpen the language of experience. Bibliotherapy also holds a special place for children. Family therapists use storybooks to help children find an “authentic language” for their emotions. Non-didactic narratives told from the perspectives of animals or children help youngsters recognize their experiences without clinical terminology. Ramble further emphasizes

the link between bibliotherapy and activism. The history of Black librarianship in the US — from Sadie Delaney to the Schomburg Library — shows that libraries themselves can be radical instruments of change. Today, bookstores highlighting banned or controversial books continue this tradition. In a world where screens have replaced pages, Ramble reminds readers that books need not be “conquered.” Sometimes fragments and

“whispers” are enough. A short poem or the final lines of a novel can provide a survival force during times of censorship, threat, or fear. Ultimately, bibliotherapy does not promise instant salvation, but it offers a defiance of despair. As Ramble notes, in an era fed by fear, polarization, and erasure, reading can move us from isolated individualism to a broader collective horizon — where pain is acknowledged, named, and perhaps made a little lighter.



# Fajr Int'l Music Festival opens in Tehran

## Arts & Culture Desk

The 41st edition of the Fajr International Music Festival officially opened on Monday, February 9, and will run until February 15, marking more than four decades of continuous celebration of Iran's musical diversity and heritage.

The festival's formal opening ceremony was held in the Artists' Section of Tehran's main cemetery, attended by cultural officials and artists, where participants paid tribute to deceased musical figures.

Although Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi did not attend the ceremony in person, he issued a message addressed to the 41st Fajr Music Festival. In his message, Salehi said music today requires a responsible approach and serious dialogue with society, stressing that the Fajr Music Festival can and should serve as one of the central platforms for such dialogue.

"Music is not merely the art of

sound, but the auditory memory of a nation," Salehi wrote.

He noted that over more than four decades, the festival has sought to provide a platform in which tradition and innovation are not in opposition but find meaning through dialogue, allowing different generations of Iranian music to be seen and heard.

Salehi emphasized that now more than ever, music needs a responsible perspective, conscious support, and meaningful engagement with society, an approach that views music not as a decorative margin, but as an integral part of the country's cultural life and social capital.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the director general of the Music Office at the Ministry of Culture highlighted the unifying role of the festival, saying that the works and programs of the 41st edition have been designed around the theme of national unity.

He expressed hope that the Fajr Music Festival would contribute

to strengthening national cohesion and to a more effective role for people and artists in the country's path toward development and progress.

Arash Amini, secretary of the 41st Fajr Music Festival, addressed the structural changes introduced this year, including the removal of the competitive section. He explained that competitions should be separated from festivals as they detract from a focus on deep, authentic, and high-quality music.

"The Fajr Music Festival should be the place for the best—both talented young artists and experienced, professional musicians," he said. "I do not believe it is right to judge and rank these figures. Each of these artists is number one in their own field."

The 41st Fajr International Music Festival is being held by the Iran Music Association with the support of the Music Affairs Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance February 9-15. The event features six main sections, namely Iranian

music, choirs or choral groups, performances by children and youth groups, fusion music and pop genres, classical music, and the music of Iran's ethnic groups and regions.

The first day of the festival began with a performance in the children and youth music section, followed by additional performances in the youth and regional music categories.

In parallel, a specialized session titled "The Link Between Toys and Music in the Development of Children's Skills" was held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, with the participation of experts and specialists in the field.

Performances will continue in the coming days and according to the published schedule at various venues across Tehran, covering regional, classical, Iranian traditional, and pop music.



Official poster of the 41st Fajr International Music Festival  
● IRNA



## Isfahan to host 27th International Storytelling Festival

### Arts & Culture Desk

The 27th International Storytelling Festival, organized by the Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (CIDCA), will be held in the central city of Isfahan from February 13-15.

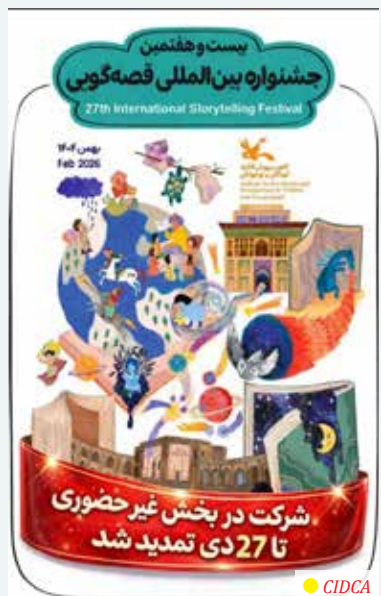
The opening ceremony of the cultural event is scheduled to be held at the historic Chaharbagh street, one of Isfahan's most prominent public and cultural spaces.

A total of 61 storytellers will compete for the festival's top honor across nine categories: Classic, Storytelling with Props, Sacrifice and Heroes, Religious, Sign Language, Narrative Poetry, New Stories, Ritual-Traditional, and Winners of the Previous Year.

Hamed Alamati, president of the festival, has outlined the festival's overarching policies, emphasizing the need to broaden and popularize storytelling among the general public, expand storytelling education, and pay special attention to families and adolescents in both the practice and promotion of storytelling.

He has also highlighted the extensive use of media to make storytelling more accessible and people-centered, as well as the mobilization of all capacities of the CIDCA in support of the national storytelling movement.

Storytelling in Iran is regarded as a living and dynamic heritage, deeply rooted in the country's long history and rich cultural traditions. Its most renowned and elevated form is "Naqqali", the dramatic narration of epic tales from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and other stories of Iranian kings and



heroes, traditionally performed in coffeehouses and public gatherings. This art form has been registered by UNESCO as an element of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Religious storytelling, which recounts episodes from the lives of the religious figures through emotive and dramatic narration, also represents a powerful example of storytelling with ritual and social functions in Iran. In addition, folktales and fairy tales were historically shared in streets and marketplaces, forming an integral part of everyday communal life. Iranian storytelling is closely intertwined with poetry, music, theatre, and visual arts, with improvisation playing a central role. Storytellers traditionally adapted their narratives to the audience, setting, and moment, using improvisation to keep stories vivid, relevant, and alive.

## Stork conservation site in southern Tehran revives historic symbol of Rey

### Social Desk

A stork conservation site has been inaugurated in the city of Rey, south of Tehran, setting the stage for the gradual return of the migratory birds to their historic habitat, IRNA reported.

Storks lived for more than 150 years across the plains and rooftops of Rey, and in local historical sources the bird is described as a symbol of wisdom and tranquility. However, rapid urban development and changes to natural habitats led to a sharp decline in their presence in recent decades. Officials say the construction of an artificial habitat has now created the conditions for their gradual return.

As part of the project, 20 live storks, both black and white species with red beaks, are being transferred from Marivan, a region with a long-standing history of stork populations, to Rey. Specially designed nests have also been installed to enable the birds to mate and build nests during their seasonal return, which typically occurs between February and September.

Migratory birds usually pass through Iran and, after breeding, migrate southward in autumn toward regions closer to



the equator.

Environmental experts in Rey County have described the launch of the stork site as an important step toward preserving the natural heritage and biodiversity of the historic city. They believe storks can once again become part of Rey's bio-cultural identity and help attract enthusiasts, researchers, and tourists.

According to Ali Mortazavi, head of green space management at Tehran's local municipal department, the site covers an area of about one hectare and, in terms of design and facilities, is considered one of the most comprehensive and practical examples of urban birdwatching infrastructure.

Mortazavi said the city lies along the migratory routes of many bird species, including storks, and that the establishment of the site can help attract and temporarily host these

birds during specific seasons. To this end, birdwatching, research, and educational sections have been incorporated into the site's design, allowing citizens, students, and enthusiasts to learn scientific methods of observing and studying birds while visiting the area. He added that the complex includes facilities such as a pigeon tower, a research room, a designated stork habitat hall, and a specialized birdwatching platform. To facilitate public use, amenities including restrooms, a conference room, and monitoring equipment for studying bird species passing through the region have also been provided. Mortazavi noted that the primary approach to landscape design has focused on fruit-bearing and native plant species which provide food sources for birds.

Two ecological ponds have been incorporated into the site's design, according to Mortazavi, one with continuous water circulation to help moderate the air, and another designed specifically for aquatic habitats.

"Our aim," Mortazavi said, "is for Rey to benefit not only from recreational and cultural spaces, but also to become a center for environmental studies and citizen education in birdwatching and environmentally responsible behavior."



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