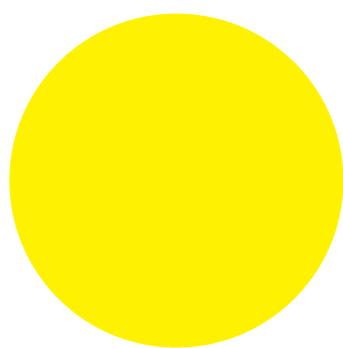


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Iran Daily

Vol. 8147 • Monday, June 22, 2026 • Tir 01, 1405 • Muharram 07, 1448 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



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Social hope; missing link between security & development



By Asgar Ghahremanpour
Editor-in-chief

O P I N I O N

The modern world has long treated security and development as the twin pillars of national success. Governments allocate vast resources to protect their borders and design economic strategies to expand prosperity. Yet history repeatedly demonstrates that these two objectives alone are not enough. There is a third pillar—less tangible but equally essential—without which neither security nor development can be sustained. That pillar is social hope.

Recent comments by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, warning that war benefits no one and ultimately deepens poverty while hindering economic growth, highlight a reality that extends far beyond Iran or the Middle East. Nations may possess military strength and economic potential, but their long-term stability depends on something deeper: whether their citizens believe in the future.

This is an increasingly important question in a world marked by geopolitical conflict, economic uncertainty, and social fragmentation. Across continents, governments are discovering that security is not measured solely by military preparedness and that development cannot be reduced to GDP growth. The ultimate test is whether societies can inspire confidence in tomorrow. Security remains a prerequisite for progress. No country can attract investment, create jobs, or improve living standards amid chronic instability. Likewise, development provides the resources that strengthen institutions and improve resilience. Yet the relationship is incomplete without hope. Security may create order, and development may generate opportunity, but hope is what encourages people to act on those opportunities.

When citizens lose faith in the future, they postpone investments, disengage from public life, and seek alternatives elsewhere. Young people become less willing to build their futures at home. Entrepreneurs become more cautious. Social trust weakens. Under such conditions, even the most ambitious development strategies struggle to gain momentum.

This insight is reflected in the work of Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen. Sen's concept of "development as freedom" challenged the narrow assumption that development is merely a matter of economic expansion. True development, he argued, lies in expanding people's capabilities and opportunities to pursue lives they value. At its core, such a vision requires confidence that the future is open to possibility rather than constrained by fear.

Seen from this perspective, hope is not simply a by-product of development; it is one of its essential ingredients. It is the force that transforms opportunity into action. Societies with high levels of social hope tend to be more innovative, more cohesive, and more resilient during periods of crisis. They are better equipped to absorb shocks because their citizens remain invested in a shared future.

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Iran, US hold direct talks in Switzerland on implementation of Islamabad MoU

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Iran's delegation, including Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) and Parliament Speaker Mohammed Baqer Qalibaf (R), arrives for a quadrilateral meeting between the United States, Iran, Pakistan and Qatar at the Burgenstock luxury hotel complex near Lake Lucerne, Switzerland, on June 21, 2026, as part of talks aimed at advancing a deal to end the Middle East conflict.

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Iran, US hold direct talks in Switzerland on implementation of Islamabad MoU



International Desk

Iran and the United States started direct talks in Switzerland on how to implement a memorandum of understanding (MoU) reached between the two countries last week, with the US vice president calling it a "historic meeting". The negotiations at the Swiss resort of Burgenstock came after Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his American counterpart Donald Trump on Wednesday digitally signed the

agreement that includes an end to attacks on all fronts, including Lebanon, removal of a US blockade affecting Iranian ports and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. The blockade on ports was lifted and the Strait of Hormuz was reopened immediately afterwards. However, the Israeli strikes on Lebanon prompted Iran to announce it had shut the shipping route on Saturday until the regime stops its attacks. The 14-point MoU also includes a commitment to clinch a final deal within

60 days on sanctions imposed on Iran as well as the country's nuclear program. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei, who is accompanying the Iranian delegation, said on the sidelines of the meeting that the negotiations would focus on the implementation of the first clause of the MoU. "The start of negotiations for a final agreement is conditional on five specific clauses, including clause one of the MoU, which concerns the cessation of hostilities in all fronts, including



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) shakes hands with Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif (C) next to Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir (R) prior to a quadrilateral meeting between the United States, Iran, Pakistan and Qatar at the Burgenstock luxury hotel complex overlooking Lake Lucerne, Switzerland, on June 21, 2026, as part of high-level talks aimed at advancing a deal to end the Middle East conflict.

● AFP

Lebanon," Baqaei said. "We know that this clause has not been implemented and that the US has not been able to or has not wanted to. The Zionist regime keeps violating its commitment. This is the main topic of discussions in today's talks." Baqaei, meanwhile, said in a post on X that the unfreezing of Iranian assets and "issuing the necessary licenses for the sale of Iranian oil will also be on the agenda". The Iranian delegation is led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf while the US Vice President JD Vance is heading the American delegation in the negotiations which is also attended by regional mediators Pakistan and Qatar.

'Historic meeting'

At the start of the talks, Vance said he hopes Washington and Tehran can reset their relationship. "This is a historic meeting," Vance said in the negotiation room. "The question before us now is how much more can we accomplish together?" "Can we turn over a new leaf? Can we

change relations in the Middle East permanently?

"Or do we go back to doing things the old way, which is not our preference, but it's certainly very much something that can happen."

The negotiation table was set up in a U-shape, with Qatar and the United States on one side, Pakistan and Iran on the other – all with three seats each. What Trump "has asked us to do is turn over new leaf to transform our relationship with the people of Iran", said Vance.

No talks on nuclear issue

Iranian state television reported on Sunday that Iran's nuclear program had not been discussed in the talks.

"No negotiations regarding Iran's nuclear program took place during the 80-minute first round of talks," the broadcaster said, adding that the focus had been on the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between Tehran and Washington, and the situation in Lebanon.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose country mediated the negotiations, also participated in technical-level talks as a follow-up to the Iran-US MoU.

"I think we will have wonderful discussions which will lead to, hopefully, very productive results in times to come," said Sharif.

"Hopefully when we go back to our homes, we'll have some wonderful paper in our hand which will promote peace, progress and prosperity around the globe."

Terms of Iran-US peace memo mostly work to Tehran's advantage: *Pezeshkian*

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that the clauses of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by Iran and the United States last week to end war were mostly to the benefit of Iran, and the tangible achievements of the ongoing negotiations would soon become fully apparent to the public. Addressing an economic conference in Tehran, Pezeshkian said that \$6 billion worth of Iranian funds held in Qatar would be released as a direct result of the MoU, IRNA reported. His remarks came as senior US and Iranian officials met in Switzerland for talks on how

to implement the agreement. The president noted that CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati was attending the negotiations to determine exactly how those assets would be allocated to domestic sectors to drive economic growth. Pezeshkian clarified that the sole point raised by the United States was that Iran must not possess an atomic bomb. He reaffirmed that this position aligned perfectly with Tehran's existing policy, as the late leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had repeatedly stated over the years that Iran did not want or intend to make nuclear weapons. "When the US requested to put this long-standing declaration

in writing, the Iranian side proceeded to sign the agreement." The president added that other negotiated items had also been agreed upon during the lifetime of the late leader, emphasizing that Iran had not and would never back down from its fundamental right to uranium enrichment, which the opposing side had been forced to accept. Pezeshkian also said that war was not in anyone's interest, yet warned the enemies that the Armed Forces were fully prepared to defend the country and that Iran had no fear of war. "This does not mean that we are afraid of war. Members of the Iranian Armed Forces,



President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during Iran's 33rd Monetary and Banking Policy Conference in Tehran, Iran on June 21, 2026.

● president.ir

serving either in the Army or the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), as well as the people of our country, have shown that they stand strong, and will continue resiliently if the war drags on," he said. Iran and the US signed the 14-point MoU on Wednesday, which calls for a permanent end to hostilities across all fronts, including Lebanon, oil export waivers, the lifting of the US naval blockade on Iran within 30 days, and the restoration of commercial traffic



through the Strait of Hormuz. The two sides also agreed to hold talks on removal of sanc-

tions on Iran and the country's nuclear program during a 60-day period.

Social hope; missing ...

The same principle applies to security. Conventional thinking often equates security with military power, intelligence capabilities, or law enforcement. While these remain indispensable, durable security ultimately depends on public confidence. Citizens who trust their institutions and believe their future can improve are more likely to contribute to social stability and collective resilience. In this sense, hope functions as a strategic asset, strengthening the foundations upon which security rests. History offers numerous examples. Countries that successfully emerged from war, recession, or political upheaval did not recover through material resources alone. Their recovery depended on restoring confidence and rebuilding a sense of collective

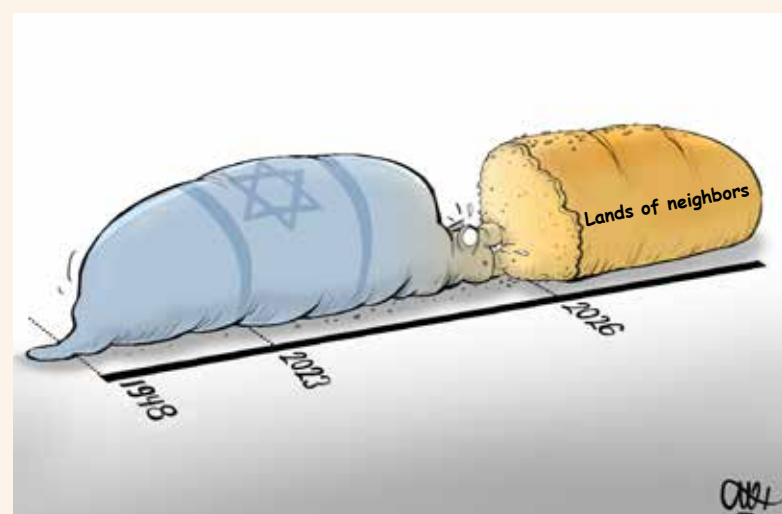
purpose. Economic reconstruction became possible because people believed that sacrifice would lead to improvement and that investment would produce results. This lesson carries particular relevance today. As societies confront uncertainty on multiple fronts, governments face a challenge that extends beyond managing economies or safeguarding borders. They must also cultivate the conditions that sustain public optimism. Hope cannot be legislated, but it can be nurtured through credible institutions, transparent governance, economic opportunity, and a clear national vision. The relationship between hope, security, and development is therefore not sequential but reciprocal. Security enables development. Development expands opportunity. Hope, however,

energizes both. It is the invisible force that encourages societies to invest, innovate, endure, and move forward. For this reason, social hope should no longer be regarded as a soft or secondary concern. It is a strategic resource. Indeed, in periods of uncertainty, it may be the most important resource a nation possesses. The countries most likely to succeed in the twenty-first century will not necessarily be those with the largest economies or the strongest militaries. They will be those capable of convincing their citizens that tomorrow can be better than today. Without hope, security becomes fragile and development loses momentum. With hope, both become sustainable. Social hope is not merely the outcome of progress. It is one of the foundations upon which progress itself is built.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



CBI chief unveils postwar roadmap as economy contracts

Economy Desk

The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) on Sunday outlined a roadmap to navigate the country's economic woes, revealing that gross domestic product contracted by 0.7% in the last fiscal year that ended on March 21, 2026, as the nation is trying to offset the effects of war and sanctions.

Speaking via video message at the opening ceremony of the 33rd Annual Monetary and Foreign Exchange Policies Conference, Abdolnasser Hemmati said the country needed to present a "realistic picture" of its economic situation.

"GDP growth at the end of last year (March 21, 2026) was minus 0.7%. Excluding the oil sector, GDP fell by 1.1%, meaning national output declined by about 1%," IRNA quoted him as saying.

Jaafar Mehdizadeh, the central bank's director general for economic policies, told the same conference that, in addition to negative economic growth at the end of the last fiscal year, liquidity growth had soared to 53.3%.

Mehdizadeh said government revenues had also been severely affected this year, making urgent decisions to curb inflation

necessary.

Hemmati said Iran's economy was facing multiple challenges stemming from both domestic significant complications and political issues imposed from abroad.

"The combination of issues such as war and cruel sanctions has posed serious challenges to the country's economy. Most importantly, people's livelihoods have been severely affected because various sectors of the economy have been impacted by sanctions."

The top banker said that alongside protecting livelihoods, improving public welfare also remained important, expressing hope that, while managing the current crisis, authorities would also focus on making development the country's central priority.

He added that a positive process had begun with the current developments, ongoing negotiations and a recently signed agreement.

Hemmati was referring to high-level Iran-US talks that began in Switzerland on Sunday, four days after Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and US President Donald Trump signed a memorandum of understanding to extend the US-Iran ceasefire for 60 days and establishes a framework

for future negotiations on Tehran's nuclear program and other key issues.

The talks are aimed at bringing about a permanent end to the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran launched in late February.

Production support remains top priority

Presenting an assessment of key macro-economic indicators and the impact of recent tensions on the country, Hemmati said the latest data underscored the need for a "very serious effort."

"The inflation rate at the end of the second month of the current fiscal year climbed to 53%, while liquidity growth stood at 52%, leaving the two rates at almost the same level."

Hemmati said national output was also expected to decline further by the end of the current fiscal year ending on March 21, 2027, as production and economic activity had been disrupted after manufacturing facilities were damaged or taken offline because of the war.

As a result, he said, economic growth could fall below the current level by the end of the year.

The official said the CBI had already be-



MEHR

gun implementing its monetary policies without waiting for conditions to improve.

"We hope these measures will gradually reduce liquidity growth and bring inflation under control."

Hemmati also expressed hope that an agreement with the United States would be reached in the coming days, saying the resumption of oil exports and the circulation of Iran's financial resources would improve economic conditions.

Iran's oil industry to offer biggest opportunities for global investment in post-deal era: Paknejad

Economy Desk

Iran's oil industry would offer the "biggest scene of investment opportunities for the global economy" following a potential agreement with the United States, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Sunday, as negotiators from both sides kicked off a new round of talks.

In an article published in the state-owned "Iran" newspaper, Paknejad said that if Western parties benefiting from the agreement remained committed to its spirit, Iran's oil industry would be the testing ground for it.

"Hundreds of reviewed investment opportunities and formats of investment contracts, as well as technical and operational partnership agreements, are ready," Paknejad wrote.

"We are prepared to review cooperation proposals in the shortest possible time and bring them to the executive contract stage," he added.

"Hundreds of capable and entrepreneurial domestic enterprises have been identified within Iran as Iranian partners for foreign investing companies, and the Oil Ministry is ready to quickly organize working groups for investors and developers."

Paknejad said Iran would enter a "new era" if an agreement is reached with the



United States, but also cautioned that "vigilance against enemies" remained necessary.

He noted that in the "post-agreement era," the oil industry would continue to the "drive force" behind Iran's economy.

Oil remains Iran's main source of foreign exchange earnings and an important source of government revenue. According to OPEC estimates, Iran earned \$46.7 billion from exports of crude oil and petroleum products last year. If sanctions are lifted and oil prices remain relatively high, that figure could increase substantially, although a rapid recovery is not expected.

A first round of negotiations over the war, launched by a US-Israeli coalition against Iran in late February, began Sunday, with Iranian nego-

tiators arriving in the Swiss host city hours ahead of US Vice President JD Vance.

The talks follow a memorandum of understanding signed separately by President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian, which extends the US-Iran ceasefire for 60 days and establishes a framework for future negotiations on Tehran's nuclear program and other key issues.

Iran has been subject to US sanctions over its nuclear program for years. Under one provision of the MoU, the United States is to grant Iran a sanctions waiver during the 60-day negotiation period to allow it to export its oil and petroleum products. The agreement also obliges Iran to allow commercial vessels to transit the Strait of Hormuz without paying tolls for 60 days.

Maritime trade to resume as UAE to let in Iranian vessels, official says

Economy Desk

Maritime trade between Iran and the United Arab Emirates is set to resume after the Arab nation announced its readiness to let in Iranian vessels, an official said on Sunday as the first Chinese cargo ship docked in the Chabahar Free Zone following the lifting of a US blockade on Iranian ports.

Head of Bushehr's Chamber of Commerce Khorshid Gazderazi said the UAE's decision followed the end of conflicts in the region.

"It is expected that with the resumption of operations at UAE ports, maritime trade in Bushehr Province will gradually return to normal," Gazdarazi said in remarks carried by ILNA.

Iran has in recent years conducted a significant portion of its imports through the UAE's Jebel Ali port, which has historically served as a key commercial hub for the country. However, following recent disruptions in trade, regional ports in Pakistan, India, Oman, and Iraq emerged as alternatives, with Iranian cargo and logistics operations redirected there, though at higher cost. Iran's southern ports were under a 66-day naval

blockade imposed by the United States on April 13.

"Given the UAE's position as a regional economic hub and its significant share in foreign trade with Iran, especially Bushehr Province, in exports and imports, the imposed restrictions posed serious challenges for merchants and economic actors in the province," Gazderazi said.

The local chamber chief said that about 90% of maritime trade activity in southern Iran, including Bushehr Province, had come to a halt or faced severe slowdown during the US-Israeli war on Iran.

"During this period, numerous consultations were held to establish alternative trade routes, including pursuing a transshipment route through Iraq's Umm Qasr port and Oman."

The resumption of maritime commercial activity would not only boost trade exchanges but also allow about 2,000 vessels and 14,000 sailors to return to work, he added.

First Chinese vessel docks at Chabahar

In a separate development, the first Chinese commercial vessel carrying cargo for businesspeople in the Chabahar Free Zone



docked on Friday after the end of the naval restrictions, according to the head of the zone's organization.

Mohammad Saeid Arbabi said the ship, carrying 409 containers, docked at Chabahar's Shahid Kalantari port.

"This marks a turning point in the restoration of the country's economic strength and the revival of international trade routes," Arbabi said, according to Mehr News Agency.

The cargo included spare parts for light and heavy vehicles, household appliances including air conditioners, refrigerators and washing machines, sanitary equipment, drilling equipment and machinery, chemicals for the textile industry, steel pipes and fittings, solar panels, safety footwear, plywood, paper and fabric, he said.

Arbabi added that Chaba-

har could become Iran's most important trade gateway to countries along the Indian Ocean, particularly in East Africa, East and Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf states, Central Asia and international markets in the post-war period.

"The port's unique logistics and transit capacities provide a rare opportunity for the country's economic growth," he pointed out.

The official also said talks have begun with international maritime transport companies and logistics operators, with the goal of transforming Chabahar into a maritime trade hub and distribution center on the strategic Makoran coast along the northern Indian Ocean.

He said efforts to attract domestic and foreign investment and develop smart logistics and port infrastructure would be pursued seriously.

Minister says industrial recovery underway

Economy Desk



Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak r tours the Mobarakeh Steel plant in Isfahan Province on June 9, following repairs to Furnace No. 8 which resumed production after damage sustained during the recent conflict.

TASNIM

Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak said on Sunday that reconstruction of industrial units damaged during recent US-Israeli war was progressing rapidly, with output on an upward trajectory.

Speaking in a virtual parliamentary session, Atabak said that despite wartime damage to some facilities, restoration efforts were proceeding at pace, ISNA reported.

"Production is now on an upward path, but it is important to note that producer inflation has always been lower than consumer inflation - yet for the first time, producer inflation is now higher than consumer inflation," Atabak said.

According to assessments cited by the minister, 3,003 industrial units sustained the most severe damage during the 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February, and have been prioritized for reconstruction based on ex-

pert evaluations.

"Isfahan Province, due to its industrial nature, was hit harder than other provinces, and Mobarakeh Steel was among the facilities that suffered damage, which caused public concern," Atabak said.

"We offered steel on the exchange several times, which helped bring prices down," he said.

He said that the ministry is planning to rebuild Mobarakeh Steel in line "with the latest global technology,"

He added that several damaged steel units have already been restored and returned to production.

Furnace No. 8 at Mobarakeh Steel, which was damaged during an Israeli attack in April, resumed production on June 9 after repairs.

On the petrochemical sector, Atabak said part of production capacity was lost due to strikes, but more than half of affected units have since returned to operation, and exports from the

sector have been banned.

Air strikes over several days hit facilities in Mahshahr, in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, and in Assaluyeh, in the southern province of Bushehr, damaging installations at multiple companies in April. The Tabriz and Marvdasht petrochemical plants were also hit. The National Iranian Petrochemical Company (NIPC) has not yet issued an estimate of the damage, but the export ban points to a sector hit hard by the attacks.

When music becomes memory



By Alireza Sepahvand

Freelance journalist

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

relationship between folk and classical music, cultural heritage, international perceptions of Iran, and the challenges of preserving memory in a rapidly changing world.

For more than five years, Iranian composer and tar virtuoso Midya Farnejad has traveled across the country, performing music in historical sites, forgotten monuments, remote villages, and cultural landscapes. His ongoing project, titled "Tar & History," seeks to connect music, memory, architecture, and identity, offering audiences a different way of experiencing Iran.

In this exclusive conversation with Iran Daily, Farnejad discusses the

IRAN DAILY: If all the videos and recordings of "Tar & History" were lost and only one sentence remained to describe the project, what would that sentence be?

FARNEJAD: Midya I usually avoid grand manifestos, but if I had to summarize the project in a single sentence, I would say: "Music became the voice of history." At its core, Tar & History is an attempt to narrate Iran through sound. The project is not simply about performance. It is about listening to places, landscapes, monuments, and cultural memories, then translating those experiences into music.

You are simultaneously a musician, researcher, traveler, and narrator in this project. Which role defines you most?

I think the best description is "author." Throughout the project I have been a performer, researcher, student, teacher, and sometimes even an observer. Yet what unites all these roles is authorship. I see Tar & History almost as a book. Any successful artistic work requires a coherent act of creation — an internal unity between form, content, and purpose. That act of creation is what gives meaning to the work. For me, the most meaningful moments occur when something genuinely new is being created. That is where I feel most present.

Should Tar & History be understood primarily as a musical project or as an exploration of Iranian cultural identity?

The two are inseparable. A significant part of Iranian cultural identity is embedded in music. Iranian music cannot be separated from Persian literature, and Persian literature has historically functioned as one of the primary carriers of collective memory and historical consciousness. When we speak about Iranian music, we are not discussing isolated sounds. We are discussing poetry, language, memory, spirituality, and history. That is why I consider the project a cultural exploration expressed through music.

After years of travel across Iran, what connection have you found between regional folk traditions and classical Iranian music?

Classical Iranian music owes an enormous debt to regional traditions. I often describe folk music as the elder ancestor and classical music as a younger descendant. The deeper someone studies the radif tradition, the clearer it becomes that many of its roots lie in local musical cultures that developed across different regions of Iran.

For this reason, I do not see folk and classical music as separate worlds. They are interconnected expressions of the same cultural heritage. Without regional traditions, classical Iranian music would lose much of its historical foundation.

Which musical region of Iran deserves far more international recognition?

Sistan and Baluchestan. In my view, it is one of the most underappreciated cultural regions in the country. The prov-

ince contains extraordinary musical traditions, historical settlements, and cultural landscapes. Traveling through the region often feels like moving through different centuries of history. Many of its historical sites remain largely unknown outside Iran, and sometimes even within Iran itself. Yet it possesses enormous potential for cultural tourism and international cultural exchange.

Is Iranian folk music endangered, or is it entering a new phase of revival?

I believe it is entering a new phase of renewal. Iranian music has survived wars, political transformations, social upheavals, and centuries of change. It has never remained static.

What concerns me is not survival but preservation. We must invest more seriously in documenting and recording regional traditions so future generations can inherit them. Music is part of a nation's cultural infrastructure. Just as we preserve historical monuments, we should also preserve the sounds, stories, and memories that accompany them.

Which instrument has surprised you most during your travels?

The dotar. Its geographical reach is astonishing. You encounter different forms of the instrument and different performance traditions across large parts of Iran. Every region seems to have adapted it to its own cultural environment. The dotar demonstrates how deeply interconnected Iran's musical traditions truly are.

When you perform at historical sites, do you feel like a musician or a storyteller?

A storyteller. I often feel that I am narrating a story that already exists within a place. Every monument contains memories. Every landscape contains traces of human experience. My role is not to impose meaning on these places but to help reveal the meanings already present. Sometimes the experience becomes so powerful that I no longer feel like

the central figure. I become a medium through which a story is communicated. That is why I intentionally avoid placing myself at the center of the project. The focus should remain on the site and its history.

Has a historical location ever changed the music you intended to perform?

Many times. There have been occasions when I arrived with a completed musical concept only to realize that the atmosphere of the site demanded something entirely different. Research is essential, but direct experience often reveals dimensions that books cannot. A place teaches you how it wishes to be heard.

What examples of neglected heritage have affected you most?

Many forgotten settlements in eastern Iran have left a strong impression on me. You can encounter historical environments containing centuries of architectural memory, yet receive almost no protection or public attention. Sometimes entire historical districts are left vulnerable to deterioration or damage. What saddens me most is not only physical neglect but the loss of awareness. A society can protect heritage only when it recognizes its value.

Why has Iran not transformed its cultural richness into a stronger international brand?

Because culture requires interaction. Tourism, cultural diplomacy, academic exchange, and artistic collaboration all depend on meaningful engagement with the wider world. We need more effective cultural communication. Too often, countries focus on broadcasting messages rather than building conversations. Contemporary audiences respond to authenticity and diversity of voices. Culture succeeds when it creates dialogue.

What role can music play in introducing Iran to international audiences?

An extremely important one. Music often communicates what political language

cannot. When foreign audiences encounter Iranian music, they discover emotional and cultural dimensions that are absent from stereotypes. Many people are surprised by the diversity, sophistication, and historical depth of Iranian artistic traditions. Music creates a direct human connection. That connection is invaluable.

What have foreign audiences taught you about international perceptions of Iran?

They have shown me how different perception can be from reality. Many people know Iran primarily through headlines. Then they encounter Iranian music, architecture, literature, or everyday life and realize the country is far more complex than they imagined. One of the most rewarding aspects of Tar & History is witnessing those assumptions change. Culture often succeeds where political discourse fails.

If you could introduce Iran through a single musical work, what would you choose?

That is a difficult question because Iran contains many musical worlds. But one work that comes to mind is Kavir-e Kian. It remains deeply rooted in Iranian musical identity while also communicating effectively with international audiences. It demonstrates how local traditions can speak in universal ways.

What is the greatest challenge facing Tar & History today?

Administrative complexity. Financial challenges exist, but bureaucracy often consumes far more energy. Independent cultural projects frequently spend significant time navigating procedures and permissions. The question is not whether regulations should exist. Of course they should. The question is whether institutions see cultural initiatives as partners in preservation and public engagement. Artists, researchers, and cultural institutions ultimately share the same goal: protecting and promoting heritage. When cooperation becomes



Midya Farnejad, Iranian composer and tar virtuoso, leans against a window during a photoshoot at Iran Daily headquarters.
● SAJJAD SAFARI/IRAN DAILY



Midya Farnejad (c) and his band of musicians perform at an unknown historical site in Iran.
● IRNA

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I would encourage people from across the world to approach Iran with curiosity rather than assumptions. Iran is far more than a political headline. It is a civilization shaped by thousands of years of history, diverse cultures, languages, landscapes, and artistic traditions. Most importantly, it is a country of people whose experiences, hopes, and stories are not so different from those found anywhere else in the world. Anyone who spends time in Iran quickly discovers dimensions of the country that cannot be conveyed through stereotypes.

easier, everyone benefits.

Do independent cultural projects face greater difficulties than institutional ones?

Generally speaking, yes. Independent projects must create their own infrastructure while simultaneously producing content. That requires persistence. At the same time, independence provides freedom. It allows a project to follow its own creative logic. The ideal situation would be stronger collaboration between institutions and independent cultural initiatives.

Are there still places in Iran where you hope to perform Tar & History?

Historical mosques remain particularly important to me. Iran's religious architecture forms a significant part of its cultural heritage. These spaces bring together architecture, poetry, calligra-

phy, spirituality, and history. I believe thoughtful musical presentations can contribute to a deeper appreciation of those environments. Historically, art and spirituality in Iran have often coexisted.

Why is documenting heritage especially important during times of crisis?

Because heritage represents continuity. Historical monuments remind us that previous generations also faced challenges and uncertainties, yet still left meaningful legacies behind. In difficult moments, cultural memory can become a source of resilience. Protecting heritage is therefore not only about preserving the past. It is also about strengthening society's relationship with its future.

Finally, what message would you like international readers to take away about Iran?

I would encourage people from across the world to approach Iran with curiosity rather than assumptions. Iran is far more than a political headline. It is a civilization shaped by thousands of years of history, diverse cultures, languages, landscapes, and artistic traditions.

Most importantly, it is a country of people whose experiences, hopes, and stories are not so different from those found anywhere else in the world. Anyone who spends time in Iran quickly discovers dimensions of the country that cannot be conveyed through stereotypes.

Tar & History is ultimately an invitation to that discovery. Not through slogans or arguments, but through music because music remains one of the most powerful ways of remembering who we are — and of understanding one another.



MIDYA FARJNEJAD/IRAN DAILY

Music, survival in wartime Tehran

By Fateme Karimkhan
Freelance journalist

PERSPECTIVE

For many residents of Tehran, the shock of the five-week-long aerial bombardment of their city lasted for only the first few days. Afterward, the city and its residents settled into a grim routine, bearing witness to new types of suffering: images of limbs beneath rubble, a corpse hanging by its arm from a building, a young woman who lost three generations of family in one attack and now lies in a coma with a chest wound. In such conditions, long dominated by division and suffering, a unifying voice for Iranians emerged from music. Mohsen Chavoshi, a singer who for more than a decade has been associated with middle-class values and charitable fundraising, released a song without the official approval of Iran's regulatory authorities, opening up a space to breathe for Iranians struggling to express their inner turmoil about the war. "Hasbi Allah" ("God Is Enough") by Chavoshi is a religious song. The song protests against warmongering, and places its focus on human suffering caused by the war. Its popularity revealed a need for words to channel emotion. It also inspired other songs that fostered empathy and morale, both essential in wartime. In the absence of free and widespread access to the internet and international social media platforms, the song circulated across domestic, intranet-based networks, passed hand to hand and shared via memory cards. It became the dominant sound in car stereos at dusk, as people ventured out to confront the depression and anxiety of staying indoors under the constant threat of bombs and missiles. Soon after "Hasbi Allah," a song known as a "rajjaz," or epic boasting, followed. This martial music tells of bravery and inspires victory. Its performer, Mehdi Rasouli, references historic battles, the story of the sacrifices of the family of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the Battle of Karbala, and the "Shahnameh," the great poetic epic in the Persian language, to mobilize listeners. Rapidly popular, the song appeared on state TV and became part of marches and funeral processions. Shortly after, the Shia tradition of "noha," or religious lament, offered a collective voice for mourning and roused emotion. One lament, sung in Persian but styled after the Pakistani singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, emphasized again Karbala's tragedy and the bravery of young men defending the country from external attack. This song also recognized the solidarity that Iranians had received from neighboring countries and became popular on social media beyond the Persian-speaking



world, especially among Pakistani, Iraqi and Turkish listeners. Other artists joined in, composing more music for the war effort. Still, these three pieces defined the soundscape and will shape the war's memory, though they are not the only musical testament, nor perhaps the most significant. Beneath the loud resonance of these songs, other musical stories have unfolded in the city. At street level, Tehran has become a city of street musicians. After last summer's war, their numbers grew so much that some streets would host the equivalent of a full rock concert in a single afternoon. Solo performers, though, were most often seen with lighter stringed instruments, such as the violin, guitar, tar and setar. Alongside them, many young people brought the handpan to the streets. The handpan's popularity, tied to a youthful, bohemian lifestyle, has grown so much in Tehran that even in neighborhoods beyond the center of the city, its sound can be heard outside nearly every small cafe. During the days of war, although the number of street musicians, especially handpan players, declined, they were not erased from the streets. Footage from Nowruz street markets still show them performing. In addition, after a Lebanese cellist played atop the ruins of a house, some street musicians in Iran repeated the act and produced widely viewed videos, though most of those videos still featured performers from the Nowruz markets. "Before the war, I played in the streets for money; during the war, I played for myself," said one of them, who agreed to speak only on condition of anonymity. "Nowruz nights usually offer musicians a chance to earn well, but this year, few felt like celebrating. Still, the pre-Nowruz markets brought some crowds. During the war, I rarely played for money, mostly to record myself... Many things were ruined, but not everything. We have to keep living."

Iranian musician Ali Ghamsari performs outside the Damavand power station in a symbolic protest against US threats against civilian infrastructure. The site supplies roughly half of Tehran's electricity.
● WANA

Playing music in the streets, whether to demonstrate the flow of life or simply to protest the war, quickly took on a new form, becoming a tool of resistance. This shift became especially clear when Donald Trump threatened to target Tehran's power plants, a move that could have plunged a population of around 10 million people into darkness, immediately endangering the lives of many, including patients dependent on life-support systems, not to mention the devastating consequences that could unfold in the hours and days that followed. In response to this threat, some Iranian artists went to stand in front of power

The illustration shows Hamidreza Afarideh returning to what was left of his music school, which was destroyed by the US-Israeli indiscriminate bombings, to play his instrument there for one last time.
● INDIA TODAY



plants and performed music, protesting what they described as an open threat of a crime against humanity. One of them, Yasaman Heydari, a classical cellist, performed Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, often associated with peace, in front of Tehran's power plant. After her performance, she said in a phone interview about her presence at a site marked as a potential target by the US military: "The purpose of this performance was to remind people of calm, empathy and mutual respect. I believe that music can serve as a bridge between hearts, fostering peace and closeness among people. It was with this belief that I played in front of the power plant. I hope our voices are heard." A week after Trump's initial threat to strike Iran's power plants, when he repeated it once again on social media, a tar player in Tehran responded by announcing a sit-in in front of the Damavand power plant. Ali Ghamsari, in a video he recorded there, addressed the public: "It doesn't matter where you have stood until now. What matters is that you understand that threats against infrastructure are threats against the lives of all of us, not only in Iran, but across the entire region." He not only continued his sit-in in front of the power plant, but also called on artists and ordinary people in Iran and across neighboring countries to form a human chain around such facilities, so that "the lights in everyone's homes remain on." Before Donald Trump had the opportunity to carry out his threat against Iran's infrastructure, and before Iran, in turn, might have found reason to target electrical infrastructure across the Persian Gulf, a temporary cease-fire was agreed upon. The human chains formed around vital infrastructure and the sit-ins in front of power plants came to an end. But this was not the whole story of music under bombs and missiles. In one of several US and Israeli attacks on residential areas in Rey, in south-

ern Tehran, a house located near one of Iran's largest music archives was struck. Ali Dolou, an oud and daf player who has spent more than 15 years of his professional life collecting and digitizing Iran's musical archives, said that the attack could have wiped out a vast body of Iranian musical heritage, and that only sheer luck prevented such a catastrophe: "For years, I have been working to digitize Iran's music archives. In one of the attacks on Rey, my home was severely damaged, but fortunately, the digital archive I had compiled, one of the most comprehensive collections of Iranian music and national radio programs from 100 years ago, was not harmed. Out of fear, despite the high costs of maintaining such archives, I have created several backup copies and stored them in different locations. So that if, in future attacks, this house or the other archive locations are damaged, at least this history of music will not be lost." Not everyone, of course, was as fortunate as Dolou. Some things cannot be protected from the dangers of war through technology, musical instruments and music schools among them. The Haniyak Music Institute in Tehran is one such example. Just three days after the Persian New Year, during one of the many US and Israeli attacks on residential neighborhoods in Tehran, a medical building in the Pirouzi district in eastern Tehran was struck. One of its floors had been dedicated to a music school. In videos published in the first hours after the bombardment, a distressed and frantic man can be seen pulling black instrument cases from beneath a mountain of rubble, showing them to the camera before dropping them onto the ground. Mr. Afrideh, the owner of the now-destroyed music school, said in a phone interview: "For 15 years, my wife and I worked, struggled, saved money, took out loans, borrowed, and built a music school. We had 250 students and 20 instructors. That was all before the war. Now, we have nothing. No students, no teachers, no instruments, no school. All that remains are debts, a broken heart and 15 years of hard work that vanished in the blink of an eye." Reaching a cease-fire does not mean the end of the war. The recent conflict erupted only eight months after the previous one, which had also been halted by a cease-fire. Political predictions about the future of negotiations do little to ease public anxiety. Artists and their businesses, who during the war used the circumstances to create in the service of solidarity and peace, are now concerned that the economic and political turbulence that follows every war will become yet another wound layered upon their already deep scars.

The full article first appeared on New Lines.

Sports Desk

Iran secured three kumite gold medals on the final day of the Asian Karate Championships in Bali, Indonesia, to finish runner-up in the medals table – the country's best result at the competition in seven years.

A haul of nine medals across the men's and women's events saw Iran finish behind Japan, which collected five golds, three silvers, and five bronze medals. Kazakhstan placed third with two golds, two silvers, and three bronzes.

Iranian brothers Morteza and Mahmoud Nemati claimed gold in their respective divisions, both at the expense of defending champions in the final.

The pinnacle of Iran's final-day success, however, came in the women's team kumite event, where head coach Pegah Zangeneh's quartet, having defeated Kazakhstan in the semifinals, beat Japan 2-0 in the final.

Hannaneh Salehi and Fatemeh-Zahra Saeidabadi emerged victorious in their bouts as the Iranian women's team – also featuring Sara Bahmanyar and Mobina Heidari – won the continental title for the

Asian Karate Championships:

Triple triumphs lift Iran to runner-up finish in Bali



⬆ L-R: Hannaneh Salehi, Fatemeh-Zahra Saeidabadi, Sara Bahmanyar, and Mobina Heidari formed the Iranian quartet that won the women's team kumite title at the Asian Karate Championships in Bali, Indonesia.
● IKF

first time since 2019. In the men's individual kumite competition, Morteza

Nemati defeated Nurkanat Azhikanov 3-2 in the -75kg final to make amends for last year's title-match defeat to the Kazakhstani karateka, who was chasing a third Asian title in four years.

Minutes later, Mahmoud Nemati added a second men's kumite gold to Iran's tally with a 4-0 victory over Saudi Arabia's Sanad

Sufyani in the +84kg final. Morteza Nemati, however, missed out on a second gold medal later on Sunday, as he was part of the Iranian squad that suffered a 3-0 defeat to Jordan in the men's team final.

Saleh Abazari, Esmaeil Motamedi, and Mahdi Ashouri all fell short in their bouts as Iran had to settle for silver behind Jor-

dan for the second consecutive year.

A place in the final had already secured both Iranian men's and women's teams qualification for the Team World Cup in Hangzhou, China, in November.

Sunday's medals came after Iran had collected five bronze medals earlier in the tournament.

Former world bronze med-



⬆ Iranian brothers Morteza (L) and Mahmoud Nemati won gold medals in their respective men's kumite divisions at the Asian Karate Championships in Bali, Indonesia.
● IKF

alist Aliasghar Asiabari recovered from a semifinal defeat to Jordan's Mohammad Al-Jafari – who went on to retain his title – to

beat India's Chetan Bhatt 16-7 and claim bronze in the men's -84kg category.

Mehrnegar Ahmadi also secured a kumite bronze medal courtesy of a 6-1 victory over Vietnam's Nguyen Thi Man in the women's -61kg division, while the Iranian trio of Fatemeh Sadeqi, Sepideh Amini, and Zeinab Hosseini defeated Hong Kong 5-2 in the bronze-medal play-off of the women's team kata event.

It was Sadeqi's second bronze medal in Bali after she had defeated China's Tao Yiwei 6-1 to secure third place in the individual kata competition on the opening day – the Iranian's fifth bronze medal in the history of the championships.

Ali Zand had opened Iran's account with a bronze medal in the men's individual kata on Thursday, defeating China's Zheng Qianqu 7-0 in the third-place match.

Iran coach Piazza prioritizes LA 2028 goal over VNL results

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Roberto Piazza shrugged off his team's slow start to the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League, outlining a long-term vision centered on qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Iran began the preliminary phase in Brasilia with successive defeats against South American powerhouse Brazil (3-1) and Bulgaria (3-0), before bouncing back to defeat Argentina in straight sets.

Piazza's side then fell to Belgium in a five-set thriller, after which the Italian regretted his team's excessive number of service errors in the decisive set,

as Iran finished Week 1 in 15th place in the 18-team preliminary standings.

"We have started another Volleyball Nations League campaign and changed many players, but the biggest change that must happen is in our minds," Piazza said. "We need to accept some mistakes and refuse to repeat others," added the Italian, whose team is in Belgrade for a training camp ahead of Week 2.

Despite his team's difficult run in the Brazilian capital, the Italian coach reiterated that he is not focused on short-term results, emphasizing that every match and training session is part of a broader project leading to the Olympics in two years.

"As I said a long time ago, I am not thinking about the final results," Piazza stated. "My final result is the goal that I want to achieve; LA 2028. That is the ultimate goal. So, each moment is a good moment for being a little bit better, and if we manage to do that, results will be around the corner."

Assessing Iran's performances in the Brazilian capital, Piazza said his team is "among the top six or seven teams in the competition" in side-out situations.

"It means our setter is able to set. I know a lot of people in Iran don't like him. I know that all of them are amazing in understanding volleyball, but he is

currently one of the best setters in the world when it comes to side-out situations," the Italian said of his first-choice setter, Arshia Behnejad, while identifying the team's major struggle in transition and recycled-ball situations, a weakness that applies to "the team as a whole."

The coach pointed to Iran's recent match against a full-strength Brazilian side as evidence of the team's growing competitiveness.

"I am disappointed because my feeling was that we could beat at their home. They were so afraid. We lost the first and fourth sets, and on both occasions, we gave away a four-point advantage."

Asking for Iranian fans' con-



● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

tinued patience and confidence in the team's long-term progress, Piazza said: "We need your support, for sure, and we feel your support. In the end, we will try to do our best. I know that trying is enough; we need to

do something special, but I trust these guys."

Iran will resume action on Wednesday with a daunting test against reigning Olympic champion France, which will also be looking to improve on a disap-

pointing 1-3 record, in the French city of Orléans. Iran will also take on the United States and Japan, which is unbeaten in the preliminary phase, before wrapping up Week 2 against Cuba next Sunday.

Chasing a first VNL Finals appearance in four years, Iran will return to the Serbian capital for the third and final week of the preliminary phase, which will feature a match against Ukraine on July 15, followed by encounters with Germany (July 16), Slovenia (July 17) and Turkey (July 19).

As far as a place at the Olympic Games is concerned, the best opportunity for Iran will come at September's Asian Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, where the champion will also secure early qualification for the multi-sport event.

World Boxing Cup 2026:

Habibinejad bags bronze to end Iran's 30-year drought



Iran's Ali Habibinejad (R) won a bronze medal in the Elite Men's 65kg category at the World Boxing Cup in Guiyang, China.
● IRANAIBA



Sports Desk

Iran's Ali Habibinejad settled for bronze at the World Boxing Cup in Guiyang, China, on Saturday, ending the country's 30-year wait for a medal at the prestigious event.

Habibinejad suffered a semifinal defeat to American Marcus Luther to finish joint-third alongside Frenchman Hugo Grau, who withdrew from his last-four bout against Moldovan Alexandru Paraschiv, in the Elite Men's 65kg division.

The Iranian started on the front foot in the opening round, but the American bounced back to claim a unanimous 5-0 decision. Iran had last won medals at the competition through Kourosh Molaei and Seyyed Ebrahim Mousavi, who both

claimed bronze medals.

After receiving a first-round bye, Habibinejad began his campaign with a victory over Mexico's Hugo Barron after the referee stopped the contest midway through the bout. He then overcame England's Patris Mughalzai by a 3-2 decision to advance to the semifinals. Habibinejad was the sole medalist in Iran's seven-athlete squad, which included two female boxers, at the event, which featured around 300 fighters from 40 countries.

Asian Gymnastics Championships: Olfati wins vault bronze

Sports Desk

Iran's Mahdi Olfati won the bronze medal in the men's senior vault event at the AGU Asian Championships in Zunyi, China.

Olfati, who made history last year by winning Iran's maiden gold medal at the championships, scored 14.8 points with his first vault in Sunday's final before posting 13.8 with his second to finish third with an average score of 14.3.

Japan's Wataru Tan-

igawa won gold in the discipline, while South Korea's Im Jae-ho settled for silver. Olfati's medal came a day after fellow Iranian Mahdi Ahmadvakani also claimed bronze

in the men's rings event.

A two-time silver medalist in the 2023 FIG World Cup series, Ahmadvakani scored 14.1 points in the final, marking his return to the international stage



● ISNA

after serving a two-year suspension for an anti-doping whereabouts violation.

China's Yang Haonan and Zhang Boheng, who were also part of the country's gold medal-winning team in the all-around competition, took gold and silver respectively in the rings event.

The two bronze medals saw Iran finish seventh in the medal table. China edged Japan to the top of the standings, with the number of silver medals (seven to four) separating the two nations after both collected six gold medals.

Hamedan's Muharram rituals reflect diversity of Iran's religious culture

Iranica Desk

From a tourism perspective, the month of Muharram — marking the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his 72 companions — along with its associated rituals, offers significant potential for the development of religious and cultural tourism in Iran. The presence of domestic and international visitors at these ceremonies can contribute to a deeper understanding of local cultures and the expansion of cultural exchange.

Tourism experts say such forms of pilgrimage and cultural travel not only generate income for local communities but also help preserve and sustain intangible spiritual heritage, according to chn.ir.

Across Iran, including in Hamedan Province, Muharram mourning practices vary considerably. These differences range from musical styles and ritual performances to clothing, offerings, and the organizational structure of religious gatherings. This diversity reflects the deep connection between local cultural identities and religious beliefs.

The Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Hamedan Province said Mu-



Ta'zieh in Maryanaj
● mehrnews.com

harram rituals in the province are among the most significant cultural and religious traditions in the region.

Mohsen Masoum-Alizadeh noted that Hamedan, as one of Iran's historical and cultural centers, hosts a wide variety of mourning ceremonies during Muharram, rooted in religious belief, social identity, and the cultural heritage of local communities.

He added that several of these rituals have been registered as intangible cultural heritage, while others are eligible for national registration. These traditions, he said, represent not only expressions of devotion to

the events of Karbala but also an important part of Hamedan's cultural identity.

According to Masoum-Alizadeh, eight Muharram-related rituals have so far been registered nationally in the province. Among them, Ta'zieh in the city of Maryanaj is one of the most well-known examples. This traditional dramatic performance narrates the tragic events of Karbala and reflects local styles of staging religious theater.

He said the Ta'zieh in Maryanaj, with a long historical background, is performed with broad public participation and Ta'zieh performers in an atmosphere of spirituality and emo-



Symbolic burial of Karbala martyrs
● farsnews.ir

tional engagement. Over time, it has maintained a structured and distinctive theatrical identity.

The use of traditional symbols, ritual music, specific costumes, and local narrative styles has transformed the Ta'zieh from a purely religious ceremony into a living cultural form. It functions both as a mourning ritual and as a means of transmitting the message of Ashura, the 10th day of Muharram, to younger generations. Its national registration underscores its importance in safeguarding Iran's intangible cultural heritage.

Other notable Muharram rituals in Hamedan include ceremonies

held on the third day after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) at the shrine of Imamzadeh Yahya (PBUH), as well as Ashura ceremonies in the Jowlan neighborhood of Hamedan and migrant chest-beating rituals, each reflecting distinct local traditions and strengthening social cohesion.

Rituals commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Ali Asghar (PBUH), the six-month-old son of Imam Hussein (PBUH), also hold a special place among mourners, symbolizing the tragedy of Karbala. Another significant tradition is the symbolic burial of Karbala martyrs by the Banu Asad tribe, a long-standing rit-

ual registered nationally as part of the region's cultural heritage. Masoum-Alizadeh also highlighted the symbolic reenactment of the arrival of Imam Hussein's (PBUH) caravan to Karbala as one of the most prominent Muharram rituals in Hamedan. Held annually in Maryanaj with strong public participation, the ceremony recreates scenes from the Karbala narrative and preserves the message of the Hussein movement across generations.

He added that the ritual, performed on the second day of Muharram, involves participants on horseback and camels entering the city, followed by mourning gatherings filled with lamentation and religious recitation. The ceremony aims to revive historical memory, promote values of sacrifice and freedom, and strengthen social solidarity.

Overall, Muharram rituals in Hamedan represent a living and dynamic part of Iran's intangible cultural heritage, where religion, culture, and social identity are deeply intertwined. These traditions not only reflect the spiritual beliefs of the region's people but also demonstrate the continuity of customs passed down through generations that remain active in contemporary social life.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad turns to culinary heritage to boost tourism

Iranica Desk

For years, the name of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province has been associated with oak forests, roaring waterfalls and nomadic migrations, with most tourism programs in the province focusing on these natural and historical assets. However, a new opportunity appears to be gaining attention: the potential of local cuisine and the culinary heritage of the Zagros region as a tool for attracting tourists.

Officials in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province believe that traditional foods and the region's culinary heritage could become key drivers of tourism development.

In their view, traditional meals are not merely part of local culture, but also a resource capable of creating jobs, increasing income and strengthening the local economy, according to IRNA. Yadollah Rahmani, Governor of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, has emphasized the need to connect tradition with industry, saying that the economic potential of local foods requires professional planning and strategic development. According to him, many tourists today travel to experience different cultures, and food is one of the most important gateways to such experiences.

He has highlighted the untapped potential of local cuisine in boosting tourism and called for greater use of this capacity to attract visitors and generate income.

The concept of "food tourism" has become one of the fastest-growing branches of the tourism industry over the past two decades. Under this approach, food is no longer con-



sidered merely an additional service for travelers but can itself become a primary motivation for travel.

Experts say food has become an inseparable part of the tourism experience and can play a decisive role in visitor satisfaction. Global trends also reflect this reality, with many cities and regions now becoming known not only for historical monuments or natural attractions but also for their local dishes. Tourists increasingly travel to new destinations to taste different flavors, learn traditional cooking methods and experience local cultures.

In this context, provinces with diverse culinary traditions can use food as a tool for branding and economic development. However, the gap between "having potential" and "using potential" remains a major development challenge, and this issue requires attention in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad. Mojtaba Amirhosseini, Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, consid-

ers the national registration of these foods as evidence of their cultural value. However, he says their importance goes beyond their age or taste.

Each of these dishes reflects a part of the history of Zagros communities — a history connected to livestock farming, agriculture, nomadic life and the use of native plants. For example, acorn bread is not only a traditional food but also a reminder of how local communities adapted to the region's natural conditions.

He added that the province's climatic and cultural diversity provides suitable opportunities for producing, promoting and developing local food tourism. Contrary to common perceptions, food tourism is not limited to eating a meal at a restaurant. It includes a wider chain of activities, from producing raw materials and agriculture to eco-lodges, handicrafts, festivals and local training programs.

Studies show that this type of tourism can create numerous employment opportunities for rural women and young people, increase the added value of lo-



● rasekhoon.net

cal products and strengthen the economies of less-developed areas.

Experts describe food tourism as a "driver of regional development" because it keeps tourism revenue circulating within local communities.

For a province like Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, where many attractions are located in rural and nomadic areas, this issue has particular importance. The development of food tourism could help reduce migration, preserve rural populations and increase household incomes. However, achieving this goal requires actions beyond holding occasional events.

In recent years, several food festivals have been held in the province. Officials consider these events opportunities to introduce local capacities and emphasize their continuation. However, experts warn that festivals are only a first step. International experiences show that food tourism becomes a competitive advantage only when it is pursued through long-term planning.

Food tourism routes, workforce

training, product standardization, the inclusion of local dishes on hotel and restaurant menus, digital marketing and professional branding are among the measures that could transform this potential from a promotional activity into a sustainable economic sector. Otherwise, local foods may remain merely a subject for festivals without creating a lasting impact on the provincial economy.

One of the less-recognized aspects of tourism and the food industry is its social role. An example of this approach was seen at the "Taste of Hope 6" festival, held in Yasuj with the participation of people with disabilities, providing a platform to showcase their abilities.

According to Mehran Keshavarz, Director General of the province's Welfare Organization in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, participants in the festival demonstrated their cooking skills and some were selected for further stages of competitions.

Plans to establish a specialized cooking training center for peo-

ple with disabilities also show that the food industry can serve as a tool for social empowerment and expanding employment opportunities.

According to some reports, Iran has more than 2,500 local and traditional dishes, making it one of the world's richest culinary heritages. However, the contribution of food tourism to the country's economy remains below its potential.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad faces a similar situation: the province has culinary diversity, nomadic culture, unique landscapes and a rich historical identity, yet it still faces major challenges in turning these assets into a sustainable competitive advantage.

Challenges include the fact that many local dishes remain unknown to a large number of domestic tourists, along with infrastructure limitations and weaknesses in promotion and marketing.

The key question today is whether tourism managers, investors and industry stakeholders can transform this scattered potential into a coherent industry. If successful, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad may one day be known not only for its oak forests and waterfalls, but also for the flavors of Zagros culinary heritage as a defining part of its tourism identity. However, achieving that vision remains a long road ahead.

According to IRNA, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province covers an area of about 16,249 square kilometers along the Zagros mountain range.

The province has a population of around 726,000 people, with 54 percent living in urban areas and 46 percent in rural regions.



Iran hails Tajikistan's push to revive traditional Persian script

Arts & Culture Desk

The head of Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature commended Tajik President Emomali Rahmon after he ordered the introduction of a school course aimed at teaching students the traditional Persian script and classical texts, according to a statement released by the academy. Under Rahmon's directive, Tajikistan's Ministry of Education will begin teaching a course titled "Alphabet and Texts of the Ancestors" in schools to strengthen students' knowledge of the Persian language and its traditional writing system, the academy said. In a letter addressed to Rahmon, Academy President Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel welcomed the move, describing it as an important step toward reinforcing Tajikistan's national identity and

one that would be warmly received in Iran. According to the academy, Haddad Adel said the decision would complement previous initiatives under Rahmon's leadership to promote the Persian language and literature, including the publication of the book "Language of the Nation" and efforts to encourage the reading of the "Shahnameh". He said teaching the traditional Persian alphabet would help younger generations in Tajikistan connect more closely with their cultural and literary heritage, arguing that the script is an essential component of the Persian language. "Script is the written visage of a language, and teaching the ancestral alphabet in Tajikistan can be seen as a blessed step toward 'unveiling' and 'revealing the face' of the beautiful bride that is the Persian language in

Tajikistan," he said. "Undoubtedly, acquainting the capable children of Tajikistan with, and enabling them to master, the script of their ancestors will have a deep and enduring effect on consolidating the national identity of the great and dignified people of Tajikistan." Haddad Adel also congratulated Rahmon on behalf of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature and the Sa'adi Foundation, expressing hope that the initiative would strengthen national identity in Tajikistan. Tajikistan, where the Tajik language is closely related to Persian, currently uses a Cyrillic-based alphabet adopted during the Soviet era. Efforts to promote knowledge of the traditional Persian script have been part of broader discussions on the country's linguistic and cultural heritage.



Emomali Rahmon



Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel

Ancient 3,500-year-old Bronze Age relics unearthed in northern Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Archaeologists excavating an ancient mound in northern Iran have uncovered architectural remains dating back about 3,500 years, along with evidence from later historical and Islamic periods and signs of an extended break in human settlement caused by environmental changes, the head of the Iranian excavation team said on Saturday. Mojtaba Safari, director of the second excavation season at the Qaleh Ben archaeological site in Khoshrudpey, near the city of Babol, said the latest findings include structures from the Late Bronze Age, as well as artifacts from the Iron Age, Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic periods. "The excavation has revealed architectural remains from the Late Bronze Age, together with evidence from historical and Islamic eras and indications of a settlement hiatus linked to environmental transformations," Safari told reporters. The Qaleh Ben mound, which is listed on Iran's National Heritage Register, originally covered a larger area but was partially damaged during road construction in 2011. About three hectares (7.4 acres) of the site remain, with the first archaeological excavation conducted



in 2018. Safari said the second excavation season was launched to expand field investigations, identify architectural features, reconstruct the livelihoods of the site's inhabitants and establish a more complete sequence of occupation. According to preliminary findings, the upper layers of the site date to the Islamic period and include Qajar-era architectural remains, including parts of water supply and drainage systems. Archaeologists also recovered Islamic-era pottery, particularly from the early and middle Islamic centuries, along with metal and glass artifacts. Lower layers contained evidence from historical periods, including burials, although Safari said some graves had previously been damaged by illegal excavations. Pottery from the Iron Age, Parthian and Sasanian periods, as well as metal objects, was also uncovered. At a depth of about 2 meters (6.5

feet), researchers identified a layer of fine-grained silt containing numerous freshwater snail remains but no cultural material. Preliminary analysis suggests the deposit was formed after a meandering river channel was gradually cut off, creating an oxbow lake and interrupting human occupation at the site. At approximately 3 meters below the surface, archaeologists uncovered Late Bronze Age cultural layers containing architectural features, including a doorway threshold, hearth-related spaces and collapsed mudbrick remains. Stone grinding tools, mortars and distinctive Late Bronze Age pottery were among the principal discoveries. Safari said the long-term project is also intended to assess the site's potential to be developed into an open-air museum. He said its location, the extent of the surviving archaeological remains and the richness of its cultural deposits could support future cultural tourism and heritage conservation initiatives. The excavation is being carried out as a joint project between the University of Mazandaran and the Mazandaran Provincial office of Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, with support from local authorities in Babol and Khoshrudpey.

Eight Iranian villages vying for UN-backed global tourism recognition

Arts & Culture Desk

Eight Iranian villages are competing for inclusion in the UN Tourism organization's list of the world's Best Tourism Villages, as the country seeks to build on last year's record performance, a senior tourism official said. Iran secured places for three villages on the list in 2025, one of its strongest showings to date, placing it among the countries with the highest number of internationally recognized tourism villages, according to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. Mustafa Fatemi, director general for domestic tourism development, said the success of this year's nominations would depend not only on cultural and tourism assets but also on infrastructure, sustainability and international conditions. "The evaluation criteria of UN Tourism remain unchanged," Fatemi told ILNA. "However, security is an important indicator in assessing tourism destinations. As tensions decline and wartime conditions come to an end, Iran's standing on this



indicator can improve." The official said other challenges, including sanctions that affect international banking services and access to global online platforms, would continue to weigh on some assessment criteria until they are resolved. Fatemi cautioned against expecting a repeat of last year's outcome, describing the simultaneous recognition of three Iranian villages as an exceptional achievement. "Only a limited number of villages can meet all of UN Tourism's criteria, and others will need to gradually reach the required standards," he said. The eight nominated villages are still addressing shortcomings identified during the application process, with final verification by UN Tourism expected in September.

Fatemi said sustainability remained the most important criterion in the evaluation process, encompassing economic, social and environmental performance. Villages must also demonstrate distinctive local identity and innovation to stand out from international competitors. Tourism infrastructure, including accommodation, visitor facilities and local tourism value chains, also plays a key role in the assessment, he said, citing previously recognized Iranian villages that benefited from well-developed hospitality services. Recognition by UN Tourism can boost the international profile of rural destinations, attracting visitors and investment while supporting local economic development and cultural preservation, tourism officials say.

Chinese translation of Nizami's 'Khamasa' unveiled in Beijing



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A complete Chinese translation of the Khamasa (quintet), the best-known work of 12th-century Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi, was unveiled at the Beijing International Book Fair on Sunday, marking the first time the entire five-volume literary masterpiece

has been published in Chinese. The collection, published by Tianjin Publishing House, was unveiled during Iran Cultural Day at the 32nd Beijing International Book Fair after the release of the final two volumes, Haft Peykar and Layli and Majnun. Earlier translations of Khosrow and Shirin, Makhzan al-Asrar, Sharafnameh and Iqbalnameh had already been completed. The project was coordinated by the Iranian Cultural Center in China, which described the publication as an important milestone in promoting classical Persian literature among Chinese readers. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had presented a signed set of the Khamasa to Chinese President Xi Jinping, while another copy was donated to the Department of Persian Language and Literature at Peking

University, according to Iran's Organization for Culture and Islamic Relations. Speaking at the launch ceremony, Iranian Ambassador to China Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said the translation would deepen literary and academic exchanges between the two countries. He noted that China features prominently in Nizami's poetry through references to its rulers, luxury goods, artistic traditions and legendary settings, reflecting the historical ties between the two civilizations. Iran's cultural counselor in China, Nematollah Iranzadeh, said the translation forms part of a bilateral agreement to translate and publish 100 classical books from Iran and China over a decade. Under the arrangement, works are translated in their country of origin and published by estab-

lished publishers in the partner country. Iranzadeh said the first phase of the initiative has already produced several Persian-language titles in Chinese translation, while additional works by authors including Rumi and other scholars of Iranian philosophy, culture and history are being prepared for publication. Chinese-language works are also being translated into Persian under the same program. Chinese publishers used the event to announce new translations of contemporary Iranian literature. Chen Xiaomei, editor-in-chief of the Tree of Life Culture Promotion Center, said children's author Farhad Hassanzadeh's novel 'Call Me Beautiful' will be published in Chinese in 2026. She also announced plans to publish 'Mother's Guest' by Iranian author Houshang Moradi

Kermani, whose earlier work 'The Teacher, the Cracked Jar' has sold more than 70,000 copies in China. Zhang Yunfeng, deputy general manager of Tianjin Publishing and Media Group, described Nizami as one of the defining figures of Persian literature, saying his Khamasa marked the emergence of Persian romantic narrative poetry by combining philosophy, ethics and romance. The complete translation was produced by a team led by Professor Mu Hongyan and Associate Professor Liu Yingjun, scholars of Persian literature at Chinese universities. The launch ceremony also featured lectures by Chinese and Iranian academics on literary and cultural exchanges between the two countries, underscoring growing interest in Persian studies in China.