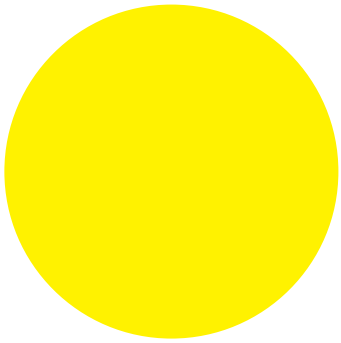


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Vessels at the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, July 12, 2026.
● REUTERS

Full coalition pullout could boost Iraq's disarmament drive

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

Iraq's new government, led by Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi, has launched a plan to bring all weapons under state control, setting September 30, 2026 as the deadline. The date coincides with the scheduled end of the US-led international coalition's mission in Iraq. Armed groups have not responded uniformly to the proposal. Some have shown flexibility and entered into talks with the government, while others have voiced objections to the plan, citing the continued presence of US forces in the country. This is not the first time an Iraqi government has attempted to disarm armed factions. In an interview with Iran Daily, Middle East affairs expert Majid Safataj argues that resistance groups still regard Iraq as being under US occupation and see disarmament as paving the way for



Majid Safataj

anti-national activities by Washington. As a result, he says, a complete and genuine withdrawal of coalition forces would significantly increase the government's chances of succeeding where previous administrations failed.

IRAN DAILY: Given the failure of previous Iraqi governments to disarm armed groups, how likely is Prime Minister al-Zaidi's new initiative to succeed, especially since its deadline coincides with the end of the international coalition's mission in September 2026?

SAFATAJ: There are several reasons why previous Iraqi governments failed to implement plans to disarm armed groups, but the most important is that Iraq remains under US occupation. Admittedly, unlike the early days of the 2003 invasion, American troops are no longer deployed throughout Iraqi cities and streets. However, their presence at what is the largest US military base in West Asia, located in Iraq, along with the numerous actions they have taken against Iraq's sovereignty and against the Islamic Republic of Iran, amounts to occupation.

As long as those forces remain, it is only natural that Iraqi armed groups such as the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the Islamic Resistance, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and other factions do not consider it either wise or logical to lay down their arms. Disarmament should only take place once the US military has completely withdrawn from Iraq, evacuated its bases, and no American military personnel remain in the country. If that scenario materializes—although I find it unlikely that the US-led international coalition will genuinely and definitively pull out of Iraq by September 2026—then it can be said that Mr. al-Zaidi's government would stand a better chance of disarming the resistance groups, the PMF, and other armed factions than previous governments did. However, if that does not happen, then disarmament—which is conditional on the withdrawal of US forces—will naturally not move forward.

Is this initiative primarily driven by Iraq's internal push to consolidate state sovereignty, or has it been shaped by external pressure, particularly from the United States? How would you assess the relative weight of these factors?

At the first stage, this plan is mainly the result of external pressure. From the very beginning, when the resistance emerged in Iraq and took up arms, the United States sought to disarm it—particularly the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Islamic Resistance, and other factions aligned with the Axis of Resistance, but not the takfiri groups. In fact, the Americans themselves trained and organized the takfiri groups. They even nurtured and organized Daesh to enable it to dominate Iraq. That is why Washington initially pushed for the disarmament of Iraq's resistance groups. The objective was to leave Iraq with a weak army, allowing takfiri and separatist groups to move in, fragment the country, and ultimately bring about Iraq's partition. Under the current circumstances, however, assuming that the United States and the international coalition fully withdraw from Iraq, it is only natural that the Iraqi people and various political currents would seek unified state sovereignty across the country. Under those conditions, they are also likely to

support the government's plan. Indeed, some groups, including Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and others, have already expressed their approval. The remaining groups are not entirely opposed to the initiative either. Rather, they believe it could still be exploited by the United States and occupying forces remain in Iraq. That is why they have made their support conditional upon the withdrawal of the international coalition—a condition that appears reasonable and logical. Therefore, assuming the US-led international coalition completely withdraws from Iraq in September 2026, it can be said that the weight of internal and external factors in shaping this initiative would be roughly equal.

The core objection raised by the resistance groups is the presence of US forces in Iraq. How would a complete withdrawal of foreign troops by the deadline affect this process?

Yes, the resistance groups' primary objection to disarmament stems solely from the presence of US forces in Iraq. In fact, the success of this initiative is directly tied to that issue.

Iran, US trade more strikes as Hormuz clashes escalate

PGSA announces halt to traffic through strategic waterway



Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps fires missiles at US bases in regional countries from an undisclosed location in Iran on July 12, 2026.
● TASNIM

stressing that they had ignored instructions to use an approved transit corridor or were violating regulations. The attacks prompted a barrage of US strikes across Iran in response, which targeted several coastal bases and telecommunications towers along Iran's southern coastline. The American military claimed that it hit about 140 targets in its third round of attacks this week. According to the IRGC, its Aerospace Force then targeted US military positions, striking key military infrastructure at Jordan's Prince Hassan Air Base, the strategic US Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the logistical support centers for naval vessels and the fueling platforms of US aircraft carriers at the Port of Duqm in Oman. In a separate statement, the Iranian Army's Public Relations Office said it had launched waves of self-destructive drones against US military facilities in Kuwait and Bahrain in response to the continued US attacks on Iran.

The Army said its drones targeted a Patriot air defense system, an ammunition depot, and a radar site belonging to the US military in Kuwait. It added that another wave of drone strikes hit a US military communications system and radar site in Bahrain. The IRGC Navy had earlier warned Washington that it must not use the Islamic Republic's justified closure of the Strait of Hormuz as a pretext for such aggression. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it had launched strikes on the orders of US President Donald Trump with the self-professed objective of reducing Iran's ability to control the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Affairs Authority (PGSA) announced on Sunday that traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has been suspended until further notice, citing recent "illegal movements" by US military forces in the region. "As soon as stability and calm are restored, all applications will be reviewed according to the established schedule and the necessary permits will be issued," the PGSA said in a post on its X account. The authority also reminded the ships and seafarers that the only way to ob-

tain a transit permit is through the PGSA.ir website. The escalation is the latest to undermine an interim agreement between Washington and Tehran aimed at ending their war, which broke out in late February with US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Mediators have been trying to salvage a diplomatic solution after President Donald Trump this week declared the ceasefire "over." Iranian media reported explosions in Bandar Abbas, Sirik, Jask and on Qeshm Island as well as in Khuzestan Province, with one soldier reported dead in the southern city of Jask. Qatar said three people were injured by Iranian attacks, while the UAE issued a warning for incoming missiles but later said they did not enter its territory. Muscat summoned the Iranian ambassador and handed him a formal protest – a rare move for the sultanate, which has been attempting to balance competing demands from Washington and Tehran. Iran initially closed the waterway to commercial shipping in response to the US-Israeli aggression against Iran on April 18, heavily impacting the world economy because the strait is a key conduit for energy exports from the Persian Gulf.

International Desk

The Iranian Armed Forces launched missiles and drones at the United States' bases in regional countries and announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz after the US carried out a new round of strikes on Iran as tensions between the two countries continue to rise. In a statement on Sunday, the Islamic

Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said that the United States had sought to "once again test what has already been tested" by imposing its will on the Omani government and provoking tensions through the "illegal movement" of several vessels south of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's Navy, it hastened to add, thwarted the attempt with a "decisive response." Iran's Armed Forces said they had targeted two ships in Strait of Hormuz,

Strait of Hormuz shut until US ends regional intervention: **IRGC**

International Desk

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz "until further notice," saying the waterway will remain closed until the United States ends its intervention in the region. In a statement on Sunday, the IRGC Navy said the measure had been taken "in light of the security situation resulting from the unlawful intervention of foreign powers." "The Strait of Hormuz has been closed until further notice and will remain closed until the United States ends its intervention in the region. No vessel will be permitted to transit the strait," the statement said. The IRGC Navy warned against any additional military aggression against the Islamic Republic under the pretext of the closure of the waterway, for which the enemy, itself, has been



responsible.

Earlier, the IRGC Navy reported having been forced to fire a warning shot at a vessel after several ships ignored its instructions regarding navigation through the strait. Describing the incident involving the trespassing vessel, the force said the ship had switched off its onboard systems, therefore, posing a threat to maritime safety. The force, meanwhile, reminded how it had previously warned that "foreign interference and unlawful designation of shipping routes in the Strait of Hormuz

would prompt a decisive response from us and disrupt the increasing volume of maritime traffic through the strait." The US military, however, insisted Sunday that ships are moving through the Strait of Hormuz. "Iran does not control the strait. Traffic is flowing," CENTCOM, which oversees US forces in the Middle East, claimed on X. Iran shut down the chokepoint to enemies and their allies after February 28, when the US and the Israeli regime began their latest bout of wholesale unprovoked

aggression against the Islamic Republic. It began exercising far stricter controls after Donald Trump announced continuation of an illegal naval blockade of Iranian vessels and ports in spite of a ceasefire that the US president, himself, had declared on April 7. In May, Iran officially launched a new mechanism for governing maritime traffic through the strategic strait, with the Islamic Republic warning vessels against refusing to coordinate their pending transits with Iranian authorities and using routes other than the supervisory management zone defined by Tehran. In June, Iran and the United States reached an understanding aimed at ending the cycle arising from the unprovoked aggression. Washington then alleged to have lifted the blockade, but would still continue military interference in the waterway.

Qalibaf scorns US breaches, says era of one-sided deals 'over'

International Desk

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said the United States needs to honor its promises or it will have to pay the price for violating its commitments under a peace deal reached between the two countries, noting that, "The era of one-sided deals is over." Qalibaf made the remarks in an X post on Sunday after the terrorist US military conducted its third round of aerial assaults this week on Iran in flagrant breach of the Pakistan-brokered Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Tehran and Washington. He referred to Article 5 of the MoU, under which only Iran is in charge of making arrangements for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical energy chokepoint which has been closed by Iran following the US-Israeli aggression in February. "The era of one-sided deals is OVER. We told you: keep your word or pay the price. Reality is knocking," the top Iranian negotiator said. In response to the latest American strikes on southern Iran, Iran's Armed Forces launched coordinated missile and drone strikes against US military facilities in Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain. Iran has restricted transit through the Strait of Hormuz since the early days of



Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf
● IRNA

the illegal US-Israeli aggression that began on February 28 and came to a halt under a ceasefire on April 8 amid the Islamic Republic's brave resistance and successful retaliatory operations. On June 18, Iran and the US signed the MoU, which calls for a permanent end to hostilities across all fronts and includes a commitment from both sides to hold further talks on a final agreement in the next 60 days. The deal's Article 5 places responsibility for reopening and managing the Strait of Hormuz squarely in Iran's hands. Iran has repeatedly stressed its legitimate right to sovereignty over the strait, noting that the waterway will never return to its pre-war conditions and that it will be administered by the Islamic Republic in accordance with international law.

Full coalition pullout ...

If, at the first stage, the Americans fully and unconditionally withdraw from Iraq and maintain no armed presence in the country, it will naturally have a positive impact on the resistance groups. In that case, they are likely to support the initiative in order to preserve the unity of the Iraqi state and ensure the country's collective security through Iraq's army and security forces.

Given the Islamic Republic of Iran's support for resistance

groups in Iraq, how do you assess Iran's role in this equation? The Islamic Republic of Iran has supported the resistance groups in Iraq primarily to rid the country of US occupying forces and to enable the Iraqi government to exercise full authority and sovereignty over Iraq's security. Iran's support for these groups has never been intended as opposition to successive Iraqi governments during the occupation. On the contrary, it has been aimed at assisting them. Iraqi governments have

consistently thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran for supporting the Iraqi people. Therefore, Iran's support is fundamentally support for both the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government, as well as for strengthening the Iraqi state's sovereignty over its own territory. Accordingly, if disarmament is pursued with that objective and in that spirit, the Islamic Republic of Iran would certainly support it and could well assist the Iraqi government in achieving that goal.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran generated 5.4 TWh of nuclear power in 2025, among top 30 producers

Economy Desk

Iran churned out 5.4 terawatt-hours (TWh) of nuclear electricity in 2025, placing it among the world's 30 largest nuclear power producers, although output fell 23% from a year earlier, according to the latest Statistical Review of World Energy published by the Energy Institute (EI).

The report showed Iran's nuclear electricity generation declined from 7 TWh in 2024 to 5.4 TWh in 2025. The drop came during a year in which Iran was targeted by US-Israeli attacks during a 12-day war in June.

According to Tasnim News Agency, Iran was among the limited number of countries producing nuclear electricity. Only 32 countries, including Iran, produced nuclear power in 2025.

Global nuclear electricity generation totaled 2,845 TWh in 2025, up 1.3% from the previous year, the EI report showed.

The United States remained the world's top producer of nuclear electricity in 2025, accounting for 29% of global output, according to the EI report. China ranked second with a 17.1% share, followed by France with 13.7%.

The report also said the United Arab Emirates cranked out more

than 39 TWh of nuclear electricity in 2025, up 0.4% from the previous year.

With 5.4 TWh of nuclear electricity made in 2025, Iran produced more nuclear power than the Netherlands and Taiwan, placing it 30th globally. The country accounted for 0.2% of worldwide nuclear electricity generation.

The Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, Iran's sole nuclear power station, has a net generating capacity of 915 megawatts (MW), amounting to about 1% of the country's total electricity output capacity. The facility is in operation, while its second and third units are under construction.

Its first unit was built with Russian cooperation and was designed to generate 1,000 MW of power.

Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said in June that the Bushehr plant had been among the world's top 10 nuclear facilities for the third consecutive year, receiving a perfect score of 100 out of 100 for safety and efficiency.

The assessment was carried out by inspectors and specialists from the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) following visits to nuclear power plants around the world, Eslami said.



A view of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant
● IRNA

Mobarakeh rebuilding roof of steelmaking unit damaged in attacks



Furnace No. 8 at Mobarakeh Steel Company resumes operations on June 9, 2026.
● TASNIM

decades and had been prepared from scanned documents, while some of the specified steel sections were no longer available.

He said the team reviewed the documentation and remodeled all trusses while preserving the original design requirements, helping speed up material procurement.

Behzad Momeni, head of the steel structure workshop, said the project faced tight deadlines and technical complexity, but careful planning enabled the fabrication work to proceed on schedule.

He described the reconstruction as "a demonstration of Mobarakeh Steel's technical expertise and the high capabilities of domestic manufacturing." According to the report, the first phase of the reconstruction was completed without any safety incidents, while work on the second phase remains underway. Company officials said the goal is to restore the unit's production capacity to operation as quickly as possible.

Economy Desk

Iran's Mobarakeh Steel Company is rebuilding the roof of its damaged steelmaking unit as part of efforts to restore production after parts of the facility were destroyed during the 40-day US-Israeli war that began on February 28, its officials said.

The reconstruction, one of the first steps toward returning the steelmaking unit to operation, is being carried out using domestic capabilities, ILNA reported on Sunday.

The first phase involves the fabrication of nearly 180 metric tons of steel structures and about 200 roof components for Furnaces No. 7 and 8, while work on a second phase covering ad-

ditional sections of the facility is underway.

Company officials said all manufacturing stages, including cutting, welding, machining and painting, were completed in line with quality standards and the components are ready for installation.

Meanwhile, the second phase of the project, covering reconstruction of the roof of Module A and Furnaces No. 1 through No. 4, has been outsourced to contractors, with modeling and fabrication currently underway.

Mahmoud Sedaqatnasab, head of Mobarakeh Steel's Central Repair Workshop, said the rapid launch of the reconstruction project, relying on in-house resources alongside outsourced work, had distinguished the effort.

"The reconstruction of the steelmaking roof is not just a key project but the first step in reviving one of the most critical sections of production," he said.

Project supervisor Dania Begdeli said restoring the steelmaking site to production had been the top priority after it was damaged during the war. He said the fabrication process, including cutting, assembly, welding and painting of nearly 180 metric tons of steel structures and 200 components, was completed in less than two months.

Ma'ad Soltani, the project's preparation and planning supervisor, said the engineering team had faced technical challenges because the original drawings dated back about three

Gov't plans national quantum labs under infrastructure expansion push

Economy Desk

The vice president for science, technology and the knowledge-based economy announced prioritization of the expansion of infrastructure for quantum technologies as well as plans to establish national and reference laboratories as part of the effort. According to Mehr news agency, Hossein Afshin made the remarks at the eighth meeting of Iran's Quantum Steering Council, where participants reviewed recent progress in quantum technology development, implementation of previous council decisions and future plans for the sector.

Afshin said the development of quantum technology required "cohesion, a national division of responsibilities and the use of the capacities of all relevant institutions," adding that the Quantum Steering Council should serve as the main body for coordination and synergy among government agencies.

He said the vice presidency's plans include establishing national and reference laboratories, completing research infrastructure and creating evaluation and standardization centers for quantum technologies. "Creating standardized and accessible infrastructure for researchers, universities and knowledge-based companies is a prerequisite for building a strong quantum technology ecosystem in the country," he said.

Afshin said the development of infrastructure for quantum technologies was among



Hossein Afshin
● MEHR

the vice presidency's priorities.

He said expanding educational and research laboratories, supporting specialized university courses, strengthening training programs, producing scientific content and creating incentives for students and researchers to enter the field were among the initiatives being pursued in cooperation with the Ministry of Science.

Workforce shortage, quantum tech market Afshin also described the limited number of specialized personnel as one of the country's main challenges in developing quantum technologies, saying universities, faculty members and researchers should receive targeted support to help address the shortage.

Afshin also emphasized the need to expand the market for quantum technologies, saying the technology was being developed for applications in communications, mining, energy, industry, healthcare and other strategic sectors to support technological progress while creating a sustainable market and incentives for specialists.

Iran forecast to retain position as key global bitumen supplier in 2026

Economy Desk

Iran remains a major global supplier of bitumen, serving markets across Asia, Africa, and other regions, despite increasing uncertainty in export conditions, according to a report by Iranoilgas.com website.

Bitumen prices are being influenced by fluctuations in crude oil prices, refinery output, transportation costs, regional construction demand, and higher freight expenses.

Thanks to its large refining capacity and competitive production costs, Iran continues to

hold a strong position in the international bitumen market. However, export prices vary depending on product grade, packaging, order volume, delivery terms, and destination.

Looking ahead to 2026, the market outlook will depend largely on global infrastructure spending, oil price trends, and international trade conditions.

Exporters are expected to emphasize pricing flexibility, reliable supply, and efficient logistics, while demand from infrastructure projects in emerging markets is likely to continue supporting Iran's bitumen exports.

A litterateur, patron of culture

Martyred Leader's relationship with poetry, novels

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Rarely does it occur within the political arena that a figure occupying the most exalted religious station and leadership position shows such profound familiarity with poetry and literature that this acquaintance transforms him, in the estimation of cultural and literary circles, into an influential persona within a linguistic domain.

Mohammad-Kazem Kazemi, an Afghan immigrant poet and researcher, as well as a non-permanent member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, delineates, in the ensuing interview with Iran Newspaper, the preoccupations of the martyred Leader of Iran with poetry, fictional literature, and the Persian language. Kazemi, who over the past decades participated in certain sessions of poets' meetings with Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, recounts his mastery over classical and contemporary Persian poetry, his precise cognizance of Persian-speaking poets, and his magnanimous disposition when confronted with critical verse; a bibliophilic Leader who regarded Persian not merely as an instrument for the actualization of cultural diplomacy, but rather as a bridge for the transmission of Islamic precepts and Iranian culture.

Mohammad-Kazem Kazemi



IRAN: The denizens of poetry and literature annually witnessed the convocation of a poetic gathering with the presence of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Given that over various periods you possessed the opportunity to participate in this literary assembly, please relate your experiences of reciting verse in the presence of the martyred Leader and his interaction with poets, particularly the younger cohort.

KAZEMI: The poetic gatherings and verse recitations in the presence of Ayatollah Khamenei were an unparalleled opportunity, not solely granted to the people of poetry, but rather apportioned to the culture and literature of Iran. It is a momentous occurrence that an individual in such a station should be so enamored of poetry and literature. This fondness was not confined exclusively to books and literature; regarding diverse facets of art, he likewise held contemplative opinions, though this subject, of course, lies beyond my specialization.

In comparison to other global leaders, he possessed, from a cultural standpoint, singular characteristics. He commanded simultaneous mastery over both ancient and contemporary literature, and he was also well-acquainted with world literature. Apart from comparisons among global leaders and prominent political figures, this degree of comprehensive knowledge even among literature professors constitutes a unique attribute. The majority of literature professors, on the basis of their research and personal interests, are familiar with the literature of merely one of these two temporal periods. The martyred Leader, however, just as he perused and recognized the poetry of ancient poets, also knew works in various poetic forms of contemporary literature and, relying upon his personal memory and according to the exigencies of the session, would recite couplets from poems of disparate periods. Naturally, his own poetic taste inclined more toward classical poetry, and he maintained greater affinity with ancient literature, yet he was also thoroughly acquainted with modern forms. I have articulated these points so that you might apprehend that regarding Ayatollah Khamenei, we were confronted with a literatus political and religious scholar, a portion of whose youth had been spent in continuous attendance at poetic gatherings and assemblies in the city of Mashhad, and who maintained contact not only with the poets of Mashhad and Khorasan Province, but also with poets from throughout the entire country.

On account of his participation in these very poetic assemblies, he was cognizant of the significance of establishing literary



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei listens closely to a cultural figure who has approached him before one of his annual meetings with poets and writers on July 12, 2014.
● [khamenei.ir](#)

circles and their functions, and he would discourse upon the necessity of convening them. Annually, he would sponsor the organization of poetic assemblies and would consistently speak about the instruments for the growth and elevation of poetry, foremost among which were the importance of participating in associations and the significance of holding poetic evenings and literary circles. Such imperatives are comprehended only by one who has experienced them and whose youth was partially spent in literary assemblies. His connection with poetry and the people of letters was never severed, neither during his presidency nor subsequently when he assumed the leadership of the country. Perhaps the younger generation is unaware, but these poetic sessions were also held prior to the commencement of his leadership — a meeting that gradually became

mediatized and transformed from an intimate literary circle into a formal session in the middle of Ramadan.

From what time did you obtain the fortune of attending the poetic sessions conducted with the presence of Ayatollah Khamenei?

My initial experience dates back many years, to the era of his presidency. If my recollection does not err, it was the year 1988, when he had already occupied the office of the presidency and came to Mashhad on a simple Nowruz journey. On that trip, circumstances were arranged for his meeting with us, the poets of Mashhad; the session was held in one of the halls of the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH). At that time, I was a young man of 21 years and, for the first time, recited a poem in the presence of Ayatollah Khamenei and his accompanying delegation.

What, in that first encounter and meeting, most captivated your attention?

The session, for which I harbored considerable anxiety, was convened in a manner more informal than one could possibly have

imagined. Ayatollah Khamenei listened to our poems with great amicability and critiqued each poem separately. His precise and professional observations regarding each poem astonished me. That meeting was not merely an ordinary poetic evening; it was also a specialized session for critique.

This criticism and these literary commentaries were not confined to that single session, but continued throughout all these years. The preponderance of what I and other poets have observed over the past decades in this connection was the martyred Leader's technical appraisals when confronted with the compositions of the poets. He abstained from conventional generalities and would offer recommendations for the improvement of the attendees' verses; for instance, that if the poem, from the standpoint of prosody, possessed such-

Yousef Ali Mir Shakak, a renowned Iranian poet, recites his poem for the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on April 5, 2023, at one of the few sessions of the poets with the Leader held during the COVID-19 pandemic.
● [IRNA](#)



In Afghanistan, we have a poet named Gholam Ahmad Navid, of whom there is virtually no trace or mention in Iran. Even within Afghanistan itself, he is not a particularly prominent figure, and it is astonishing for me that in one of the sessions, Ayatollah Khamenei recited a couplet from the compositions of the late Navid. To be truthful, even I myself do not possess the divan of this poet, nor have I located a written copy of his works. To this day, I remain astonished as to how he came to know Navid!

and-such a feature, it would be improved, and so forth. His opinions transcended general discussions of poetry; Ayatollah Khamenei was also a consummate expert in matters such as prosody and rhyme. This is a matter that, from that very first meeting, captured my attention and that of other poets.

In addition to his exemplary command of poetic techniques and principles, his knowledge and memory were not restricted to famous poets. On the basis of the topics raised, he would sometimes recite verses by poets or make reference to the work of a poet that left all of us astounded. In Afghanistan, we have a poet named Gholam Ahmad Navid, of whom there is virtually no trace or mention in Iran. Even within Afghanistan itself, he is not a particularly prominent figure, and it is astonishing for me that in one of the sessions, Ayatollah Khamenei recited a couplet from the compositions of the late Navid. To be truthful, even I myself do not possess the divan of this poet, nor have I located a written copy of his works. To this day, I remain astonished as to how he came to know Navid! This degree of knowledge and, on the other hand, his exemplary memory concerning poetry and fictional literature was truly wonderful.

Tell us about the encounters of your fellow Afghan poets and writers with instances such as the martyred Leader's remarkable familiarity with poets of the Persian linguistic geography, including the late Navid.

The majority of my Afghan poet and writer friends with whom I maintain contact lament that they wish we too in Afghanistan had been beneficiaries of such a lettered and bibliophilic Leader. They would marvel that the Leader of Iran had not only read Iranian and globally prominent books, but also recognized Afghan men of letters in various domains of poetry and fictional literature. Although Afghanistan too is counted among the bases of the Persian linguistic geography, the majority of our statesmen were not only not people of letters, but in some cases even harbored antagonism toward it. We have witnessed this Persian-antagonism repeatedly in Afghanistan; for this reason, some of the litterateurs of my birthplace invoke Ayatollah Khamenei with praising words.

I recall that Najib Bavar (an Afghan poet and researcher) was present at one of the poetry recitation sessions in the presence of the martyred Leader. When his turn arrived, he addressed Ayatollah Khamenei as the Leader of the Persian-speaking peoples of the world. This is a significant occurrence. He did not even say the religious leader of Muslims! His emphasis was that he is the Leader of all Persian-speakers.

Well, a portion of this perspective derives from the relationship that Ayatollah Khamenei maintained with books, literature, and their adherents. There is no doubt that Afghanistan and other countries within the Persian linguistic geography are, politically, independent territories; however, just as that Afghan poet stated, Ayatollah Khamenei's literary standing had placed him, within the linguistic domain, at the apex of the realm of these countries — a matter that reverted to his professional bibliophilia, his excellent knowledge, and his concerned disposition.

In the sessions conducted with his presence, was there any particular thematic constraint imposed upon the poets?

Never! In none of the poetic sessions held with the presence of the martyred Leader was the recitation of any specific content imposed upon the poets. Even his own disposition was not such that he would favor particular themes — for instance, religious poetry. It had occurred numerous times that some poets would emphasize in the session that they had both religious and romantic verse prepared for recitation, yet Ayatollah Khamenei would select the romantic or the socially-oriented poem.

His encounter with critical poetry was likewise accompanied by receptivity and an open perspective. I myself, on several occasions, recited critical poems concerning the situation of immigrant poets, and he listened to my verses with patience. If his reception had not been favorable, we would not have recited critical poetry! The majority of the satirical poems recited in the sessions were also critical in nature. Mr. Naser Feiz, on account of the familiarity he had acquired with the martyred Leader, several years ago recited a critical satirical poem in his presence — a poem that, had a young and unfamiliar poet been in his place, ignorant of Ayatollah Khamenei's magnanimity, would never have been recited. I recall well that our martyred Leader, after Mr. Feiz recited this poem, smiled and, with cheerful countenance, announced his opinion.

I have recounted this so that the younger generation might know that if the poets present at these annual poetic gatherings selected particular themes, it was their own personal choice. If they perceived self-censorship on the part of poets in altering certain couplets, they would admonish that there is no need for such an action. The sole occasion upon which Ayatollah Khamenei requested that the poets no longer recite a particular theme was when one of the young poets recited a poem filled with praise and adulation of him. When the poem concluded, he addressed those present and beseeched them not to recite this type of poem in these sessions henceforth. This very recommendation was also offered most amicably, with the rationale and argument that if I commend such poems, others will suppose it is on account of their laudatory theme, and if I criticize them, the composer will take offense. His humility was such that he would caution poets against reciting such poems.

The sessions were extremely heartening, and over these years I have seen many poets who yearned to recite verse in the presence of the martyred Leader and to benefit from those assemblies. Regrettably, his martyrdom has left the grief of attending



Female and male Iranian writers and poets gift their published works to Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on May 20, 2019.
● khamenei.ir

poetic sessions upon the hearts of many poets — a presence in which, contrary to certain rumors and in contrast to some literary congresses and festivals, there was no monetary reward, yet in spiritual and professional terms, it possessed abundant yields. Many new and talented figures were introduced to the country's literary community through these very sessions, and this under circumstances where some of those poets resided in small towns and remote regions — poets whose talents would not, under normal conditions, have attracted anyone's attention. This matter occurred also with respect to veteran figures, but in a different manner: when certain professors recited poetry in his presence, cultural officials would become cognizant of the necessity of honoring them through the organization of commemorative ceremonies.

What preoccupations did he harbor concerning Persian as the official language of the country and as a point of commonality among the countries of the cultural Greater Iran geography?

He maintained particular attention and a special regard for the subject of the Persian language and matters pertaining to it. But why is this regard so important and noteworthy? As was mentioned, regarding Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, we were confronted with a Leader and

religious scholar of the highest level of seminary education; the majority of Muslim scholars, on account of their religious training and the exigencies of their studies, exhibit greater inclination toward the Arabic language. Concerning the martyred Leader, however, the situation was different; despite his mastery of Arabic and his numerous authored works composed in Arabic, he harbored a perpetual concern for Persian literature and its standing.

This concerned and multifaceted perspective have also been among my perpetual astonishments, and I suspect that its root must be sought in his profound knowledge and extensive studies in the domain of Persian poetry and literature. He believed that a serious endeavor must be exerted for the elevation of Persian's global standing, and he emphasized that Persian should become the language of science.

The implementation of the martyred Leader's directives, some of which were mentioned, what yields would it bring forth?

The efforts of the country's cultural and educational officials to apply Ayatollah Khamenei's statements in the sphere of the Persian language and literature will have many yields, one of the most significant of which is the realization of cultural diplomacy as a groundwork for the achievement of other types of diploma-

The great Iranian poet Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar, who composed works in both Azerbaijani and Persian, recites a poem for then-president Seyyed Ali Khamenei (R) in Tabriz, Iran, in the summer of 1986.
● SNN



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In none of the poetic sessions held with the presence of the martyred Leader was the recitation of any specific content imposed upon the poets. Even his own disposition was not such that he would favor particular themes — for instance, religious poetry. It had occurred numerous times that some poets would emphasize in the session that they had both religious and romantic verse prepared for recitation, yet Ayatollah Khamenei would select the romantic or the socially-oriented poem.

cy, including public and political diplomacy. The presentation of various strategies for the official language and, on the other hand, the admonitions addressed to the responsible authorities, if emanating from a nationalist figure, would not be particularly extraordinary; but emanating from a religious scholar, perhaps it is not without precedent.

Permit me to recount an anecdote narrated by Mohammad-Hossein Jafarian, a journalist, war documentarian, and poet — an anecdote that Mr. Jafarian used to relate to me and other friends concerning the rationale behind Ayatollah Khamenei's statements for the expansion of the Persian language. In that meeting, the martyred Leader had emphasized that one of the necessities for the development of Persian reverts to its capacity for influencing the transmission of Islamic religious knowledge, and he considered its exemplification in the fact that whenever we have witnessed the expansion of our religious knowledge within the Persian cultural domain, this occurrence has taken place through the medium of the Persian language and with the aid of literary texts.

The majority of foreign enthusiasts have become acquainted with our religious knowledge through the poems of Rumi, Sa'di, and other great figures of Persian poetry. Had the literary masterpieces of the Persian language not functioned as a powerful bridge between Islam and other countries, the Islamic religion would not have spread to this extent in China and parts of Central Asia. The number of Muslims in China is perhaps slightly less than the Muslim population of Iran, which constitutes a considerable number. The number of Muslims in India and Pakistan is also very large. The Muslims of the aforementioned regions have predominantly not converted to Islam through religious books, but rather the literary texts produced in Persian have rendered them desirous.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that if we seek religious propagation and the promulgation of revolutionary values, one of the optimal strategies is the strengthening of the Persian language. This perspective of the martyred Leader emanated from the mastery he possessed over the Persian language and literature. Interestingly, both Leaders of the Revolution regarded poetry with special attention; both Imam Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei were poets and men of philosophy. That both Leaders of the Islamic Revolution of Iran were litterateurs is a great fortune and felicity that has been granted to this country and its literature.

Over the past decades, Ayatollah Khamenei has repeatedly visited the Tehran International Book Fair and engaged in discourse with publishers concerning publishing matters and new book releases. Did his preoccupation with direct meetings with publishers and with learning of their concerns emanate from his mastery of world literature and his bibliophilia?

Undoubtedly, his pursuit and concern with matters pertaining to the publishing domain emanated from a particular affinity he maintained with books and reading. Ayatollah Khamenei did not have mastery only over poetry; he was a professional bibliophile.

You have likely heard that in his reading, he perused both au-

thored works and translations. In his youth, during the 1960s, he had read the majority of the world's seminal works of fiction, countless exemplifications of which can be observed in the content of his various statements concerning subjects related to books and in his meetings with the people of publishing.

Among the most manifest fruits of Ayatollah Khamenei's professional bibliophilia is the preoccupation he maintained for direct interaction with publishers and those involved in publishing. In every period of the Tehran International Book Fair that conditions permitted, he would visit it. A point that I mention on the basis of personal experience and follow-up is the martyred Leader's abstention from discrimination among publishers during these visits. In each visit, he would approach various publishers; some might suppose that his selection was exclusively of publishers of religious books, but if you review the content of the reports of these visits briefly, you will observe that in his numerous visits to different periods of the Tehran International Book Fair, he made no distinction among publishers and repeatedly visited the booths of publishers that carried books with intellectual themes, and discoursed about their problems and works. When you read these reports, you encounter Ayatollah Khamenei's opinions concerning various books — a matter that shows his bibliophilia and his awareness of the intellectual and literary currents of contemporary Iran and the world.

On the basis of this very characteristic, after each visit he would deliver addresses to cultural and national officials for the resolution of publishing domain issues. Ayatollah Khamenei was concerned with pursuing publishing and literary matters and frequently offered recommendations to officials for the amelioration of their condition, including the necessity of supporting a literary current or cultural institution.

What feedback did such an encounter of the martyred Leader with fictional literature and publishing matters have among the people of books?

To be truthful, for me personally, particularly in my younger years, this degree of knowledge and bibliophilia on his part was astonishing. Probably other poet and writer friends also harbored such a perception. Under normal circumstances, perhaps few would expect that a cleric and religious scholar, occupying such a station, would know poetry so well and also Iranian and foreign fictional literature!

This matter was far more astonishing in relation to certain books. Ayatollah Khamenei had read all the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky! Books such as Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and even authors from various intellectual and political spectra of different decades in Iran he recognized and had read their works. He was well acquainted with poetic schools and various literary tendencies. This type of encounter and comprehensiveness in his studies — concerning ancient and contemporary poetry, as well as Iranian and foreign fictional literature — is not a matter that can be easily dismissed, and it exerted a positive influence upon the condition and perspective of the people of books.

The full interview first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper Iran.

Sports Desk

Amir Qalenoeei will remain in charge of Iran through the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, which begins on January 7 in Saudi Arabia, Iranian Football Federation (FFIRI) president Mehdi Taj has confirmed.

The announcement ends recent speculation over the future of the national team's bench following a mixed World Cup campaign in the United States.

Iran drew all three of its Group G matches – 2-2 against New Zealand, goalless against Belgium, and 1-1 with Egypt – to finish third in the standings and miss out on a place in the knockout stage of the expanded 48-team tournament.

"Mr. Qalenoeei will continue as Iran head coach. We have already received his plans for the Asian Cup, and preparations will begin during the upcoming FIFA international window in September," Taj told Iranian state television on Saturday.

A semifinalist at the previous two editions, Iran will



Iran head coach Amir Qalenoeei looks on during the warm-up before the FIFA World Cup Group G match against New Zealand in Los Angeles, California, U.S., June 15, 2026.
● DANIEL COLE/REUTERS

Qalenoeei to stay on as Iran coach for Asian Cup, Taj confirms

begin its bid for a fourth Asian Cup title – and its first since 1976 – against China in Group C, which also features Kyrgyzstan and Syria, at Riyadh's Kingdom Arena on January 9.

Never-ending debate

Debate continues among Iranian fans and pundits over Team Melli's World Cup campaign in the United States.

Iran produced some spirited performances and

completed the group stage unbeaten for the first time in its World Cup history, an achievement many considered noteworthy given the politically charged and disrupted buildup Qalenoeei's side endured amid

the country's conflict with one of the tournament's co-hosts.

All Iran-based players in the squad arrived at the tournament without competitive action after the outbreak of the war in late

February, while the national team had little opportunity to play high-profile warm-up matches before the World Cup.

Logistical problems – including travel restrictions, visa denials affecting support staff, and repeated trips back to the team's training base in Tijuana, Mexico, after each match – also complicated Iran's campaign, with Qalenoeei and several players publicly complaining about those conditions throughout the tournament.

Describing Iran as the "most oppressed" team at the World Cup, Qalenoeei urged FIFA after the Egypt match "not to let the hosts treat teams and players the same way in the future."

Captain Mahdi Taremi also labeled the tournament a logistical "disaster," saying Team Melli had not been made to feel welcome in the United States.

Despite those challenges, Qalenoeei has faced mounting criticism over his tactical approach and decision-making during the three group-stage matches. Critics argue he failed

to deliver on the team's stated objective of reaching the knockout rounds for the first time in seven World Cup appearances, despite what many observers viewed as a favorable group-stage draw.

Qalenoeei, who returned for a second spell as Iran head coach in March 2023, broke his silence on Wednesday with a lengthy social media post reflecting on the World Cup campaign. However, he stopped short of offering an apology for the team's elimination, prompting further criticism from those who accused him of refusing to take responsibility for the early exit.

The 2027 Asian Cup will be a fourth major tournament for Qalenoeei, whose current contract is due to expire on July 23, as Iran head coach. During his first spell in charge, Iran was knocked out by South Korea in the quarterfinals of the 2007 Asian Cup, while his second tenure has so far produced a semifinal finish at the 2024 edition, where Team Melli lost to host Qatar.

Iranian clubs forced to host Asian matches at neutral venues: Report

Sports Desk

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has instructed Iranian clubs competing in the 2026/27 continental competitions to stage their home matches at neutral venues, IRNA reported on Saturday. Esteghlal and Tractor will represent Iran in the AFC Champions League Elite next season, while Chadormalou is set to compete in the AFC Champions League Two.

The Asian football governing body cited "logistical challenges, travel-related issues, and security concerns for participants, including teams, match officials and competition delegates" arising from the military tensions in the region as the reasons for the decision.

The move has drawn objections from the three Persian Gulf Pro League clubs, each of which has submitted a formal appeal to the AFC, arguing that there is no jus-

tification for moving their home matches to neutral venues, according to IRNA. The draw for the 2026/27 AFC Champions League Elite and AFC Champions League Two is scheduled to take place in Kuala Lumpur on August 18. The Iranian top flight was declared null and void following the outbreak of war between Iran and a U.S.-Israeli coalition on February 28.

The cancellation forced the Football Federation

of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) to nominate Esteghlal and Tractor—the top two teams in the standings before the league was called off—for the AFC Champions League Elite. Both clubs are guaranteed places in the 12-team West Zone league phase.

Chadormalou, meanwhile, defeated Golgozar and Persepolis in a three-team playoff tournament last month to secure its continental debut.



● FFIRI

Iran to send 150-member delegation to World Nomad Games

Sports Desk

Iran will send a unified national delegation of up to 150 members to the 2026 World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan, Sports and Youth Minister Ahmad Donyamali said during a coordination meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Gholamhossein Yadegari.

The World Nomad Games, held every two years and dedicated to traditional ethnic sports practiced across Central Asia, have previously featured Iranian participation through separate federation entries. Donyamali said the upcoming edition will mark the first time Iran competes as a single, coordinated delegation.

According to the minister, the Iranian contingent is expected to include around 120 athletes and coaches, along with approximately 20 accompanying officials.

The sixth edition of the multi-sport event will kick off on August 31, with the closing ceremony sched-



● kabar.kg

uled for September 6.

Donyamali said Iran intends to strengthen both the size and quality of its participation in order to increase its medal prospects.

"For the first time, we are sending the teams in a serious and integrated manner, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and we want to enhance the medal-winning capacity of our delegation," he said.

The minister added that Iran also aims to use the event to showcase its cultural heritage, with athletes set to wear traditional costumes representing the country's various

ethnic groups during the opening parade. Six zurkhaneh athletes will also take part in exhibition performances showcasing Iran's traditional ritual sport.

Donyamali also said contingency plans had been prepared in case Iran's airspace becomes unavailable amid the military tensions in the region.

"If air borders are closed, we must evaluate alternative transit routes from now and, if necessary, send the delegation overland through neighboring countries. Ashgabat in Turkmenistan is one possible route," he said. "Even if we are in the

midst of war, it is important for us that the team is dispatched because it demonstrates our strength, and we want to achieve the best possible result," Donyamali said. Ambassador Yadegari said about 100 countries and roughly 3,000 athletes are expected to participate in the 2026 Games. He added that the event has gained additional significance as it coincides with the fifth anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit process.

Yadegari said around 20 presidents and heads of state have been invited to the opening ceremony, which will coincide with Kyrgyzstan's National Day. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is among the invited leaders, and an SCO summit meeting is also expected to be held alongside the Games. Donyamali noted that each participating country has been granted permission to introduce and demonstrate selected traditional sports during the competition.

Beach Volleyball U18 World Championships: Iran exits after injury-forced retirement in knockouts

Sports Desk

Iran's campaign at the FIVB Beach Volleyball U18 World Championships came to a premature end on Saturday after an injury forced the national team to retire from its first knockout-round match against Colombia in The Hague, Netherlands. Having finished third in Pool A to qualify for the round of 24, the Iranian

duo of Amin Vakili and Amirreza Jamshidi lost the opening set 21-19 and was trailing 16-7 in the second when Jamshidi was forced to retire through injury. The Iranian player had already required treatment during the first set and briefly returned to the court. However, he was unable to continue midway through the second set, with Colombia awarded the victory under tournament regulations.

The Iranian pair opened its campaign with a 2-1 (21-16, 20-22, 15-6) victory over Canada's Bruno Azevedo and Cameron Gibson before suffering a straight-set defeat (21-14, 21-18) to hosts Sven van Groenestein and Kyan Bezemer. Iran then fell 2-1 (18-21, 21-19, 15-12) to Poland's Karol Lunio and Wojciech Witkowski to finish third in the group.



● FIVB

Mashayekh village offers haven of nature in western Iran

Iranica Desk

Nestled among the lush valleys and gentle mountains near Naghan in Iran's Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, Mashayekh village shines like a hidden gem between the protected areas of Helen and Sabzkuh. Here, rivers, forests, and silence speak the language of nature, while the delicate balance between people and the environment remains remarkably intact.

The people of Mashayekh have long lived in harmony with their surroundings. Surrounded by ancient oak forests and crystal-clear springs, generations have cultivated a way of life rooted in respect for nature. Every winding mountain road, every valley, and every sunlit oak grove reflects a centuries-old relationship between humans and the landscape, according to IRNA.

Behind the area's tranquil beauty lies a traditional rural lifestyle shaped by sustainability. Small-scale livestock farming, family orchards, and the careful use of natural resources remain central to the local economy. This enduring culture has enabled residents to live alongside



nature rather than against it, giving Mashayekh a distinctive identity among Iran's mountain communities.

Spring transforms the village into a spectacular display of color. Blossoms blanket the hillsides, birdsong echoes through the valleys, and countless springs breathe new life into the landscape. It is a season that invites visitors to rediscover nature, offering scenery that is difficult to capture in photographs yet leaves a lasting impression on every traveler.

Across the village's rolling green hills, life unfolds at an unhurried pace. Morning sunlight illuminates vast grass-

lands while grazing sheep move peacefully across the slopes. A solitary tree standing on a hillside watches over the landscape like a silent guardian, symbolizing the enduring coexistence of people, livestock, and nature. In Mashayekh, tranquility is not merely a passing moment but a way of life.

Flowing through the heart of the village is a clear mountain river that winds like a silver ribbon between green meadows and fertile fields. Rising from the mountains of Helen and Sabzkuh, the river nourishes the land before continuing its journey across the province. Ancient trees line its banks, while



● IRNA

small farms spread across the surrounding plains, creating a landscape shaped by water and tradition.

A cool northern breeze carries the sound of flowing water alongside the songs of morning birds, creating an atmosphere of remarkable serenity. For local residents, the river is more than a source of water; it is part of their collective memory. It has sustained generations who farm its banks, cultivate the soil, and draw life from its waters, making it a lasting symbol of hope and continuity.

Sunlight plays across Mashayekh's green hills, filtering through drifting clouds and

casting moving patterns of light and shadow over the mountains. The constantly changing landscape highlights the richness of this untouched corner of western Iran and the abundance of its natural beauty.

Expansive meadows carpeted with fresh spring vegetation stretch across the village, while centuries-old trees stand as silent witnesses to the passing seasons. Their deep roots and towering branches symbolize the resilience of life in this mountain landscape. Every gentle breeze beneath the oak trees and every ray of sunlight crossing the hillsides reinforces the peaceful rhythm of nature.

For visitors seeking refuge from the pace of urban life, Mashayekh offers a rare sense of calm. Crystal-clear springs, cool mountain air, and open landscapes create an environment where silence becomes a source of renewal rather than emptiness. Here, beauty lies not in grandeur but in the authenticity of an unspoiled natural world.

The village's higher elevations reveal dramatic rock formations shaped over countless centuries. Their weathered surfaces preserve the geological history of the mountains, while patches of lingering snow rest upon the highest peaks long after winter has passed. The contrast between bright snow and dark stone creates one of the region's most striking natural scenes, illustrating the meeting of winter and spring.

Amid the quiet hills, a solitary tree stands beneath an endless sky. Its long shadow stretches across the grass, while the gentle contours of the land and the vast openness above complete a landscape defined by silence. It is a simple yet powerful reminder that Mashayekh is a place where nature continues to shape both the scenery and the rhythm of everyday life.

Khameh Duzi faces challenges, renewal efforts in Nimruz

Iranica Desk

In the scorching winds of Sistan and Baluchestan Province — where history is tightly woven into everyday life — quiet needles move across fabric, stitching patterns that are far more than decoration. They are living narratives of identity, memory, and cultural inheritance, carried silently from one generation to the next.

Khameh Duzi, a traditional embroidery art in Nimruz, is a craft born in humble homes and sustained through generations, passed down from mothers to daughters as an intimate form of cultural preservation. In doing so, it safeguards a vital thread of the region's collective memory. At a time when many traditional arts are fading under the pressures of industrial production and rapidly changing lifestyles, Khameh Duzi continues to breathe within the homes of Adimi town and its surrounding villages. Here, women patiently and delicately place fine white threads onto fabric, creating works that appear simple at first glance yet reveal remarkable depth, authenticity, precision, and aesthetic refinement upon closer inspection, according to chn.ir.

Khameh Duzi is widely regarded as one of the oldest handicrafts of Sistan, holding a distinguished place in the cultural fabric of the region. It is not merely a method of textile decoration; it is a living symbol of creativity, patience, discipline, and artistic skill — qualities embodied by generations of women who have kept this tradition alive against the passage of time.

Its motifs are often drawn from geometric structures, botanical elements, and indigenous visual patterns rooted in local imagination. Each design carries



fragments of lived experience in Sistan — experiences that, rather than being written in books or formal archives, have been preserved directly on fabric, stitch by stitch, across decades.

In Nimruz, Khameh Duzi finds expression across a wide range of everyday and ceremonial objects: traditional clothing, scarves, tablecloths, curtains, and decorative textiles. These products serve both functional and cultural roles, reflecting the identity, tastes, and aesthetic values of the community.

A crucial factor in the survival of this craft lies in its mode of transmission. Rather than being taught through formal institutions or structured curricula, Khameh Duzi is learned within the intimate environment of family life. Girls begin by observing and practicing basic stitches alongside their mothers and grandmothers from an early age, gradually developing into skilled practitioners and, eventually, custodians of this heritage. This oral and hands-on transmission has played a key role in preserving many of its original techniques, motifs, and stylistic integrity.

Beyond its cultural significance, Khameh Duzi also carries nota-

ble economic importance. In regions where employment opportunities for women are limited, handicrafts offer a meaningful pathway toward income generation, financial independence, and greater participation in household and local economies.

Today, many women in Nimruz earn part of their livelihood through the production and sale of embroidered goods. With improved market access, specialized training programs, and targeted institutional support, this traditional craft has the potential to evolve into a major source of sustainable income for local families, strengthening both economic resilience and cultural continuity.

According to the head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Nimruz, there are currently 70 active handicraft workshops in the town, operating across diverse fields such as traditional clothing production, mat weaving, black embroidery, Khameh Duzi, and carpet weaving.

Morteza Barzegar Moqaddam stated that handicrafts have become one of the most important drivers of home-based employment in the region. He empha-



● chn.ir

sized that the national registration of Adimi as a "town of Khameh Duzi" has significantly elevated the craft's status at the national level, and that ongoing efforts are focused on expanding training programs, supporting artisans, and developing sustainable markets for their products.

He also highlighted the sister-city agreement between Adimi — recognized as the national hub of Khameh Duzi — and Tafresh, known for its own tradition of Tafresh embroidery. He described the agreement as a valuable opportunity for cultural exchange, economic collaboration, and artistic cooperation. According to him, this partnership is expected to strengthen knowledge-sharing mechanisms and expand access to broader handicraft markets.

The governor of Nimruz also described handicrafts as a priceless treasure of Iranian culture and creativity.

Mahmoud Bameri stated that handicrafts restore authenticity and meaning to everyday life, while simultaneously playing an essential role in job creation and economic development. He further emphasized their importance in preserving Iranian-Islamic identity and supporting sustainable forms of employment.

He added that artisans from Adimi have succeeded in bringing national recognition to their city, and that the designation of "National City of Khameh Duzi" stands as one of their most significant cultural achievements. Meanwhile, the Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Sistan and Baluchestan Province described the sister-city agreement between Adimi and Tafresh as an important milestone in strengthening cultural, artistic, and economic cooperation between two major handicraft centers in the country.

Mohammad Hadi Taharani-Moghaddam stated that this agreement represents more than a formal administrative arrangement; it marks the beginning of a new phase of collaborative efforts aimed at preserving and promoting Iran's traditional arts. He stressed that strengthen-

ing ties between culturally rich cities can facilitate meaningful exchange of experience, expand handicraft markets, and enhance the global visibility of Iran's traditional artistic heritage. He also underlined that crafts such as Sistan's Khameh Duzi and Tafresh embroidery represent enduring cultural legacies that have been carefully transmitted across generations.

He added that the agreement is expected to lead to specialized exhibitions, educational and research programs, exchange of expertise, development of cultural tourism initiatives, and reinforcement of handicraft markets. These measures could significantly enhance the national and international profile of both cities and their artisans.

Despite its strengths and cultural value, Khameh Duzi in Nimruz faces a number of serious challenges, including competition from machine-made products, shifting preferences among younger generations, limited access to specialized training, weak marketing structures, and restricted sales channels. Without coordinated planning and sustained institutional support, parts of this heritage risk gradual decline — threatening not only an art form, but a living segment of Sistan's cultural memory.

Ultimately, Khameh Duzi of Nimruz remains the story of women who have preserved history through their hands. Their craft is not only about creating beauty, but also about sustaining identity, hope, and livelihood. Supporting this art means investing in women's employment, strengthening cultural industries, and nurturing a living heritage — one that continues to breathe through embroidered threads and keeps the spirit of Sistan alive.



Pezeshkian hails Iran's historic feat

Iran bags 3 golds, 2 silvers at World Physics Olympiad in Colombia

Social Desk

Iran's national Physics Olympiad team won three gold and two silver medals at the 56th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) in Bucaramanga, Colombia, the Education Ministry announced on Sunday, as President Masoud Pezeshkian praised the students for showcasing the country's scientific excellence on one of the world's most competitive academic stages. Held from July 4 to July 12, the annual competition brought together more than 400 high school students from over 90 countries to compete in rigorous theoretical and experimental physics examinations. Hirbod Foudazi, Kian Zarabian and Mohammad Mirmohammadi earned gold medals, while Nima Koushki and Amirsam Goharpey captured silver medals, delivering one of Iran's strongest performances in recent years, IRNA reported.

The achievement went beyond the medal count. Zarabian finished first worldwide in the experimental physics examination, becoming the first Iranian contestant to claim the top global ranking in that section of the Olympiad. The highest score in the theoretical examination was awarded to a student from South Korea. In a message released after the results were announced, Pezeshkian called the outcome "another golden chapter" in Iran's scientific achievements and said the students had demonstrated "the scientific capability, outstanding talent and admirable perseverance of the nation's youth," president.ir reported. "Iran's sons and daughters have once again proved that knowledge, hard work and hope open the way to distinguished success on the global stage," the president said. He added that the accomplishment underscored the need to invest further in talented young people, strengthen quality education and pro-



Members of Iran's national Physics Olympiad team pose during the closing ceremony of the 56th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) in Bucaramanga, Colombia, on July 12, 2026, after winning three gold and two silver medals.

● IRNA

vide equal opportunities for scientific growth. The International Physics Olympiad is regarded as one of the world's most prestigious science competitions, testing participants through two demanding five-hour examinations in theoretical and experimental physics designed to assess analytical thinking, scientific creativity and problem-solving skills. Iran's latest success also marked an improvement on its performance at the 2025 IPhO in Australia, where the national team collected two gold, three silver and one bronze medal to finish 12th overall.



The result extends a strong run for Iranian students in international academic competitions. Earlier this month, Iran claimed the overall team championship at the International Mathematics Summer Camp in China after winning four

gold and two silver medals, highlighting the continued success of the country's young scholars in global science Olympiads and reinforcing Iran's reputation for producing top-performing students in mathematics and physics.

Historic prayer niche unearthed at listed Pasargadae caravanserai



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian conservators uncovered a historic prayer niche (mihrab) during restoration work at the UNESCO-listed Mozaffari Caravanserai in Pasargadae, opening a new chapter in the study of the site's architectural evolution and religious history, Abdolmajid Abedi, head of Pasargadae's Office of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said on July 12. The discovery was made as conservation crews carried out restoration work at the centuries-old caravanserai, part of the UNESCO-inscribed Persian Caravanserai serial property, CHTN reported. Abedi said the structure was immediately documented under scientific conservation proto-

cols to preserve its architectural and historical integrity. "This remarkable find stands out for its architectural design, construction techniques and artistic features," Abedi said. "It can provide valuable evidence about the site's religious past, historical transformations and the evolution of its architecture." He said teams of archaeologists, conservation specialists and architectural experts have launched detailed studies to determine the mihrab's construction period, original function and role within the caravanserai's spatial layout. The work includes comprehensive documentation, condition assessment, comparative research and technical analysis. Preliminary examinations indicate that the craftsmanship and decorative elements reflect a high level of technical expertise, suggesting the structure once occupied a prominent place within the historic complex, Abedi said. Emergency conservation, continuous monitoring and scientific documentation are underway in line with national and international heritage conservation standards. The findings of the ongoing research will be released after experts complete their studies, potentially shedding fresh light on the cultural and architectural history of one of Iran's UNESCO-listed heritage sites.

Isfahan researcher wins silver at IFIA Geneva Innovation Competition for AI tourism platform

Social Desk

An Isfahan tourism researcher won a silver medal at the 6th International Invention and Innovation Competition, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from July 3 to July 5, for developing an artificial intelligence platform designed to modernize tourism services. Ehsan Aghajanirizi received the award for NASTE AI, an AI-powered smart tourism platform, at the competition organized by the International Federation of Inventors' Associations (IFIA), which brought together innovators from around 50 countries. Davoud Abyan, deputy head of tourism at Isfahan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, said the platform demonstrates how artificial intelligence can reshape destination management and strengthen tourism services. "Using AI in tourism is no longer optional," he said, adding that advanced technologies

can enhance marketing, digital content creation, and visitor guidance while improving the overall travel experience. Abyan described the IFIA competition as a globally recognized event judged under international standards, saying the award helps showcase Isfahan's technological capabilities alongside its cultural heritage. He said AI applications should increasingly underpin tourism management, from travel planning and event organization to hospitality, transportation, and inbound tour operations. Integrating AI specialists with tourism managers, he added, would improve services for international visitors and reinforce tourism diplomacy. Home to more than 22,000 historical and architectural sites, Isfahan remains one of Iran's leading cultural tourism destinations, with its rich tangible and intangible heritage providing a strong foundation for adopting next-generation tourism technologies.

Alamut fortress complex clears key ICOMOS review ahead of UNESCO decision

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's nomination of the Alamut Castle and its related fortifications cleared a major hurdle on the path to UNESCO World Heritage inscription, with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) endorsing the property's Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, integrity, and management framework ahead of the upcoming World Heritage Committee meeting in Busan, South Korea, according to the director of the nomination dossier. Mohammad Hassan Talebian, who leads the UNESCO nomination, said ICOMOS had recommended the property under Criterion (iii) of the World Heritage Convention, recognizing the serial site as an exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions of the Nizari Ismaili state between the 11th and 13th centuries. He said the technical evaluation also endorsed the site's conservation plans, restoration methods, monitoring system, tourism strategy, and community participation, significantly strengthening its prospects for inscription. The nomination brings together seven interconnected castles and fortifications: Alamut Castle,



Lambsar, Ilan, Shirkuh, Navizar Shah, Qostin Lar, and Shams Kalayeh. Although physically separate, Talebian said they functioned as an integrated mountain defense and governance network linked through visual, structural, and operational connections across the Alamut Valley. "Comparative studies found virtually no parallel for the Alamut fortification network," Talebian said, adding that the ensemble preserves a rare combination of military engineering, territorial defense, water management, agriculture, governance, and cultural life within a single cultural landscape. Perched atop a steep rocky outcrop, Alamut Castle served as the political, administrative, intellectual, and religious center of the Nizari Ismaili state, while the surrounding fortresses safeguarded communication routes and reinforced the broader defensive

system. Talebian said the mountain strongholds incorporated sophisticated water storage systems, reservoirs, tunnels, watchtowers, and defensive structures designed in harmony with the rugged Alborz landscape, where the natural terrain itself became part of the defensive architecture. He described the nearly 2,000-square-kilometer cultural landscape as extending beyond the castles to include villages, farmland, orchards, and water-based agricultural systems that sustained the region's economy and society. Calling the nomination one of Iran's most technically demanding World Heritage dossiers, Talebian said years of archaeological research, documentation, conservation work, and multidisciplinary field studies in the remote Alborz Mountains laid the foundation for the submission. "The Alamut complex stands not only as an outstanding example of advanced military engineering, but also as a center of governance, scholarship, and cultural achievement in Iranian and Islamic history," he said. "The final decision now rests with UNESCO's World Heritage Committee."

'Shelter' gives 26 Iranian artworks new home in Oman

Arts & Culture Desk

Eighteen Iranian artists will showcase 26 works in the 'Shelter' Online Group Exhibition, opening in Oman on July 14, according to the event's media office, in a cultural initiative aimed at expanding Iranian visual arts and handicrafts to regional audiences. Organized by the Aytist Art Group in partnership with Oman's Rawad

Al-Tijarah Al-Intaj Al-Alami" Institute, the virtual exhibition is curated by Iranian painter and Aytist director Aynaz Zarei. The event, scheduled to run through July 19, brings together artists working across contemporary visual arts and traditional handicrafts, reflecting the breadth of Iran's artistic heritage through a digital platform. "The exhibition creates a new space

for Iranian artists to engage with audiences beyond national borders," Zarei said, adding that Panah seeks to present diverse artistic voices while strengthening cultural dialogue through art. The exhibition features works by 18 Iranian artists, including Atousa Absalan, Babak Zirak, Kiomars Pilechian Langroodi, Mahboobeh Rastegari, Mehdi Fayeze, Sara Kian, and Zahra Navabi.