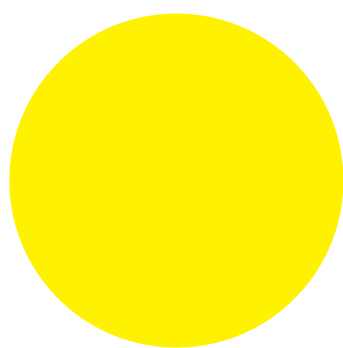


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Iran Daily

Vol. 8204 ● Saturday, September 05, 2026 ● Shahrivar 14, 1405 ● Rabi' al-Awwal 23, 1448 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages



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US has no better option than deal with Iran

INTERVIEW The US had shifted its approach

to Iran in recent weeks, moving away from military action and toward economic pressure. But the president has once again ordered strikes on areas in southern Iran, prompting a response from Tehran. The latest moves suggest that Washington is determined to pursue its objectives by whatever means necessary and at any cost. International relations analyst Jalal Dehghani Firouzabadi, however, told IRNA that it was unlikely that a combination of war and maximum pressure would force Iran to submit to Washington's demands. If Tehran ultimately concludes that it should reach a deal, he said, Washington would eventually have no better option either.



Jalal Dehghani Firouzabadi

Tehran has described the Islamabad memorandum of understanding as the most important document underpinning its engagement with the US. What factors have turned this understanding into Tehran's most important precondition for any further interaction with Washington? Should this insistence be seen as a sign of strategic flexibility or as an indication that Tehran's options are narrowing?

DEGHANI: There were two views in Iran on the MoU. One took a positive view of the understanding and regarded it as serving the national interest, while the other stood in opposition to it.

Recently, however, a view has once again begun to take shape — if not a consensus — that the US should return to the MoU. In a way, this can be described as “strategic flexibility” or a return to the previous strategy. Rather than allowing the understanding to be violated, the emphasis is on implementing it through coercive diplomacy and a combination of negotiations and defense.

Some evidence and media reports suggest that the US is not interested in returning to this MoU. Is that assessment consistent with the realities on the ground, or is Washington in some way trying to play up the issue?

The US does not have many options. It either has to escalate tensions and launch an all-out war to achieve its objectives, or hold on to the status quo — neither war nor peace, along with the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the blockade. The third option is a deal.

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Deadly strike on Iranian wedding likely direct hit by US munitions: *Analysis*

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Mourners carry a coffin during a funeral procession for the victims of a US missile strike that hit a wedding party in southern Iran on Tuesday in Sirik on September 3, 2026. ● IRNA



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Armed Forces stand ready for any faceoff with US



TASNIM

International Desk

The Commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Joint Air Defense

Headquarters on Friday said that Iran's Armed Forces had prepared themselves for "any kind of confrontation" after the

United States launched new round of attacks against the country. "The confrontation between

the front of truth and the front of falsehood will continue, and ... we have prepared ourselves for any kind of confrontation,

both today and in the future," Alireza Elhami said at a meeting to mark the anniversary of the establishment of the Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Headquarters and the Islamic Republic of Iran Army's Air Defense Force, IRNA reported.

"Today, we know that the enemy's threats have not ended, and that the enemy may be pursuing its sinister objectives on other fronts," Elhami said, adding, "But their objectives will once again be thwarted through the vigilance and profound insight of the great Iranian nation."

Iranian Army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia also said on Friday that the US and Israel suffered a major defeat in their latest aggression against Iran, failing to achieve their stated objectives.

Speaking at a local event in Mashhad, Akraminia said the enemy entered the war after making a series of miscalculations about Iran and its capabilities.

"The criminal enemy had set many goals in its attack, including destroying Iran's missile and nuclear capabilities, overthrowing the government and, of course, partitioning Iran. However, it failed to achieve any of these objectives," he said.

The US and Israel waged their

first war against Iran, which lasted 12 days, in June 2025. Their second aggression began on February 28, 2026, and came to a halt in early April after 40 days.

In both wars, Iran's resistance and retaliatory operations forced the aggressors to accept a ceasefire.

In July, however, the US conducted waves of deadly air raids on Iran and imposed a naval blockade of the country in violation of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Iran, signed on June 17, to end the war.

In response, Iranian Armed Forces launched devastating attacks against strategic American targets across West Asia and declared the Strait of Hormuz closed to all traffic.

In their latest retaliatory attacks, the Armed Forces hit US military bases in Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE on Thursday in response to a US missile strike on a wedding party which claimed the lives of at least five people and wounded scores others.

The new clashes, which began with new US raids on Sunday, have deepened the impasse in the six-month war, as Iran maintains a stranglehold on the strategic Strait of Hormuz and Washington presses its blockade of Iranian ports.

Deadly strike on Iranian wedding likely direct hit by US munitions: *Analysis*

International Desk

An explosion that ripped through a wedding celebration in southern Iran on Tuesday, killing five people and injuring at least 68 others, likely resulted from a direct hit by a US munition and not a ricochet off another target, according to an analysis by weapons experts who reviewed images and video verified by Reuters.

The incident in the small town of Kuhestak has reignited concerns about the civilian toll in the US war with Iran and marks the most dramatic case since a missile struck an Iranian primary school in February, killing scores of children and teachers inside.

On Thursday, a funeral ceremony was held in Kuhestak for the victims of the US attack. The Iranian Red Crescent has urged the International Criminal Court to investigate a potential war crime.

The US Central Command had claimed its forces carried out multiple strikes across Iran's south on Sept. 1, targeting Islamic Revolution Guards Corps air defense sites, radar systems, and communications facilities. On Thursday, US Vice President JD Vance said the United States was investigating the strike. "We're investigating it because obviously we care. We want to know," Vance said during a White House press briefing. The US military said it



The photo shows the aftermath of a US strike on a wedding ceremony in southern Sirik county in Hormozgan Province in southern Iran on September 1, 2026.
IRNA

was aware of reports and was looking into them. On the night of the attacks, dozens of residents had gathered in a home in Kuhestak for a wedding ceremony, according to eyewitnesses. During the party, a munition likely struck the building's roof, according to photos and video verified by Reuters and reviewed by experts.

Direct hit

Reuters shared video and images of the incident with four military weapons experts who said the damage was consistent with a direct hit, as opposed to secondary damage from a munition ricocheting off a separate target. Three of the experts said the munition was likely a US weapon, rather than an errant Iranian air defense missile. One of the experts said the weapon may have

simply missed its objective.

"Given the number of bombs that have been dropped, this does occur from time to time even with the most sophisticated guidance systems," said Gareth Collett, a retired British Army brigadier who specialized in counterterrorist bomb disposal and holds a doctorate in explosives engineering.

After the strike, bloody shoes lay amid the rubble, and wedding decorations that are common in that part of Iran were strewn about, the images show.

Two US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, claimed that the US military had carried out strikes in Kuhestak on Sept. 1, specifically targeting the town's telecommunications tower. That tower is roughly 135 meters from the site

of the wedding celebration, according to satellite imagery. The tower was hit at approximately 9:30 PM local time, according to Iranian media. The incident comes more than six months after a missile destroyed a primary school in Minab on Feb. 28, hours after the start of the US and Israeli attacks on Iran that launched the current conflict. That hit killed more than 175 children and teachers.

The Pentagon has not publicly released the findings of its investigation into the Minab strike, which was the US military's biggest civilian casualty incident in decades. But Reuters first reported on March 5 that an initial, internal US military investigation showed US forces were likely responsible for that strike on the opening day of the war with Iran.

Araghchi posts sarcastic reply to Jordan FM over Iran's response to US attacks

International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi challenged Jordan's account of Iran's military response to the United States, asking how long Tehran was expected to wait before responding to an aggressor violating both Iranian and Arab sovereignty.

Araghchi was responding to recent remarks by Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, who accused Iran of attacking his country and other countries in the region just two hours after the start of the US war on Iran and described Tehran's response as a "premeditated policy", Press TV reported.

"How much time does the Jordanian Foreign Minister believe Iran should wait before responding to an aggressor that respects neither Arab sovereignty nor Iranian sovereignty?" In Araghchi asked Safadi an Arabic-language post on X on Friday.

"And is he truly unaware that Arab airspace, lands, and waters were used in the initial American attacks that resulted in the killing of innocent Iranians?" he added.



Abbas Araghchi
AFP

The exchange followed a series of US strikes on southern Iran on September 1 that killed and wounded dozens of people.

In Hormozgan Province, US missiles struck a residential building in Kouhestak, in Sirik County, where a wedding reception was being held.

At least five people were killed and 68 others wounded. Two children, aged four and 16, and two women were among those killed.

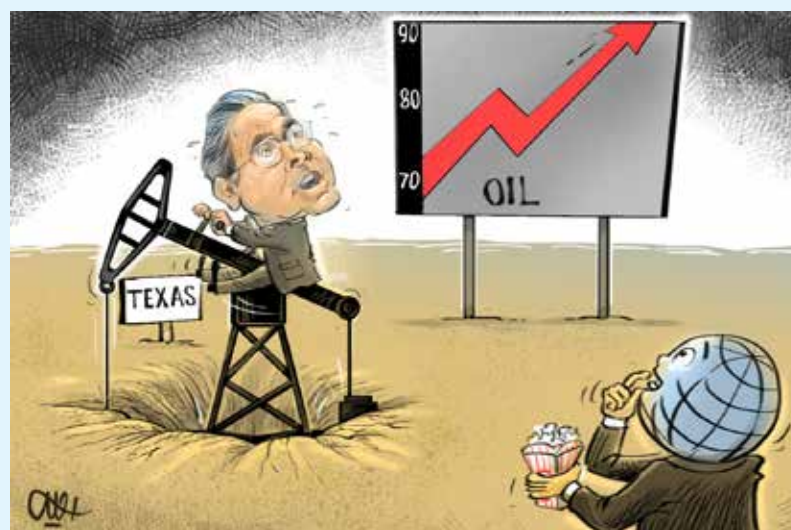
Seven other people were killed and eight wounded in US missile strikes on three locations near the cities of Ahvaz and Aghajari in Khuzestan Province.

Iranian Armed Forces subsequently launched a "crushing" operation against US military bases in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain in retaliation.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Pezeshkian urges gradual approach to gasoline consumption control

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Friday said that the government would curb gasoline consumption gradually and mainly through “non-price measures”, saying it would avoid sudden decisions that could shock the public. Pezeshkian made the remarks at a meeting on the country’s energy shortage, where officials reviewed the latest situation regarding gasoline production, reserves and distribution, as well as pilot projects in several provinces and measures to boost the resilience of the energy sector. Already hit by Western sanctions over its nuclear program, Iran’s southern ports remain under a US naval blockade imposed by Washington as part of a pressure campaign following a 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February. The naval siege has limited Tehran’s trade options, including in the energy sector.

The president said the government’s approach, particularly on gasoline, was deliberate, gradual and based on considering people’s concerns. “Policies should be explained to the public and implemented gradually after the necessary preparations were in place,” he said. Pezeshkian also said the government was not seeking to impose energy decisions on people and that any policy creating problems would be revised. He added that resources generated by reducing gasoline consumption would be used to strengthen the government’s food subsidy program, known as the electronic goods voucher scheme. The president appeared to be referring to the possibility of raising gasoline prices to bring fuel closer to its real and full cost. “The policies for managing consumption will be implemented gradually, with transparent information and by bringing the people on board,” he said.



President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) chairs a meeting on the country’s energy shortage in Tehran, on September 4, 2026. [president.ir](#)

Last week, in a televised interview, Pezeshkian said that, after coordination with various institutions, the third-tier gasoline price would rise from 50,000 rials (\$0.022) to 100,000 rials (\$0.045) per liter and would not go higher. He rejected reports of an “astronomical” increase in gasoline prices but did not specify when the new rate would take effect. He said gasoline supply prob-

lems were linked to wartime conditions and lower national revenues, adding that difficulties in importing goods, including gasoline, had arisen because import routes were closed. “The country is in a wartime situation; first we need to understand that we are at war. The route is closed now and goods are not coming in. One of those goods is gasoline,” he said.

He said in the televised interview that the country’s revenues had declined and the government needed financial resources to secure gasoline supplies, adding that various methods of managing the situation were under consideration. After years of challenges in the energy sector, Iran introduced a three-tier gasoline pricing system in December. Under the

scheme, the price of gasoline dispensed through emergency fuel cards at service stations rose to 50,000 rials (\$0.022) per liter from 30,000 rials (\$0.0135). Gasoline has since been sold at three rates based on monthly consumption: 15,000 rials (\$0.0067) per liter for the first 60 liters, 30,000 rials (\$0.0135) for the next 100 liters and 50,000 rials (\$0.022) for any consumption above 160 liters. At Friday’s meeting, participants also examined the latest production, reserve and distribution data for gasoline, the implementation of various pilot projects in provinces, fuel consumption levels and measures already taken or under consideration to strengthen the energy sector’s resilience.

Pakistan seeks cooperation with Iran’s crash-test center

Economy Desk

Pakistan’s ambassador to Iran has called for cooperation with an Iranian vehicle crash-testing center, saying an initial agreement could pave the way for joint work despite current political restrictions. Imran Ahmad Siddiqui visited the center in Tehran with a Pakistani delegation and described it as a successful example of Iran’s private sector, according to IRNA. He said the two sides could begin cooperation by signing an initial agreement and expressed hope that the necessary infrastructure for expanding the partnership could be put in place as soon as possible. During the visit, a frontal crash test was conducted on an Iranian vehicle. The results will be analyzed and shared with the automaker and Iran’s National Standards Organization. The chairman of the board of Iran’s Inspection Quality and Standard Research Institute, referring to Pakistan’s high number of road accidents, said cooperation with Pakistani automakers and auto-parts manufacturers on safety testing could provide a joint business opportunity.



Pakistan’s Ambassador to Iran Imran Ahmad Siddiqui (2nd R) visits Iran’s private-sector car crash test center in Tehran on September 3, 2026. [IRNA](#)

Crash tests under regulations R94 and R95 have recently become mandatory in Pakistan, and the country is seeking to use Iran’s testing capacity for its automakers. A deputy head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce also said the chamber was ready to facilitate the participation of a Pakistani business delegation in the Iran Expo exhibition in November and arrange a visit to the crash-testing center.

Russia sees no decline in trade with Iran despite regional tensions, Deputy PM says

Economy Desk

Russia has seen no decline in trade with Iran despite recent regional developments, thanks to a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union that has helped sustain volumes, Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk said Thursday. “One of our major achievements was the agreement with Iran coming into force last year. We are also extending the North-South [corridor] there,” he said at the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok, TASS reported. The free trade agreement between Iran and the five EAEU member states entered into force in May 2025, marking a major practical step toward deeper economic ties between the two sides. “Despite what is happening in and around Iran today, this agreement allows us to maintain trade volumes. In other words, against the backdrop of everything that is happening, we are seeing no decline in trade volumes,” he said. The country has remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February. During the 40-day conflict, civilians and infrastructure were targeted, while Iran’s southern ports remain under naval restrictions. Overchuk did not give a figure for bilateral trade. Russian Transport Minister Andrei Nikitin said in June that shipments from Russia to Iran via the



International North-South Transport Corridor rose by more than 56% in the first four months of 2026, while total freight traffic along the corridor increased 87%. Also, Russian Ambassador to Iran Alexey Dedov said in June that bilateral trade reached approximately \$5.8 billion in 2025, up 21% from the previous year. He said the positive trend continued in the first four months of 2026, when bilateral trade grew 2% despite disruptions in some logistics chains.

US has no ...

My guess is that the pressure the Americans have imposed and continue to impose — including the military option, sanctions and the blockade — is ultimately aimed at reaching a “favorable” agreement with Iran — one that serves US interests to the greatest possible extent. Or, if the memorandum is to be restored, Washington wants that return to take place under conditions that it defines. It is unlikely that the strategy the Americans have once again adopted, based on suffocating economic pressure on Iran, can achieve their objectives — particularly if their goal is to force Iran to comply with or surrender to Washington’s maximalist demands. Therefore, the US is seeking to pile on maximum pressure in all areas, in order to extract the greatest possible concessions from Iran while giving the fewest concessions in return. The Islamabad memoran-

dum, by contrast, was the opposite. Under such circumstances, returning to the memorandum would be very difficult for Trump, particularly because he came under heavy criticism, attacks and pressure in the US immediately after signing it. However, if Iran concludes that it should reach a deal, I believe Trump will ultimately have no better option and will inevitably have to accept it. Therefore, it can be said that Trump’s position is one in which he is effectively playing a push-and-pull game over the memorandum.

The US has recently shifted the nature of its aggressive policy from military to economic pressure. How likely is this policy to succeed, and given the impatience we have seen from Trump, how much time do you think he will give this new policy to take effect?

There is serious doubt about whether the US can really pressure all countries and build a global consensus against Iran. There is no doubt that this policy will deliver psychological shocks to Iran’s economy and put pressure on both the government and the people. But the strategic question is whether it can actually bring the US to its main objective — forcing Iran to comply — or to even broader goals, namely surrender. There is serious doubt about this too. This is particularly because sanctions are a slow-acting policy and do not produce results in the short term, while Trump needs policies that deliver quick returns. Therefore, it is unlikely that sanctions will achieve the objectives Trump is pursuing, other than creating pressure and imposing costs on Iran.

To what extent do you agree with the assessment that Trump

is seeking to buy time to get past the electoral environment in the US and will ultimately launch a third war against Iran? It is very difficult to make a prediction in this regard. Nevertheless, strategic policymaking should not underestimate or ignore the possibility; rather, prepare to deal with it. The possibility of war will depend to a large extent on the outcome of the US congressional midterm elections. There are two possible outcomes: Democrats could take both chambers, or Republicans could retain control of both. If the Democrats win, some believe this could tie Trump’s hands when it comes to pursuing a war, or at least constrain him. Others, however, put forward the opposite hypothesis. They believe that if Republicans lose the House and the Senate, Trump’s policy could become more aggressive because he would have nothing left to lose.

In either scenario, war remains a possibility, though its likelihood cannot yet be assessed with certainty. **Iran and Oman say they are nearing the scheduled release of a joint statement on the mechanism for the management of the Strait of Hormuz. How likely are the talks to succeed this time? What role could a potential agreement play in resuming Iran-US talks and ultimately reopening the Strait of Hormuz?** The possibility of a bilateral agreement between Iran and Oman does not depend solely on the two countries. Iran adopts policies based on its national interests and enjoys freedom of action, but Oman does not have the same degree of freedom of action under these circumstances. As has been seen, Trump has threatened Oman militarily twice so far.

Oman is currently under pressure from several directions. First, it is under US pressure and must fully take Trump’s interests into account in any decision. Second, it is under pressure from the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf and must in some way accommodate their interests as well. Third, there are the other users of the Strait of Hormuz. Therefore, Oman has to reconcile and balance the interests of Iran, the Arab states, the US and other users of the Strait of Hormuz. In reality, it is not the sole decision-maker. Despite all this, I believe there is a possibility of success and an agreement between Iran and Oman. If Iran and Oman reach an agreement and the US at least does not oppose it, it could pave the way for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and the resumption of Iran-US talks. Yet, an agreement between Iran and Oman is necessary, but not sufficient.

Books under watch

Story of a war on knowledge



By Saman Sofalgar
Political researcher

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Five years after the Taliban returned to power, Afghanistan's situation is no longer limited to the banning of girls from education or the exclusion of women from universities. A broader process is now taking shape: an attempt to control who can receive education, what can be taught, and what people are allowed to read.

In today's Afghanistan, books are no longer merely cultural commodities. A book can preserve an alternative account of history, carry a competing idea or simply have been written by a woman. Any of these characteristics may be enough to place it under scrutiny, censorship or even a ban.

The latest figures from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicate that approximately 2.4 million Afghan girls remain excluded from secondary education. Five years after the Taliban's return, Afghanistan remains the only country in the world where girls and women are formally barred from secondary and higher education.

But the story does not end at the school or university gates. In 2025, the Taliban took the unprecedented step of banning hundreds of academic books from universities. A published list contained 679 titles, including 140 books written by women. At the same time, 18 academic subjects were banned or removed from university curricula, including subjects related to human rights, women's rights and a range of political and social concepts.

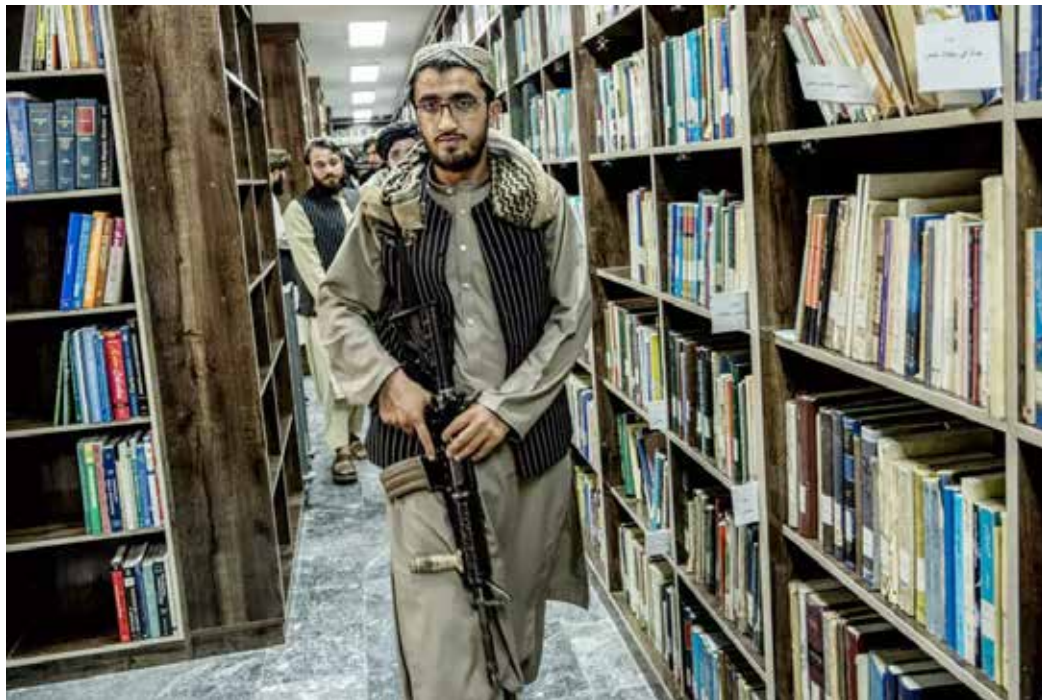
This may be one of the clearest signs that Afghanistan's cultural situation is changing in nature. The Taliban have not merely closed the doors of schools to girls; they are also attempting to redefine the boundaries of permissible knowledge.

Targeting right to know, not just books

During the first years after the Taliban returned to power, the international community largely focused on one question: Why were girls being denied the right to continue their education? Five years later, another question must be added: For those who are still allowed to study, what sources of knowledge will remain available to them?

The question matters because an education system deprived of diverse books and sources cannot easily sustain a culture of critical thinking. The Taliban argue that educational reforms are necessary to bring curricula into line with Afghanistan's Islamic and cultural values. Critics, however, argue that when a government itself determines which works are "appropriate" and which are "inappropriate," books cease to be merely cultural products and become objects of ideological and political control.

Reports concerning the list of 679 books banned from Afghan universities indicate that the policy extends far beyond explicitly political works. Academic and



specialized publications were also among the titles removed. This suggests that the issue is not simply the suppression of books critical of the Taliban. Rather, the very structure through which knowledge is produced, transmitted and consumed is being reshaped.

From this perspective, books have become part of a broader struggle over the future of Afghan society.

Erasure of women from classroom to bookshelves

Perhaps the most symbolic aspect of this policy is the treatment of books written by women. When 140 books authored by women are removed from university resources, the issue goes beyond the disappearance of hundreds of titles. At a deeper level, it concerns the role of women in the production of knowledge:

How can a woman who is barred from university become a university professor? How can a woman prevented from participating in academic life continue to work as a researcher? And when women's scholarly works are removed from educational resources, what image of women's contribution to knowledge will be presented to the next generation of Afghan students?

This cycle risks gradually erasing women from Afghanistan's academic memory. UNESCO has

repeatedly warned about the consequences of the Taliban's education policies. In January 2026, the organization reiterated that restrictions on the education of girls and women remained in place and that Afghanistan continued to be the only country in the world where secondary and higher education is formally prohibited for women and girls. In this sense, the exclusion of women from education and the removal of women's works from educational resources can be seen as two sides of the same policy: restricting both the consumers and the producers of knowledge.

Libraries no longer just libraries

In any society, libraries are places where people gain access to different sources of information and ideas. Under an ideological political system, however, they can become some of the most sensitive cultural spaces. A library gives readers the freedom to choose. A reader can pick up one book, compare it with another and arrive at a conclusion that differs from the official narrative of the government. That is precisely what makes libraries important spaces for intellectual diversity.

For this reason, the control of libraries in Afghanistan is part of the same broader process unfolding in schools and universities. In

recent years, various reports have documented the removal of books deemed "inappropriate" from Afghan libraries and bookstores. In January 2024, reports also emerged that tens of thousands of books had been collected from publishers and bookstores in Kabul. Likewise, the process of reviewing books has continued into 2026. Taliban officials continue to refer to committees responsible for examining books and granting publication permits.

There is an important distinction here: the Taliban do not oppose the existence of books as such. Their objection is to books that fall outside the ideological framework they approve. That distinction is essential to understanding the Taliban's cultural policy.

Book market has not disappeared

Afghanistan today should not be portrayed as a country in which every bookstore and library has disappeared. Such an image would not accurately reflect the current situation. Bookstores continue to operate, book markets have emerged and Taliban officials have even expressed support for the expansion of the sector. In 2025, a new book market opened in Kabul, while Taliban officials spoke of policies intended to support book printing and distribution. But the central issue



A Taliban security personnel leaves after an event at the Central Public Library in Kabul, Afghanistan, on May 19, 2025.
● WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP



Such a transformation may serve a government's short-term interests, but its long-term costs will be borne by society as a whole. Afghanistan's future doctors, engineers, economists, teachers and researchers need to develop in an environment where questioning, experimentation and comparison are possible. Without such an environment, universities cannot effectively produce the skilled workforce a country needs for development.

lies elsewhere. A market in which books must first pass through such an ideological filter is no longer a free marketplace of ideas. A publisher may know that releasing a particular title could create problems. An author may limit what they write about before putting pen to paper. A bookseller may decide not to stock a work that could later be confiscated. In such an environment, censorship does not necessarily begin with the seizure of a book. Sometimes it begins with the fear of publishing one. That is the phenomenon that can prove even more powerful than an official ban: self-censorship.

A university with fewer books

Universities are among the most important victims of this process. After the Taliban returned to power in 2021, Afghan universities were closed to women. In the years that followed, the content of higher education also underwent significant changes. The list of 679 banned books published in 2025 is significant because it demonstrates that restrictions are not limited to who is allowed to enter a university. The sources students are permitted to consult have also become matters of political decision-making.

When subjects such as human rights, women's rights and certain concepts related to governance and social sciences are removed from curricula, universities gradually risk changing from institutions designed for inquiry and criticism into institutions primarily responsible for transmitting an official narrative.

Such a transformation may serve a government's short-term interests, but its long-term costs will be borne by society as a whole. Afghanistan's future doctors, engineers, economists, teachers and researchers need to develop in an environment where questioning, experimentation and comparison are possible. Without such an environment, universities cannot effectively produce the skilled workforce a country needs for development.

Five years on, a generation being lost

In 2021, when the Taliban once again seized power in Afghanistan, there was still hope that some of the restrictions imposed on society would prove temporary. Five years have now passed. UNESCO estimates that approximately 2.4 million Afghan girls remain excluded from secondary education. This figure is not simply about education; behind it lie millions of lost opportunities to enter universities, pursue careers, conduct research and participate fully in professional life.

For a child, five years can represent almost the entirety of secondary education. For a society, it can mean the emergence of a generation that grows up without meaningful access to school, university and a broader academic environment. The consequences are not merely cultural. Restricting women's education means reducing Afghanistan's human capital. A country seeking development needs teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, economists, researchers and administrators. When half of the population is



Afghan women chant slogans in protest against the closure of universities to women by the Taliban in Kabul, Afghanistan, on December 22, 2022.
● STRINGER



excluded from a significant part of the education system, the country's ability to produce that human capital inevitably suffers. UNICEF and UNESCO warned in January 2026 that, beyond the ban on girls' education, Afghanistan was also facing a broader learning dilemma, with a significant proportion of children failing to achieve basic reading proficiency by the end of primary school. Afghanistan therefore faces a double whammy: some children are being denied continued access to education, while others are being educated within a system whose content is increasingly contested and ideologically shaped.

Books as last avenue for learning

Yet amid this cultural darkness, one fact remains important: the desire to learn has not disappeared from Afghanistan. Many Afghan women and girls who have been excluded from

schools and universities continue to pursue education through informal channels. Home-based classes, distance learning, digital resources and books have become substitutes, however imperfect, for formal educational institutions.

New technologies have also entered this struggle. Recent research on Afghan women indicates that some are turning to artificial intelligence tools and online education to continue learning and develop new skills despite restrictions on formal education. At the same time, concerns over security, surveillance and reliable access remain serious.

This reality demonstrates that the desire for knowledge cannot simply be eliminated by closing schools or removing books from libraries. A university can be closed, but the question itself cannot be shut down. A book can be removed from a library,



but the need to know cannot simply be erased from the mind of a generation.

Afghanistan's situation not only about today

Ultimately, what is happening to books, universities and schools in Afghanistan is about the country's future. Five years after returning

to power, the Taliban have consolidated their territorial control and expanded their diplomatic engagement with a number of countries. Yet the situation of the rights of women and girls remains one of the most significant obstacles to the normalization of Afghanistan's relations with the international community.



Men read books in a library at a private university in Kabul, Afghanistan, on July 22, 2024.

● WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP

From this perspective, books are not a peripheral issue. A country that restricts its books is also restricting its collective memory. A country that excludes women from universities is setting aside a significant part of its human capital. A country that rewrites its curriculum according to ideological considerations is shaping the intellectual future of its next generation. And a country that restricts free access to diverse sources of knowledge gradually loses part of its ability to debate its own future. Afghanistan today is facing something larger than a book trouble. It is facing a trouble of access to knowledge. A trouble that began in schools, moved into universi-

ties and is now affecting the bookshelves and libraries that once provided Afghans with access to a wider intellectual world.

Perhaps that is why, in today's Afghanistan, an ordinary book can carry a meaning far greater than its few hundred pages. A book can represent a world in which asking questions is not forbidden, women can be university students, writers can write without fear, and universities can remain the meeting ground of competing ideas.

Five years after the Taliban's return to power, the central question is no longer simply how many books remain in Afghanistan. The deeper question is this: Will the next generation of Afghans still have the opportunity to read different books and decide for themselves which version of the world they choose to believe? The answer may determine Afghanistan's cultural future more clearly than any figure.

I lived through first Taliban girls' school ban

Watching it happen again heartbreaking



By Ghazal Habibyar
Afghanistan's former acting minister of mines and petroleum

OPINION

In August 2021, the Taliban recaptured Kabul and, within weeks, barred girls from attending school beyond Grade Six. The ban has not lifted.

Afghanistan remains the only country in the world that formally bars girls and women from secondary and higher education. In the years since, Afghan women have also been banned from working across most sectors that once employed them, from the civil service to national and international aid organizations. About 2.2 million adolescent girls have been barred from secondary school for nearly 1,800 days. A 2026 UNICEF analysis projects Afghanistan will lose up to 20,000 women teachers and 5,400 health-care workers by 2030, with the restrictions already costing the country an estimated \$84 million a year.

Since September 2025, Taliban forces have also barred Afghan women, including United Nations staff, from entering UN offices. In January 2026, women civil servants lost even the reduced pay they had received since 2021 for staying home.

I watched a version of this happen once before, as a young girl in 1996, the last time the Taliban took Kabul.

What strikes me most about this second ban isn't that it happened again. It's that the world's failure this time isn't due to a lack of awareness. Everyone knows what's happening to Afghan girls. The failure is that knowing has not carried any real cost for the Taliban.

What Afghan women have built

Within days of the takeover, Afghan women were in the streets of Kabul chanting "Bread, Work, Freedom," a demand they have kept making since, at real personal risk. The defining rallying cry calls for basic human rights — education and employment in the face of systemic erasure from public life.



Groups of Afghan women have organized protests throughout that time, even as participants have described arrests, torture and killings in response — reactions so severe they've forced much of their resistance work underground.

As recently as February 2026, girls were back on the streets of Kabul, still demanding education. But where protest has become too dangerous, Afghan women have built something quieter instead: informal networks of underground schools, run out of homes, that teach girls who would otherwise have no access to a classroom at all.

None of this resistance is happening because it's easy or safe. It's happening because no one else has done it for them, and it has to be done.

Alongside protest and underground schooling, Afghan women's organizations have also taken on documentation. As of June 2026, researchers at Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security counted 264 Taliban decrees affecting human rights since 2021, 166 of which specifically target women and girls.

International response falls short

The main channel for international engagement with the Taliban is the UN-led Doha process. There have been multiple rounds of talks with Taliban representatives since 2023 in pursuit of Afghanistan's eventual reintegration into the international community — normalized diplomatic relations, formal recognition of the Taliban govern-

ment and the country's return to standard participation in international institutions and trade. At the Taliban's insistence, women and Afghan civil society groups have been excluded from the main talks, meeting separately and on the sidelines instead. Sima Samar, former chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, has argued that by accepting the Taliban's terms for participation, the UN risks indirectly legitimizing the very policies it says it opposes.

That risk is disputed within the UN itself. Georgette Gagnon, the UN's deputy special representative and officer-in-charge of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, argued the opposite case at that same session: that continued, principled but pragmatic engagement remains necessary even when progress is incremental.

That disagreement, playing out at the UN's own podium, captures the trap Afghan women have been describing for years — statements of concern are issued regularly and they cost the Taliban nothing.

Canadian efforts

Canada's own record shows the same pattern, in a more hopeful register but with the same unfinished quality.

In September 2024, Canada joined Australia, Germany and the Netherlands in formally invoking Afghanistan's obligations under CEDAW, the UN convention against discrimination toward women that Afghanistan ratified in 2003. It is a genuine-



Afghan schoolgirls pose for a photo in a classroom in Kabul, Afghanistan, in December 2022. The Taliban ordered women nationwide to stop attending private and public universities until further notice.

● EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

ly significant initiative because it's the first time any state has attempted to hold another accountable at the world's highest court for gender discrimination. But two years on, the case has still not reached the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Ottawa has described the required negotiation and arbitration steps as prerequisites that must run their course first. And civil society's own statement marking the initiative's first anniversary could still only describe it as an effort that may eventually culminate in an ICJ case, not one that has reached it.

Canada has also just secured a seat at that same table. Amanda Dale, a Canadian human rights expert nominated by Ottawa, has been elected to the CEDAW committee itself for the 2027-2030 term. With a Canadian nominee, advocates ask that Canada match that milestone with the same urgency in moving its own Afghan-istan case forward.

When Canada and the Netherlands pursued a similar case against Syria over torture, they moved through each stage without delay. Once negotiations stalled in 2022, they promptly requested arbitration. When Syria failed to engage within the required six-month window, they filed at the ICJ in 2023 and secured a binding order.

After invoking the same mech-



As recently as February 2026, girls were back on the streets of Kabul, still demanding education. But where protest has become too dangerous, Afghan women have built something quieter instead: informal networks of underground schools, run out of homes, that teach girls who would otherwise have no access to a classroom at all. None of this resistance is happening because it's easy or safe. It's happening because no one else has done it for them, and it has to be done.

anism against Afghanistan, no equivalent milestone has been reached. Negotiations, if they have failed, have not visibly given way to a request for arbitration, and the case remains where it started. Afghan women, and the states that made this commitment on their behalf, deserve the same procedural urgency that carried the Syria case through to a resolution.

The scale of what this inaction has allowed is well-documented.

Personal reflections

I recognize all of this because I lived a version of it once already. In 1996, I was a young girl a few weeks from final exams when the Taliban took over Kabul. That night, with no electricity, we gathered around a radio and heard we were promoted to the next grade, but that schools were closing to girls until further notice.

At first, I didn't understand what that meant. As a young student, I was excited about the cancellation of final exams, so I ran to tell my grandmother. Partway down a dark corridor, what it actually meant caught up with me: there would be no school next year. I sat down and cried.

But I was fortunate.

My parents moved my sister and me to Pakistan so we could keep studying, a decision many Afghan families could not afford. We could not either. It was my aunts and uncles living overseas who supported our studies.

Friends of mine were not able to finish school and, as far as I know, were married off instead. I went on to become the first woman to serve as a director, then deputy minister, then acting minister of mines and petroleum in the Afghan cabinet.

Those conditions changed for my generation. Nothing guarantees they will for this one — awareness alone will not accomplish that.

Afghan women have spent the last five years proving they have not accepted this ban as permanent. It is worth asking why the rest of the world has settled for so much less than that.

The article first appeared on *The Conversation*.

AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship:

Iran sweeps New Zealand, makes statement start to Olympic bid

Sports Desk

Iran's bid for a coveted Olympic volleyball berth got off to an emphatic start at the AVC Men's Continental Championships on Friday, as the Asian powerhouse swept New Zealand 3-0 (25-15, 25-12, 25-22) in its Pool B opener in Fukuoka, Japan.

Making his first international appearance since the preliminary round of the 2025 Volleyball Nations League, star opposite Amin Esmailnejad topped the scoring for Iran with 11 points, surpassing the 1,000-point mark for the national team.

Outside hitters Morteza Sharifi and Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh added seven and six points, respectively, as Iran finished the match with 35 points from attacks, five blocks, two aces and 33 points from New Zealand's errors, wrapping up the game in

58 minutes at Kitakyushu City Gymnasium.

Opposite spiker Seth Dylan Grant chipped in a game-high 12 points but could not prevent the Oceanian team from suffering a fourth defeat in as many meetings between the two sides at the competition, dating back to 1987.

With the champion in Fukuoka securing a place at the Los Angeles Olympics in two years, Iran will have extra motivation to chase a fifth Asian crown in eight editions, though Japan remains the heavy favorite to secure back-to-back titles on home soil.

The hosts enter the showpiece on the back of a remarkable 12-0 run in the VNL preliminary round earlier in the summer before ultimately finishing fourth. Japan also holds a superior head-to-head record against Iran in recent years, emerging victorious in their previous four



encounters, including a straight-set win in the 2023 Asian Championship final in Urmia and a five-set VNL thriller in Orléans, France, in June.

Iranian outside hitter Hosseinkhanzadeh hailed the comfortable victory as "a

perfect preparation" for his side on the way to its ultimate objective in Fukuoka. "As you saw, it was not really a difficult game for us. The players were focused on making a strong start to the tournament, which I think we did," he said.

"Our goal here is something else, and today's match served as a perfect preparation for us as we pursue our main objective. We always give 100 percent on the court, and that's exactly what we did today," added the Iranian, who



Iranian players celebrate a point during a straight-set victory over New Zealand at the AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, on Sept. 4, 2026.

● AFC

finished with six points, all coming from attacks. Iran head coach Roberto Piazza, meanwhile, praised the way his team approached the game right from the outset.

"This is just the beginning of the championship, and we started very well in the first set," Piazza said. "I think the opponent also made some mistakes on serve, but we were in the game from the beginning."

"Today I told the players to focus on ourselves and simply think about the details. If we can do that, we can compete even against the strongest teams."

"The second set was easier for us, so I started making substitutions. In the third set, we should have done

much better from the beginning, though it was important that all the players in the squad played today," he said. "A team is really not just a collection of individual players. All the players have to work together for the team," added the Italian, who is desperate to see his players deliver a much-improved performance from their below-par VNL campaign, in which Iran managed just three wins in 12 outings to finish 14th in the 18-team standings.

Iran will resume action against India on Sunday before concluding the pool phase against three-time champion China on Wednesday – a rematch of the 2023 semifinals, which Iran won in straight sets.

The top two teams in each of the three pools will be joined by the two best third-placed teams – determined through a combined ranking system – in the quarterfinals.

AFC Women's Champions League

Khatoon lands defending champion Naegohyang in group stage

Sports Desk

Iran's Bam Khatoon has been drawn alongside defending champion Naegohyang Women's FC of North Korea, Japan's INAC Kobe Leonessa and Myanmar's Ayeyawady FC in Group A of the upcoming AFC Women's Champions League.

The draw for the group phase of the Asian elite club competition took place at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday, with 12 teams divided into four groups.

The Iranian top-flight champion will open its campaign

against INAC Kobe Leonessa at Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, Myanmar, on November 1, before taking on Naegohyang at the same venue three days later. Khatoon will conclude its group campaign against the hosts on Nov. 7.

The top two teams from each of the three groups will be joined by the two best third-placed teams in the quarterfinals, which will be hosted by the three group winners and the best-ranked runner-up in single-leg ties in March.

Elsewhere, North Korean

debutant 4.25 SC was pitted against South Korea's Hwacheon KSPO WFC, Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City Women's FC and Indian host East Bengal FC in Group B.

Australian Group C top seed Melbourne City FC will have to contend with China's Beijing Jingtan FC, Kaya FC-Iloilo of the Philippines and group host PFC Nasaf of Uzbekistan.

The semifinals and final – scheduled for May 2027 – will be played at a centralized venue.

Khatoon won the preliminary group in August to

secure a third successive appearance in the main-round group stage in as many editions.

Iranian international striker Sara Didar was on target either side of Maryam Dini's strike as Khatoon defeated CSKA Dushanbe in Hisor, Tajikistan, in its preliminary-stage opener. Didar then scored a 95th-minute equalizer to salvage a point for her side in a 1-1 stalemate against Saudi champion Al Nassr.

Didar was also the hero for Marziyeh Jafari's side in the must-win encounter against



Bam Khatoon players celebrate a goal during a 3-1 victory against Etihad Club at the AFC Women's Champions League preliminary stage in Hisor, Tajikistan, on Aug. 23, 2026.

● AFC

Etihad Club, scoring twice late in the game to help Khatoon come from behind to defeat the Jordanian outfit 3-1 and pip Al Nassr to the top spot in the group.

Khatoon enjoyed an impressive run in the inaugural 2024/25 season, reaching the quarterfinals before losing 1-0 to South Korea's Incheon Red Angels in Incheon.

The following season, however, was one to forget for Jafari's team, which suffered an early exit after finishing bottom of its group with three points.

Iran's Soltaninejad wins Strongman gold at World Nomad Games



Sports Desk

Iran's Sajjad Soltaninejad claimed the Strongman gold medal at the 2026 World Nomad Games in Kyrgyzstan.

The Iranian topped the standings after three days of grueling competition, successfully negotiating a series of demanding and heavy events to finish at the top of the podium.

His triumph marked a second gold medal for the country at the sixth edition of the multi-sport event, dedicated to traditional ethnic sports practiced across Central Asia.

Reza Qeitasi, Iran's flag bearer at the opening ceremony, won gold in the men's Tayak Tartysh on Wednesday, securing the first gold for the country's 130-athlete delegation.

Tayak Tartysh, also known as mas-wrestling, is a strength contest originating from the Sakha, or Yakut, tradition. Two athletes sit facing each other with their feet braced against a board and compete by pulling on opposite ends of a short wooden stick. The aim is to pull the opponent across the board or take the stick away. Qeitasi also represented Iran at the 2024 World Nomad Games in Kazakhstan, finishing runner-up in the Strongman competition behind the host representative.

Sadeq Azarang got Iran off the mark on the opening day of the showpiece on Tuesday, settling for silver in the men's +90kg kurash class, which featured 22 contestants, after suffering defeat to Uzbekistan's Nomonjon Radjabov in the final.

An Asian Games gold medalist at Hangzhou 2022, the Iranian defeated opponents from the host country, Russia and Georgia before beating his Turkmen opponent to reach the final.

Mohsen Mirzaei, meanwhile, won silver in right-arm wrestling, while Iran's four-man team, comprising Nader Kazemi, Sajjad Jafari Gohari, Abbas Azimi and Hamidreza Saeed, also finished runner-up in the tug-of-war event.

Maryam Farahaninia won bronze in Tayak Tartysh, while Abolfazl Heydarimehr took bronze in Atysh. Mohaddeseh Tabarok also claimed two bronze medals in right- and left-arm wrestling, with Amirreza Sahraei earning bronze in Sarym wrestling and Hassan Poladi finishing third in the men's 64kg sambo competition.

Mesr village on track to join UN Best Tourism Villages list

Iranica Desk

The historic village of Mesr in Khur and Biabanak, Isfahan Province, nestled among the golden dunes of Iran's Central Desert, is on track to join the Best Tourism Villages list of UN Tourism in 2026. The village is one of Iran's eight finalists for the title and has in recent years become one of the country's best-known destinations for desert and astronomical tourism, thanks to its combination of natural attractions, adobe architecture, cultural heritage and strong local community participation in tourism. Mesr is located about 45 kilometers east of Jandaq and 60 kilometers north of Khur, along the route connecting Damghan with Na'in and Isfahan. Together with the nearby settlements of Amirabad and Farahzad, the village forms a roughly six-kilometer-long chain of settlements in the heart of the desert. Its geographical location, vast desert landscapes and access to sand dunes have made Mesr a popular destination for Iranian and international nature lovers and desert travelers.

One of the area's major natural attractions is the Mesr sand sea, a vast expanse of sand dunes that offers visitors opportunities to walk across the sands and enjoy expansive desert views. About five kilometers from the village, extensive green reed beds form a striking contrast with the surrounding arid landscape and are considered one of the area's notable natural features. Tamarisk and saxaul trees



have also been planted in the region to stabilize shifting sands and combat wind erosion, forming part of the vegetation adapted to the harsh desert environment.

The history of Mesr dates back about 120 years. The settlement was initially known by names such as Kalateh Yousef and Mazraeh Yousef and was established by a man named Yousef, a livestock herder and landowner. He built a manor house west of the present-day village and gradually laid the foundations for a settlement that later became known as Mesr.

As the region's traditional qanats dried up and their water supplies declined, Yousef turned to deep wells to secure water for the settlement and used some of the first English-made diesel engines for the task. Because of the great depth of the wells, the village was for a time known as Chah-Deraz, meaning "long well." Yousef, however, disliked the name and proposed that the village be called Mesr, or Egypt. According to local accounts, the name had a symbolic connection to his own name and the story of Jo-



● snapp.ir

seph and the land of Egypt, and the proposal was accepted by the residents. One of the most interesting aspects of Mesr's history is the foresight of its founder in planning the village. When the settlement was still small, Yousef ordered the construction of a wide street at least 500 meters long and a boulevard about 50 meters wide. According to local accounts, he predicted that the village would eventually become a busy and well-known destination. The large number of domestic and international visitors arriving today can

be seen as the fulfillment of that prediction. Part of the Iranian film *So Far, So Close* was also filmed in the village's historic fabric. Mesr's desert environment, combined with its silence and clear night skies, provides opportunities for a variety of tourism activities. Desert excursions, camel riding, safaris and controlled motorbike rides are among the experiences available to visitors. The area's tranquility and distance from urban pollution have also made Mesr an appealing destination for experiential tourism and those seek-

ing relaxation and contact with nature.

Astronomical tourism is another major attraction of the village. Its dark skies, lack of light pollution and favorable atmospheric conditions have made Mesr a destination of interest for astronomers and night-sky photographers. In recent years, specialized meetings and programs focusing on astronomical tourism have also been held in the area. Alongside its natural attractions, handicrafts and intangible cultural heritage play an important role in Mesr's cultural identity.



migration from the area. Tourism accommodations, camps and handicraft workshops operate under official licenses and regulations, forming part of efforts to organize and develop tourism in the desert destination.

Environmental sustainability is another important component of Mesr's submission for evaluation by UN Tourism. To reduce plastic use and support the local economy, environmentally friendly packaging has been designed for handicrafts, local products and livestock-derived goods. A women's association has also been established to help empower women, promote household products and increase their participation in the tourism value chain.

The launch of an official bilingual website in Persian and English is another initiative aimed at introducing Mesr's natural attractions, cultural heritage and licensed accommodations to domestic and international visitors.

The combination of desert landscapes, traditional architecture, handicrafts, astronomical tourism, ecotourism accommodations and extensive local participation has distinguished Mesr among Iran's rural tourism destinations. If the village is included in the Best Tourism Villages List in 2026, the recognition could draw further attention to the potential of sustainable tourism in Iran's desert regions — areas that continue to preserve not only distinctive natural attractions but also valuable cultural heritage and traditional ways of life.

Semnan's historic core gains national heritage status

Iranica Desk

The historic areas of the Nasar and Esfanjan neighborhoods in Semnan have been officially added to Iran's National Heritage List after completing the required legal procedures, opening a new chapter in efforts to preserve and reinterpret the city's historical identity. The registration was formally notified by Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, to Semnan Governor-General Mohammad-Javad Kolivand.

According to IRNA, Nasar and Esfanjan are located in the central part of Semnan's historic fabric, around which several of the city's most prominent historic monuments and elements have developed. These include the Jaame Mosque, its approximately 1,000-year-old minaret, Imam Mosque, also known as the Soltani Mosque, and the historic bazaar of Semnan. Covering approximately 55 hectares, the registered area encompasses part of the historic core of Semnan. Its inclusion on the National Heritage List provides a legal framework for



Bazaar of Semnan
● karnaval.ir

protecting its historical and cultural values, safeguarding its valuable urban fabric, and planning for its proper restoration and revitalization.

Nasar and Esfanjan historic area contains a collection of valuable historical and cultural monuments and elements, with the surviving remains dating from various periods, including the Ghaznavid and Seljuk eras through the contemporary period.

The registration as an important step toward preserving the city's historical identity for fu-

ture generations.

The heritage registration is also considered an important measure for protecting Semnan's historic legacy and strengthening its potential for cultural tourism. However, safeguarding the area will require the participation of local residents.

The shrine of Hazrat Yahya ibn Musa (PBUH) is also located in central Semnan, in the Esfanjan neighborhood. Its location within the old urban fabric and near Imam Mosque and Jaame Mosque gives the area particular historical and cultural significance.



Jaame Mosque of Semnan
● archilearn.net

The presence of such monuments alongside historic and religious routes highlights Esfanjan's role in Semnan's historical urban structure and its connection with some of the most important elements defining the city's historic identity. The registration of the 55-hectare Nasar and Esfanjan area on Iran's National Heritage List not only strengthens the recognized historical status of the two neighborhoods but also makes it possible to apply conservation regulations and develop more coordinated plans for

protecting the historic fabric.

The measure could pave the way for the gradual restoration of historic buildings and passageways, improvement of the area's physical environment and greater use of Semnan's cultural tourism potential. Realizing this potential, however, will require coordination among the responsible authorities and active participation by residents of the historic area.

Semnan's historic fabric, with its collection of old neighborhoods, bazaar, mosques, Tekyehs, historic houses and other

architectural and cultural elements, is regarded as one of the city's most important historical and tourism assets. The registration of Nasar and Esfanjan marks another step toward protecting this valuable heritage.

Semnan's historical importance also stems from its position between the major regions of Rey, Qumis and Tabaristan. During the early Islamic centuries, the city gradually developed from a relatively small settlement into an important regional center, particularly from the 10th century onward. Its location along routes connecting central Iran with the Caspian provinces and Khorasan helped sustain its economic and administrative importance through successive dynasties.

Historical accounts also record periods of destruction and rebuilding, including the Mongol invasion in the early 13th century, after which Semnan gradually recovered and regained its regional prominence. This long history of continuity and change forms an important backdrop to understanding the historic neighborhoods that survive in the city today.



FM: Women entrepreneurs showcase Iran's creative potential, foster cultural ties

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Thursday that women entrepreneurs and female heads of households are helping showcase Iran's productive capacity, creativity and ingenuity to foreign visitors while fostering closer human and cultural ties, as he visited a charity exhibition in Tehran.

Araghchi made the remarks during his visit to the 16th Charity Exhibition of the Diplomatic Ladies Association, held at the Abgineh Hall in the capital on September 3. The two-day event, which opened a day earlier, brought together Iranian entrepreneurs and artisans alongside members of Tehran's diplomatic community, Mehr News Agency reported. The exhibition featured products from leading Iranian businesses and producers



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C) visits the 16th Charity Exhibition of the Diplomatic Ladies Association at Abgineh Hall in Tehran, Iran, September 3, 2026.
● jamaran.ir

in handicrafts, clothing, gold and jewelry, food and confectionery. Proceeds from the event are being directed toward charitable causes. Araghchi described the exhibition as an expression of "solidarity," social responsibility and support for Iranian capabilities. He said the participation of women entrepreneurs and

female heads of households had strengthened ties between the diplomatic community and Iranian producers while offering foreign guests a closer look at the country's creative and productive potential. A symbolic reconstruction of a school in Minab was also displayed along the route to the exhibition. Araghchi said

the installation commemorated children who lost their lives at the school and helped visitors understand the circumstances surrounding the incident.

"I sincerely thank" the Women's Diplomatic Association, organizers, entrepreneurs, the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation and all those involved, Araghchi said, expressing hope that such initiatives would promote a culture of philanthropy, support people in need and expand equal opportunities for Iranian children.

The opening ceremony was attended by government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani, Zahra Pezeshkian and Arezou Ahmadvand, wife of the foreign minister and head of the Women's Diplomatic Association. Several foreign ambassadors accredited to Tehran also attended with their spouses.

Baghdad book fair displays Iran's literature

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has brought 1,150 books to the 27th Baghdad International Book Fair, which opened Wednesday in the Iraqi capital with more than 600 publishers from 28 countries, as Prime Minister Ali al-Zeidi described Baghdad as a continuing hub for culture and intellectual exchange.

The 10-day fair, running through September 2, features Iran's Book and Literature House on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's cultural affairs deputy. Its pavilion brings together works spanning Iranian history and art, literature, children's and young adult books, women's studies, psychology, resistance, Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'anic editions, Persian-language instruction, tourism and Iranology, IRNA reported.

The display is designed to introduce Arabic-speaking readers to the breadth of Iran's literary and intellectual output while opening up further opportunities for publishing and cultural cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

At the opening ceremony, attended by Iraqi Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Minister Sarwa Abdulwahid, Baghdad Governor Atwan al-Atwani and Iraqi Publishers Union Presi-



dent Abdulwahab al-Radhi, al-Zeidi said the event carried a message that Baghdad remains a "qibla of culture," a beacon of thought and a guardian of the written word.

Iran's participation also includes a seminar examining Iranian-Iraqi cultural relations through the perspective of the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Three Iraqi academics and an Iranian scholar are scheduled to discuss the two countries' shared historical and civilizational ties and Khamenei's views on their cultural potential.

Publishers from across the Middle East and North Africa, including Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Morocco, Algeria and Libya, as well as Turkey and Palestine, are taking part in the Baghdad event.

Iran registers Sangak bread as national intangible heritage, eyes UNESCO listing

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts registered Sangak bread on the country's national intangible cultural heritage list and will pursue its inscription on UNESCO's global list, Alireza Izadi, director general of the ministry's National and World Heritage Registration Department, said.

The registration follows an expert review by the National Council for Intangible Heritage and is intended to safeguard the traditional knowledge, skills and cultural practices surrounding one of Iran's most enduring staple foods, IRNA reported.

"Sangak" is traditionally baked on a bed of heated pebbles, a distinctive method that has remained embedded in Iranian daily life across generations. Its cultural significance extends beyond the bread itself to dough



preparation, baking techniques, specialist tools and the knowledge passed down among traditional bakers.

The oldest known written reference cited in the registration dossier appears in the Borhan-e Qate dictionary, compiled by Khalaf Tabrizi in 1062 AH, which defines Sangak as a type of bread baked on hot stones. Izadi also pointed to oral traditions and historical accounts that associate the bread's origins with the Sasanian era or earlier periods.

Iran's Cultural Days in Russia to bring together 168 artists

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran will showcase its cultural and artistic heritage across four Russian cities this October, with Culture Minister Abbas Salehi expected to attend alongside 168 Iranian artists and cultural figures, Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali said Friday in Moscow.

The program will take place in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan and Astrakhan, building on reciprocal cultural exchanges between Iran and Russia. Jalali said the delegation's size was chosen to commemorate 168 Iranian students who were killed at a school in Minab on February 28.

Held under the banner "Minab's Story in the Russian Land, a Gift of Friendship and Resistance," the events will combine exhibitions, performances, film screenings, academic forums and sports programs. Organizers also plan business-oriented meetings aimed at bringing together Iranian and Russian cultural and creative-industry professionals. The National Orchestra of Iran will headline the artistic program, performing in St. Petersburg before appearing at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre. Visual-art exhibitions will feature calligraphy, miniature painting, photography, sculpture, handicrafts, Persian carpets, cuisine, fashion and other facets of Iranian culture.

Invitation to Participate in Public Tender

Tender No.: 14040129

Project Title: Bridge and Steel Structures Group



Machine Sazi Arak Co. (MSA) hereby invites qualified and eligible companies to participate in Public tender for:

ROW	DESCRIPTION OF GOODS	AMOUNT (kg)
1	IPBL 220*12000 S355J2W	90,900
2	IPBL 400*10300 S355J2W	51,500
3	L 100*65*11*12000 S355J2W	12,060
4	PL 20*1400*6000 S355J2W	39,564
TOTAL		194,024

Interested and qualified bidders are invited to obtain the Tender Documents and submit their bids in accordance with the requirements, terms, and conditions specified therein

Tender Information

- **Tender Issuing Authority:** Machine Sazi Arak (MSA)
- **Tender Number:** 14040129
- **Scope of Work/Supply:** supply of IPBL, angles and plates
- **Date of Publication:** 03/Sep/2026
- **Date of receiving the tender Documents:** 04/Sep/2026
- **Deadline for Submission of Bids:** 13/Sep/2026
- **Place of Submission:** MSA Shop in Arak or through Email: Technical proposals to emails: a-mashayekh@msa.ir, commercial5@msa.ir, commercial8@msa.ir and commercial proposal only to email STC@MSA.IR
- **Bid Validity Period:** [10 Days]
- **Bid Security:** Bank Guarantee or valid company cheque valuing around 5% of the total value of the tender

Tender Documents

The Tender Documents including:

Envelope A

- The technical offer
- Technical specifications & requirement and

also MPS, ITP, Drawing should be send by nominated email.

Envelope B

- The tender guarantees should be submit as hard copy to **Mr Talebi** by duly time.

Envelope C

- The commercial offer considering all necessary term condition.

Should be sent through sealed and signed envelope to MSA Company in Arak or by email to STC@MSA.IR By duly time.

Department / Contact Person: Commercial dep. / Mr. Talebi the related Commercial Expert
Address: Arak, Sanat Square, Machine Sazi Arak Co. (MSA), Foreign Commercial dep.
Email Address: commercial8@msa.ir, commercial5@msa.ir, a-mashayekh@msa.ir
Telephone: 08632172909

Bidders are required to carefully review all tender documents and submit their bids in full compliance with the specified requirements. Machine Sazi Arak Co. (MSA) reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, in whole or in part, in accordance with the applicable rules and regulations, without incurring any liability to the bidders.

For further information and clarification, please contact:

Mr. Talebi, Tel no. 08632172909

Procurement and Commercial Deputy Dep.