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People march in central Tehran as part of the nationwide rallies to mark the National Day of Fighting Global Arrogance on November 4, 2026.
FARS

Eurasian outreach to bypass US naval blockade, opportunities & constraints

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The US naval blockade of Iran's southern ports has undoubtedly placed constraints on the country's trade and heightened the strategic importance of cooperation with northern countries and Eurasian partners. In an interview with Iran Daily, Jahangir Karami, an expert on Eurasian affairs, said the current crisis could strengthen regional cooperation, provided that Iran makes use of its shipping and transport capacities in the Caspian Sea, the North-South Corridor, its railway network and trade agreements to diversify its trade routes.



Jahangir Karami

IRAN DAILY: **Given the restrictions imposed on Iran's southern trade routes, what role have Central Asian and Caucasus countries assumed in Iran's political and economic calculations? Could these developments also change how these countries view cooperation with Iran?**

KARAMI: Naturally, recent developments have increased the importance of Eurasian countries in Iran's political and economic calculations. Under these circumstances, Iran has turned greater attention to its northern potential in an effort to reduce its economic vulnerability, diversify trade routes and strengthen ties with regional markets. Countries such as Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can help connect Iran to Eurasian trade networks through the development of railway and road links. Azerbaijan also plays an important role in the North-South Corridor, Armenia in maintaining overland connections, and Georgia in linking the region to the Black Sea and European markets.

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Those expecting US policy shift toward Iran 'seriously mistaken': *Leader*



Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei
IRNA

International Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei said on Wednesday that anyone expecting a shift in US policy toward Iran was "seriously mistaken", hours after midterm elections dealt a blow to President Donald Trump.

"If there are still those who have even the slightest hope for a change in behavior or political and partisan shifts in the system of domination, or imagine that by granting concessions to America they can dissuade it from hostility toward the Iranian nation, they are seriously mistaken," Ayatollah Khamenei said in a message marking National Day of Fighting Global Arrogance.

Describing such expectations as disregard for the major victories achieved by the Iranian people through trust in God, perseverance and struggle, he said the ultimate desire of the "Great Satan" is the unconditional surrender of the Iranian nation.

The Leader underlined that continuing the strategy of making Iran "ever stronger" through comprehensive progress is the only way to achieve "absolute deterrence".

He stressed that national unity, solidarity and social cohesion must govern the conduct of the Iranian nation and officials.

"The only way to reach the point of absolute deterrence is to continue the strategy of 'Iran ever stronger' along the path of comprehensive progress; and unity, solidarity and social cohesion are the main elements of success in this path, which must govern every individual and collective word and action of the nation and officials," he said.

Referring to developments in the Persian Gulf, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, Ayatollah Khamenei said the situation has demonstrated "the falsity of the myth of America's invincibility."

He said it has also exposed "the weakness and humiliation of governments that rely on a force other than their own people, and the disloyalty and inability of major powers to defend their dependent governments."

"The exercise of Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz and the destruction of America's military bases in regional countries, although a reaction to America's aggression and crimes in the third imposed war, also constituted an initial jihad against global arrogance on a regional scale," he said.

He warned that "in the event of a repetition of these aggressions, their dimensions will become much wider."

In reviewing the history of American hostility toward Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei traced its roots to more than seven decades ago, citing the August 1953 coup as the starting point of US oppression against the Iranian nation.

Washington has now abandoned even the deceptive conventions and outward appearances of international conduct and is openly pursuing the disintegration of Iran, the submission of its people, the collapse of its political system and the destruction of its ancient and authentic civilization, he added.

However, Ayatollah Khamenei said, the United States has encountered "the solid wall of realities on the ground and the steadfast rock of the determination of the proud Iranian nation" at every stage.

He said the consequences of American miscalculations and arrogant delusions have imposed heavy costs on the American people and governments dependent on Washington.

Democrats win US House, Senate in major blow to Trump

International Desk

Democrats won control of both chambers of Congress, delivering a decisive rebuke of Republican governance in Washington and ushering in a new era of congressional resistance to President Donald Trump.

Tuesday's midterm elections laid bare voters' deep frustrations over high prices, the war on Iran and concerns over government corruption.

Democrats routed their rivals across the map, flipping states that have voted Republican for decades and that Trump won by double digits just two years ago.

That includes James Talarico's stunning Senate victory in Texas, where no Democrat had won statewide office in more than 30 years, and Annie Andrews' upset victory over Sen. Darline Graham in South Carolina. Trump had thrown his full weight behind both losing candidates.

In Michigan, progressive Abdul El-Sayed — one of a crop of left-wing candidates who prevailed in Democratic primaries — topped Republican Mike Rogers. Even Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, a battle-tested survivor of difficult elections, lost to Democrat Troy Jackson.

The results marked a fundamental unraveling of the coalition that returned Trump to the White House two years ago, with young people and Latinos moving away from Republicans, according to The AP Voter Poll. Only about one-third of Hispanic voters said they backed the Republican in their local US House races.



A voter visits a polling station to cast their ballot during the US midterm elections, in West Columbia, South Carolina, US, on November 3, 2026.
REUTERS

It was all a major blow to Trump, who spent nearly every day of the last month holding rallies to energize his supporters but was unable to stop a wipeout.

While Trump has proven adept at steamrolling efforts to rein him in, Democratic control will profoundly reshape Trump's final two years in office and hamstring his legislative agenda.

Party leaders have signaled they'll use their new power to ensure Trump's final two years in office are dominated by a series of investigations of top members of his administration and deeper scrutiny of how he's enriched his family. Impeachment of Trump and his Cabinet officials is not off the table. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and tech titan Elon Musk, a former top Trump adviser, are among possible targets for investigations.

In celebratory events Tuesday night, Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer called the results a "generational remake of the Senate map." Democratic House Leader Hakeem Jeffries said "the American people are crying out for transformational change."

Trump immediately sought to shift blame for his party's losses, posting on his social media site before polls even closed on the West Coast that he wasn't on the ballot — even though he spent weeks asking voters to act like he was. He vowed to veto Democrat-controlled legislation, sharing a picture of a red baseball cap with "VETO" stenciled in the style of his trademark "Make America Great Again" campaign swag.

In a late-night phone interview with Fox News, Trump said he didn't consider the elections to be a personal defeat. Voters, he said, "didn't like the candidates."

Trump told Fox News late Tuesday that the Iran war played a role in the stunning midterm election defeat for his Republican Party.

Iranians mark National Day of Fighting Global Arrogance

National Desk

Iranians from all walks of life took to the streets in cities across the country on Wednesday to mark National Day of Fighting Global Arrogance.

In the Iranian calendar, 13 Aban is designated as the National Day of Fight against Global Arrogance. The date commemorates the 1979 takeover of the US Embassy by Iranian students following the Islamic Revolution.

Waving Iran's flags and holding pictures of the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the demonstrators shout slogans against the United States and Israel, which have launched an aggression against Iran since February.

The participants also set fire to US and Israel's flags and carried placards reading "Kill Trump".

They also issued a final resolution demanding retribution for the martyred Leader, the updating of the US-Israeli target bank, and an honorable withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). A statement by organizers condemned the criminal acts of Washington and Tel Aviv, emphasizing the absolute necessity of seeking justice for Ayatollah Khamenei, and the 168 martyred students in the southern city of Minab.

The resolution stressed the need for updating the enemy's target bank in preparation for any fresh war of aggression to ensure that all US-Israeli assets remain within the crosshairs of Iran's armed forces. In a major geopolitical stance, the resolution demanded that Iranian officials initiate an "honorable withdrawal" from the NPT in response to the broken promises and threats of hegemonic powers. Furthermore, the participants pledged unwavering allegiance to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, and called on the Armed Forces to maintain maximum deterrence, preparing for an "immediate, impactful response without geographic limitations."



Iranians burn flags of US and Israel during a rally in front of the former US embassy to mark the National Day of Fighting Global Arrogance in Tehran, Iran, on November 4, 2026.
AFP

The statement concluded by reaffirming Iran's steadfast support for the Axis of Resistance across Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq, stressing that the "unity of fronts" is the decisive factor in shaping the new security order in West Asia. The nationwide rallies were held in over 900 locations across the country under the slogan "Covenant with Martyrs, Battle against Arrogance."



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran ranks among world's top five producers of eight farm products, FAO data show



Economy Desk

Iran ranked among the world's five largest producers of eight agricultural products in 2024 despite water shortages and prolonged drought, while earning $1.15 billion from exports of five major farm commodities, according to data from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), cited by the Iranian economic news outlet Eqtesad-e Moaser.

The figures also show that Iran was the world's second-largest exporter of pistachios and dates and the leading exporter of figs during the year.

Pistachios were Iran's biggest agricultural export earner in 2024, generating $636 million, double the $317 million recorded in 2023. The country exported 98,000 tons of the product, making it the world's second-largest exporter after the United States, which shipped 348,000 tons.

Iran ranked third in global pistachio production, with output rising 3% to 316,000 tons from 307,000 tons a year earlier. The United States led production with 498,000 tons, followed by Turkey with 383,000 tons. Iran had ranked second in 2023 but fell behind Turkey despite increasing its output.

Dates were the country's second-largest agricultural export earner, bringing in $172 million in 2024, down 14% from the previous year.

Iran exported 315,000 tons of dates, ranking second globally behind Saudi Arabia, which shipped 351,000 tons. It was also the world's fourth-largest producer, with output rising 18% to 1.182 million tons. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Algeria ranked ahead of Iran.

Apples ranked third among Iran's agricultural export earners, with exports worth $130 million in 2024, half the value recorded a year earlier. Iran exported $280 million worth of apples in 2023, when it ranked ninth among the world's largest exporters.

Despite the decline in export earnings, Iran's apple production rose 11% to 2.346 million tons in 2024, making it the world's seventh-largest producer.

Iran was the world's largest fig exporter, shipping about 14,000 tons worth $18 million in 2024, according to FAO data. It ranked fifth in global fig production, with output increasing 3% to around 75,000 tons.

Butter and raisins were Iran's fourth- and fifth-largest agricultural export earners, respectively, generating $112 million and $99 million during the year. Saffron, another major Iranian export, is not included in the FAO figures cited in the report.

Beyond its leading export commodities, Iran held several other high global rankings in agricultural production.

The country was the world's fourth-largest producer of apricots and walnuts in 2024, harvesting 304,000 tons of apricots and 411,000 tons of walnuts. Walnut production increased 8% from about 380,000 tons in 2023.

Iran ranked fifth globally in the production of cherries, sour cherries and kiwifruit. Cherry output fell 5% to 137,000 tons, while sour cherry production edged up by 1,000 tons to 136,000 tons. Kiwifruit production reached 294,000 tons.

The FAO data also placed Iran sixth in almond production, with 132,000 tons in 2024, and seventh in apple and peach production.

Russian firm receives additional 37 km of key North-South rail corridor project

Economy Desk

Iran has signed an agreement to hand over an additional 37 kilometers of the Rasht-Astara railway project to Russia's Caspian Service company, bringing the total length of the route delivered to the firm to 162 km, as the two countries step up cooperation on the strategic rail link.

The agreement was signed as part of ongoing efforts to complete the railway, a key component of the North-South rail corridor, according to ILNA.

Houshang Bazvand, head of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructure Company and a deputy roads minister, said speeding up construction of the Rasht-Astara line was a priority for the president and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

He described the project as strategically important to bilateral relations with Russia and a significant milestone in international cooperation on regional transport infrastructure.

A previous agreement signed last year covered the handover of 125 km of the route. The latest 37-km addition brings the total to 162 km.

Bazvand said the progress would pave the way for larger commercial agreements and diplomatic and economic visits in the near future to finalize further deals.

He also said technical studies were being carried out carefully inside Iran, with qualified domestic contractors available to carry out the construction work. He added that there were no major obstacles or concerns over the project's implementation.



MEHR

Alongside the route handover agreement, the two sides signed a separate contract for geotechnical studies to assess geological and infrastructure conditions along the route and provide a sound technical basis for the work.

A director of Caspian Service said the Russian side was ready to advance the studies as quickly as possible. Ten geotechnical drilling teams are currently working along the route, he said.

He also praised the quality and technical expertise of Iranian consultants, expressing hope that the completion of field studies would pave the way for finalizing the contract.

Technical, engineering services exports rise 130% under current administration: *TPO*

Economy Desk

Iran's exports of technical and engineering services have increased 130% over the past two years under the Pezeshkian administration, which took office in August 2024, Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Ali Dehqan-Dehnavi said.

Speaking at a meeting with members of the Iranian Association of Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services, Dehghan Dehnavi said the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) was following up on exporters' foreign exchange and banking problems with the Central Bank, IRNA reported.

He said Iran had considerable technical knowledge, engineering expertise and specialized companies capable of expanding the country's target markets, increasing services exports and raising the sector's share of non-oil exports.

Dehqan-Dehnavi cited challenges facing exporters, including difficulties in the Iraqi market, bank guarantees and foreign exchange obligations. He said the TPO would pursue solutions with the central bank and other relevant agencies.

He added that a Supreme Export Council had been established at the TPO on the president's instructions to remove obstacles and strengthen exporters' capabilities. The president had also made commitments to address problems facing these companies during National Export Day, and following up on their implementation was on the TPO's agenda.

In April, Amir Roshanbakhsh, a TPO deputy, reported a 140% increase in Iran's exports of technical and engineering services in the fiscal year that began on March 21, 2025, compared with the previous year.

He said exports of technical and engineering services had reached $1.8 billion in that fiscal year, while other services exports totaled $1.2 billion, bringing combined services exports to about $3 billion. In the preceding fiscal year, exports of technical and engineering services stood at about $790 million, while other services exports were around $400 million.

Roshanbakhsh said the sector's exports remained below the country's potential and that, with greater attention and planning, Iran could aim to increase technical and engineering services exports to $5 billion.

China's chances of ...

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Important transport and connectivity networks have existed for decades, both during the Soviet era and since its collapse in 1991. They have gradually been developed and strengthened within the framework of reviving the Iranian Silk Road, the North-South Corridor and the ECO Southern Corridor. Iran's railway network connects a vast geographical area, stretching from the borders with Turkey, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to Afghanistan, and extending southward to the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the US naval blockade has also prompted Iran to expand its economic diplomacy, develop transport infrastructure, strengthen its northern ports and streamline customs procedures. Nevertheless, infrastructure limitations, transport costs and sanctions have restricted the extent to which northern routes can fully replace southern ones.

On the other hand, these countries need diverse and reliable routes to access global markets, and Iran can offer them a suitable gateway to open waters. However, regional insecurity and concerns over sanctions may push them toward alternative routes, such as the Middle Corridor. These developments therefore present Iran with a strategic opportunity, but capitalizing on it depends on ensuring transit security, reducing costs, maintaining regulatory stability and building mutual trust. Lasting cooperation can only take shape when the economic and security interests of all parties are served.

However, the pressure exerted by the US on these governments should not be overlooked. Regional governments face considerable constraints. All of them maintain extensive relations with the US and Western countries, as well as with Israel. Their official policy is generally to maintain relations with all sides, from Russia and China to Iran and Turkey, as well as Western countries. Nevertheless, their vulnerability to US pressure can sometimes constitute a major constraint.

Overall, shared opposition to US unilateralism does not necessarily translate into a political alliance or unrestricted economic cooperation. To capitalize on the potential of Russia and Central Asia, Iran needs to focus on shared interests, long-term projects, trade facilitation and the creation of mutual economic interdependence, while also remaining aware of the practical limitations of such an approach. This is because the way states operate in the international system is always more complicated than the agreements they reach or the statements their officials make.

Given the competition between Russia, China, Turkey and other regional players in Central Asia and the Caucasus, what opportunities and constraints does Iran face in seeking to strengthen its position in the region?

Since the Central Asian and Caucasus countries gained independence, extensive competition has emerged among regional and global powers across Eurasia. This rivalry, particularly between the West and Russia, has been a greater source of tensions, crises and wars than competition involving other powers. The war in Georgia during the first decade of the 21st century, followed by the war in Ukraine, has been a consequence of the West's expansionist policies in the region, to which Russia has responded by pushing back against what it considers a threat to its security interests.

From the outset, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also been sensitive to Western presence and influence along its 3,000-kilometer northern borders and has sought to coordinate with Russia and regional countries in responding to these moves.

In any case, Central Eurasia holds considerable importance in Iran's foreign policy because of its geopolitical position and the competition among regional and global powers. The presence of Russia, China, Turkey and the US in these areas creates both opportunities for expanding cooperation and constraints on Iran's efforts to increase its influence.

Iran's most significant advantage is its geographical position and transit potential. Through the development of the North-South Corridor, expansion of railway links, energy cooperation and the facilitation of trade, Iran has sought to connect Central Asian countries to the Persian Gulf and global markets. Historical and cultural ties with countries in the region, along with their need for diverse trade routes, have also created favorable conditions for expanding economic relations.

Nevertheless, Iran faces significant constraints. US sanctions, banking difficulties, a shortage of foreign investment and weaknesses in some transport infrastructure undermine the country's economic competitiveness. By contrast, China has extensive financial resources and economic capacity, Russia has historical and security ties in the region, and Turkey has strong trade relations and access to European markets, giving them effective tools to expand their influence.

Of course, competition among these powers does not necessarily mean that Iran will be sidelined. In some cases, it can also create opportunities for multilateral cooperation and strengthen Tehran's bargaining position.

In my view, the two main factors that have constrained Iran's Eurasian strategy are, first and foremost, US and Western sanctions pressure and, secondly, the weakness of Iran's private sector. Throughout these years, both factors have played a significant role in limiting Iran's economic initiatives in the region and undermining its position in regional economic relations. At present, China, Russia and Turkey are the region's main economic partners, followed by some European countries, while Iran plays a more limited role.

Could current developments lead to stronger regional cooperation and the emergence of more sustainable economic arrangements between Iran and its northern neighbors, or will conflicting interests and the political considerations of these countries stand in the way of such a prospect?

The war against Iran and the blockade have made the importance of, and opportunities for, regional cooperation across Eurasia more apparent to our country. Naturally, the naval blockade of Iran's ports has heightened the strategic importance of cooperation with northern countries and Asian partners. As a result, developing land-based and regional routes has become an economic and geopolitical necessity.

Under these circumstances, Iran's membership in organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization provides platforms that can help reduce the country's economic vulnerability. BRICS offers opportunities for discussions on settling transactions in national currencies, banking cooperation and expanding trade relations. The SCO, meanwhile, can help strengthen Iran's ties with Russia, China and Central Asia, particularly in transport, energy and overland trade.

Nevertheless, we must be fully aware that membership in these organizations does not, in itself, mean the lifting of sanctions or guarantee economic and military support from their members. Russia and China have strategic considerations regarding the expansion of US influence across Eurasia and may view closer cooperation with Iran as a means of maintaining the regional balance of power. However, their interests do not fully coincide with those of Tehran. China depends on energy security and uninterrupted maritime shipping, while Russia has its own independent security and economic priorities. Therefore, expecting unlimited support from these countries would be unrealistic.

Ultimately, the current crisis can strengthen regional cooperation, provided that Iran makes use of its shipping and transport capacities in the Caspian Sea, the North-South Corridor, its railway network and trade agreements to diversify its trade routes. The sustainability of this process depends on joint investment, workable financial mechanisms and the management of differences, rather than merely on shared concerns over US influence.

Grandfather inspired dream of invention for visually impaired

Masoumeh Hosseini; a girl with celebrated ideas to make life easier



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Masoumeh Hosseini, an 18-year-old Iranian girl who ventured into the world of ideation, inspired by the life of her blind and inventive grandfather, dreams of developing a smart device to assist the visually impaired; an instrument intended to alleviate some of their communication and everyday limitations. She has participated in several international invention and innovation competitions, where her ideas have won medals.

For Masoumeh, her grandfather was not merely a family member; he was an example of determination, curiosity, and perseverance in overcoming limitations. Abdol Shah-Palangi lost his sight during adolescence, but blindness could not distance him from the worlds of industry and invention. Relying on his tactile and auditory senses and imaginative faculties, he entered industrial component manufacturing, built machinery, and worked to localize certain components required by the automotive industry.

Now, his young granddaughter wishes to continue her grandfather's path through a different approach; this time, with the assistance of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence. Masoumeh Hosseini's first serious idea is the design of an intelligent assistant for the visually impaired: a small device capable of describing the surrounding environment — such as assisting with banknote identification, reading books and written materials, and even explaining certain facial cues — to a blind user. The idea originated from observing her grandfather's needs, but it is now intended to benefit other visually impaired people.

Alongside this project, Hosseini has ideas in the fields of pregnancy monitoring and medical record management; these projects remain at the design and assessment stages and require technical resources, capital, and collaboration with specialists to become marketable products.

In the following interview, Masoumeh Hosseini and her mother, Leila Shah-Palangi, discuss the life of Abdol Shah-Palangi, the genesis of the young Masoumeh's ideas, international competitions, and their hopes for support for innovative talents.



Masoumeh Hosseini, the 18-year-old Iranian girl whose ideas for quality-of-life inventions have been awarded in international competitions, speaks to a reporter at Iran Daily Headquarters on October 16, 2026.
REZA MOATTARIAN/IRAN DAILY

IRAN DAILY: Miss Hosseini, let us begin with you. How old are you, and what sparked your interest in invention and ideation?

HOSSEINI: I am 18 years old, and this year, I am in my final year of high school, studying mathematics. Since childhood, I have been interested in creating new devices and inventing things, but my grandfather had the greatest influence on the development of this interest. He was blind, yet he always wanted to build new things and help others. When I observed his life and became familiar with the difficulties he faced, I began to think that I could help others by designing new devices.

Did your first idea also emerge from these concerns?

HOSSEINI: Yes. My first serious idea concerns the difficulties faced by visually impaired people. My grandfather always wanted others to read books to him and help him acquire more information about the world around him. Sometimes, when he was talking to someone, it was also important to him to know how the other person felt; for example, whether they were angry, happy, or speaking with a smile. Observing these needs led me to consider designing a device that would enable blind people to obtain more information about their surroundings and other people's facial expressions. This idea began to take shape seriously in my mind when I was around 17.

What is the name of this idea, and what is it intended to do?

HOSSEINI: My idea is called "Eco Sight". My goal is to design a small, smart device for blind people that sits beside the forehead and ear and uses a camera, artificial intelligence (AI), a voice assistant, and a connection to a mobile phone to help visually impaired people better understand their surroundings and live more independently. The device can examine the environment through its camera and convey information to the blind user through an earpiece.



A visually impaired person hesitantly hands over several banknotes to a vehicle driver in India.
newzhook.com

The device will be able to identify obstacles and people nearby and explain what is in front of the user; for instance, whether there is a tree beside them or someone is crossing from the opposite direction. It will be able to also read written material, assist with banknote and product price identification, and provide the user with information about the surrounding environment. I want the device to be connected to AI and function like a voice assistant. The device will be able to identify obstacles and people nearby and explain what is in front of the user; for instance, whether there is a tree beside them or someone is crossing from the opposite direction. It will be able to also read written material, assist with banknote and product price identification, and provide the user with information about the surrounding environment. I want the device to be connected to AI and function like a voice assistant.

One of the interesting aspects of your idea is facial expression recognition. How would this feature work?

HOSSEINI: Yes, this feature distinguishes it from other similar devices. The device is intended to use a camera and AI to recognize certain visible facial cues and explain them to the blind user through the voice assistant. For example, if the person in front of the user smiles or displays an expression indicative of anger, the device can describe these cues. This feature could assist the user in social interactions and provide them with more information in various situations.

Ms. Shah-Palangi, to what extent do you think observing her grandfather's difficulties inspired your daughter, Masoumeh, to pursue ideation and invention?

SHAH-PALANGI: This was extremely significant because Masoumeh had witnessed firsthand the limitations that blindness imposes on everyday life. My father was extremely interested in reading books and staying up-to-date with world news and current events. Even during his final days in a hospital bed, he would ask us to bring him books and read them to him.

Sometimes, we did not have time or could not read to him at the very moment he wished. This saddened us because I could see how much he wanted to be independent and access information himself.

My father owned a shop in the bazaar, and despite his abilities, he sometimes encountered difficulties communicating with others. For example, he would say that people entered his shop, and when he asked who was there, they did not respond, leaving him unaware of whom he was dealing with. Even such simple situations can be difficult for a blind person. Masoumeh had experienced her grandfather's difficulties firsthand and considered whether she could use technology to alleviate some of these limitations.

When did your father lose his sight, and how did he enter the world of invention?

SHAH-PALANGI: My father lost his sight during adolescence. According to his own account, he was approximately 15 when a teacher's ruler struck his glasses, causing bleeding in both eyes. He subsequently underwent surgery, but unfortunately, his vision problems were not resolved.

My father also attended a boarding school for the blind for some time, but he said that he felt his pace of learning and performing tasks exceeded the pace of instruction there. He was an extremely active person and was by no means inclined toward idleness.

A friend named Jamshid played a significant role in changing the course of my father's life. After a period of isolation, his friend encouraged him to leave the house and look for work. At a workshop, my father became acquainted with the production of components such as washers, and this marked the beginning of his entry into industry. Gradually, he learned the work, acquired machinery, and entered the production of industrial and automotive components.

Operating industrial machinery is difficult for a blind person. How did your father manage to do it?

SHAH-PALANGI: He had an exceptionally acute sense of hearing and could recognize the sounds of machinery. By listening to the sounds, he could determine when a machine opened or closed, and he examined components through his sense of touch. He also employed workers, but he supervised many stages of production and personally performed a substantial portion of the work.

My father worked in the production of automotive components, washers, plastic parts, and automotive sound damping materials. He also gained experience with the materials and resins used in sound damping and tested various formulations to achieve suitable heat resistance. He registered some of his designs as patents and managed to expand his operations, eventually becoming the owner of a factory for a period. He started with limited capital and sought to domestically manufacture certain components required by the industry.

Miss Hosseini, let us return to your idea for assisting the visually impaired. Have you

taken any practical steps to turn it into a product?
HOSSEINI: At present, the idea has not yet entered the production stages. I have researched similar devices and am examining the features I intend to incorporate, but building a functional prototype requires technical resources, collaboration with specialists, and capital. When I first presented this idea, I was unable to register it in my own name because I had not yet turned 18, so it was registered in my father's name.
I presented the idea at international competitions and won a silver medal at an inventors' competition held in Switzerland, where I also received positive feedback. I had even been invited to attend an event in Switzerland, but the timing, my studies, and the circumstances of that period prevented me from attending the exhibition. Consequently, I lost the opportunity to establish direct contact with people who might have been interested in investing.

Besides the device for the visually impaired, do you have other ideas in the healthcare sector?
HOSSEINI: I have designed another idea called "MaterniGuard AI" to assist expectant mothers. My idea is to place a belt around the mother's abdomen that provides her with information about the fetus's condition.
Alongside this device, a mobile app would also be developed, with each mother having her own dedicated user dashboard. Information about the pregnancy would be recorded in this dashboard, and, if the necessary infrastructure were established, the physician could also access the required information. The goal is to enable the mother to obtain more information about her pregnancy and alleviate the family's concerns.

What prompted you to consider designing such a device?
HOSSEINI: This idea occurred to me in light of the experiences my mother recounted about her pregnancies. I considered how pregnancy can be accompanied by considerable anxiety for some families. Sometimes, a mother feels that something has changed in her abdomen or notices an unusual sign and becomes concerned that something may have happened to the fetus.
I wanted to develop an idea that could provide the mother with more information and help her manage her concerns. I presented this idea at international competitions as well and won a silver medal at a Swiss invention and innovation competition.
My other idea is to design a system for storing and accessing individuals' medical records. I considered that when someone migrates to another country, they may be unable to access their previous medical records or provide the necessary information to a new physician.
Under such circumstances, diagnosing an illness may become more difficult or treatment may be delayed, particularly when the individual cannot accurately explain their medical history, medications, and previous treatments.
Under my proposed design, each person would have a user dashboard containing information about their illnesses, prescriptions, prescribed medications, and treatment history. Individuals would be able to access their medical records in different countries and share essential information with their physicians.

What are your plans for your academic and professional future?
HOSSEINI: I would like to study computer science at the University of Tehran and expand my knowledge of programming and artificial intelligence. Afterward, I intend to work on my ideas and bring them to fruition. One of my major goals is to establish a company in the future dedicated to ideation, invention design, and manufacturing; a company that could evaluate new ideas, turn them into functional prototypes, and ultimately bring them into production. I would like to serve my country in this way. I believe that Iran has considerable talent, and that, if appropriate resources and opportunities were made available to these individuals, they could accomplish valuable work.

Biosecurity in age of AI



By Doug Irving
Corporate communications officer at RAND

INTERVIEW

Steph Guerra is an expert in AI, security, and biotechnology. The question that drives her work at RAND may be one of the most consequential for this moment in the AI era: How can we harness the full potential of AI for science and medicine — but also ensure it never helps anyone build a biological weapon?
Her career began in the lab. She's a molecular biologist by training, whose earliest research focused on preventing cancer. But she's been working on issues of AI safety since long before "large language model" was a household term. She now leads RAND's portfolio of research at the intersection of AI and biotechnology.
In a recent study, Guerra and a team of researchers tested so-called "open-weight" AI models. These models are made publicly available for anyone to download, run, and modify. That can make them more transparent and accessible than hosted models like Claude or ChatGPT. But it also creates concerns about how they could be misused.

What did you find in your study of open-weight models and biosecurity risks?
GUERRA: It's important to say, first, that these open-weight models are a central part of the AI ecosystem. They support open research; they allow organizations or people to deploy their own models without relying on third parties. But there are some potential downsides. Once they're released, their developers can no longer enforce safety controls, and the underlying model can be customized for beneficial or potentially harmful purposes.
We evaluated a few different open-weight models. We found that their capabilities are quite comparable to those of frontier models. But we also found that tampering with them to remove their safeguards was actually pretty trivial and low-cost. Obtaining a highly capable open-weight model, and then removing the safeguards that tell it to refuse certain questions, is within reach of many capable actors.

Does that mean someone could use these models to help plan a biological attack?
Just getting information out of a model is one small step on what would be a long pathway to carrying out an attack. A bad actor would still have to obtain the materials; design, build, and test the biological agent; weaponize it; and then release it. There are technical, operational, and motivational barriers along that entire pathway.
One of the real challenges we have is that it's difficult to assess how an AI model could help. Could it motivate someone to cause harm? Could it help with the technical aspects, using the appropriate tools to design and enhance an agent? We can all agree that people should not be able to use AI models to develop a bioweapon. But it's really hard to test the end-to-end risk of that. And so, we rely on these snapshots that our team and others build to understand where and how a bad actor could use AI.

What are some practical steps that AI developers can take to reduce the risk?

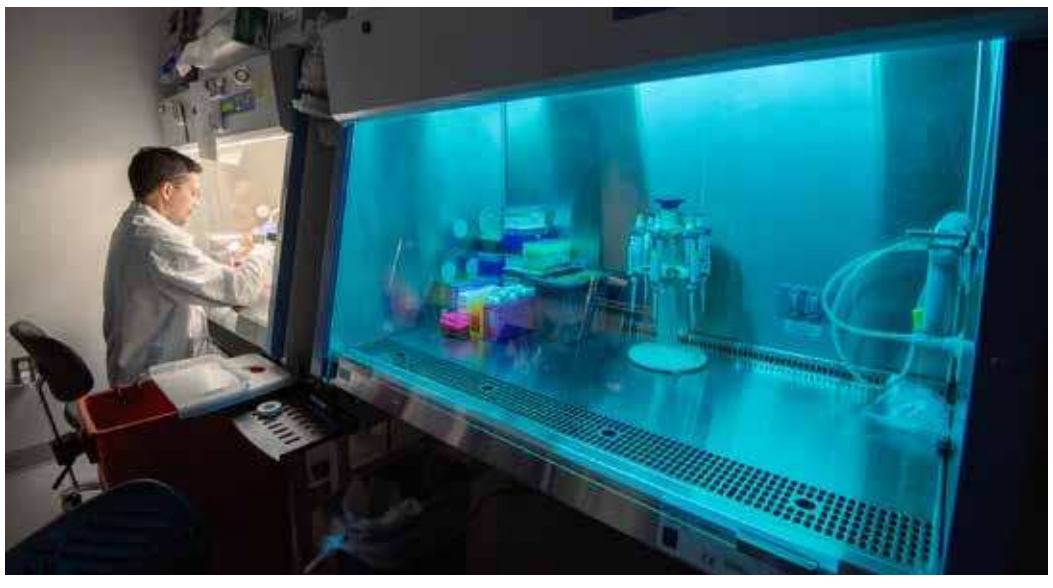


Steph Guerra

vietnam.vn

The ideal would be to build safeguards that are tamper-resistant. There has been some work on that, but it's unclear whether we'll ever be able to get there. If you think about it, closed-weight models are not tamper-free either. We always have to assume there will be ways to circumvent any single intervention put in place.

So then, what does an effective biosecurity strategy look like?
You need to create friction along the entire pathway. Our team looked at this problem and just recently developed a multi-layered strategy that would prevent a pandemic-scale biological attack.
It has four key theories of defense. One is managing access to information through things like stronger model safeguards and managed access programs. The second is preventing bad actors from getting access to the materials they would need to create a biological weapon, the DNA and RNA, such as through gene synthesis screening. The third is detecting misuse early through real-time monitoring. And the fourth is being able to rapidly respond to and attribute an attack, to deter a nefarious actor from attempting one in the first place.
Model safeguards might stop a lone actor, but by themselves, they won't slow down a sophisticated state with a bioweapons program. Early detection, early attribution — that deterrence layer — might. That's the challenge. There's never going to be a single silver-bullet solution that can stop all threats. We need all of these layers.



A scientist at Red Queen Bio grows cells to produce and test candidate antibody designs. The idea behind founding the startup company was to use AI to design remedies against AI-enabled bioweapons, and cure other scourges along the way, too.
WSJ

> We evaluated a few different open-weight models. We found that their capabilities are quite comparable to those of frontier models. But we also found that tampering with them to remove their safeguards was actually pretty trivial and low-cost. Obtaining a highly capable open-weight model, and then removing the safeguards that tell it to refuse certain questions, is within reach of many capable actors.

How do you avoid stifling legitimate research while still preventing malicious uses?
Biology is a dual-use endeavor. The same AI capabilities that might cause harm could also be incredibly useful for developing medical innovations. The goal here is managed access and not blanket prohibitions. It's to precisely define who a legitimate user is and then ensure those individuals have access to the most powerful tools and data they need.
There are some useful precedents. There are managed-access frameworks to address privacy and security concerns with human genome data, for example. It doesn't foreclose legitimate research, but it also doesn't put the data out there for anyone to misuse. Part of our philosophy at RAND is that the scientific community needs to be part of developing the solutions. AI safeguards are only going to work if they preserve meaningful utility for beneficial research.

Was there a moment in your career that put you on the path to doing what you do now?
A few years ago, I was part of a small federal team doing red-teaming experiments with AI models. I was watching these models answer questions about biological attacks, and they were providing really creative, useful information, fluently, and with a lot of confidence. And I remember it just struck me: We needed to be doing a lot more to monitor and track these risks.
I started my career as a cancer biologist. And I kept running into this reality that we pour years and resources into developing treatments, but not as much into preventing cancer in the first place. So, this idea of focusing on prevention, on getting ahead of risks so we're not scrambling to respond later, has just followed me through my career.

The interview was first published by RAND.

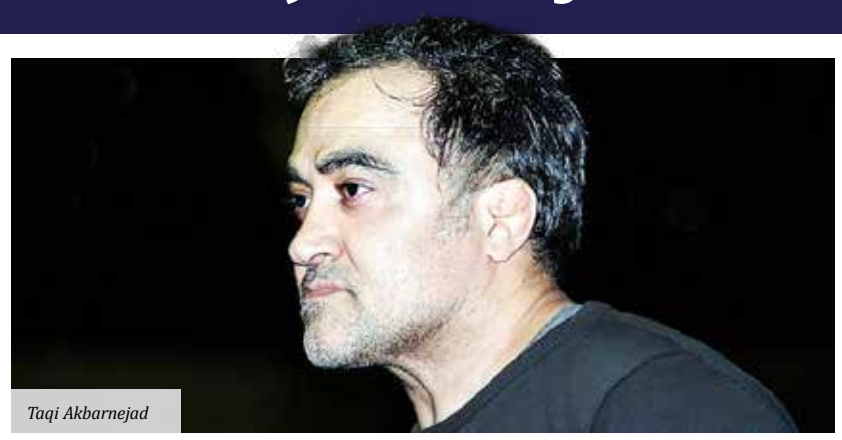
Iran must address technical shortcomings in freestyle wrestling, Akbarnejad says



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iran's freestyle wrestling team finished third at the 2026 World Wrestling Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, claiming six medals – two gold, one silver and three bronze – and collecting 133 points.
The United States topped the standings with 194 points, followed by Russia on 185. Iran's result came in stark contrast to the country's impressive performance in Greco-Roman wrestling, where the team claimed a record nine medals and secured its second consecutive world title.
Although Iran's freestyle wrestlers returned with six medals, their campaign was marked by mixed performances, ranging from impressive displays by Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan and Amirhossein Zare to disappointing results from several established names and missed opportunities to win gold in multiple weight classes.
To assess Iran's performance, its technical and physical shortcomings, the coaching staff and the team's prospects ahead of the 2028 Olympics, I spoke to Taqi Akbarnejad, a former member of the national team, coach and wrestling analyst.



Taqi Akbarnejad

IRAN DAILY: How would you assess Iran's performance at the World Championships in Kazakhstan? Do you consider six medals and a third-place finish an acceptable result?

AKBARNEJAD: I believe the national team had plenty of ups and downs at the competition and could have performed better. We failed to achieve the results we expected in some weight classes, while our performances improved in others compared to previous competitions.

For instance, very few people would have expected Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan to produce such impressive performances and win gold in the 61kg category. He showed that he is making progress and could become one of the key figures in Iranian wrestling in the years ahead.

On the other hand, we could have seen Kamran Ghasempour in the 86kg final and even on top of the podium. In the 65kg category, Rahman Amouzad also had an excellent opportunity to win gold. Unfortunately, mistakes by both the wrestler and the coaching staff in the closing seconds cost him that opportunity.

Nevertheless, six medals at the World Championships represent an acceptable result overall.

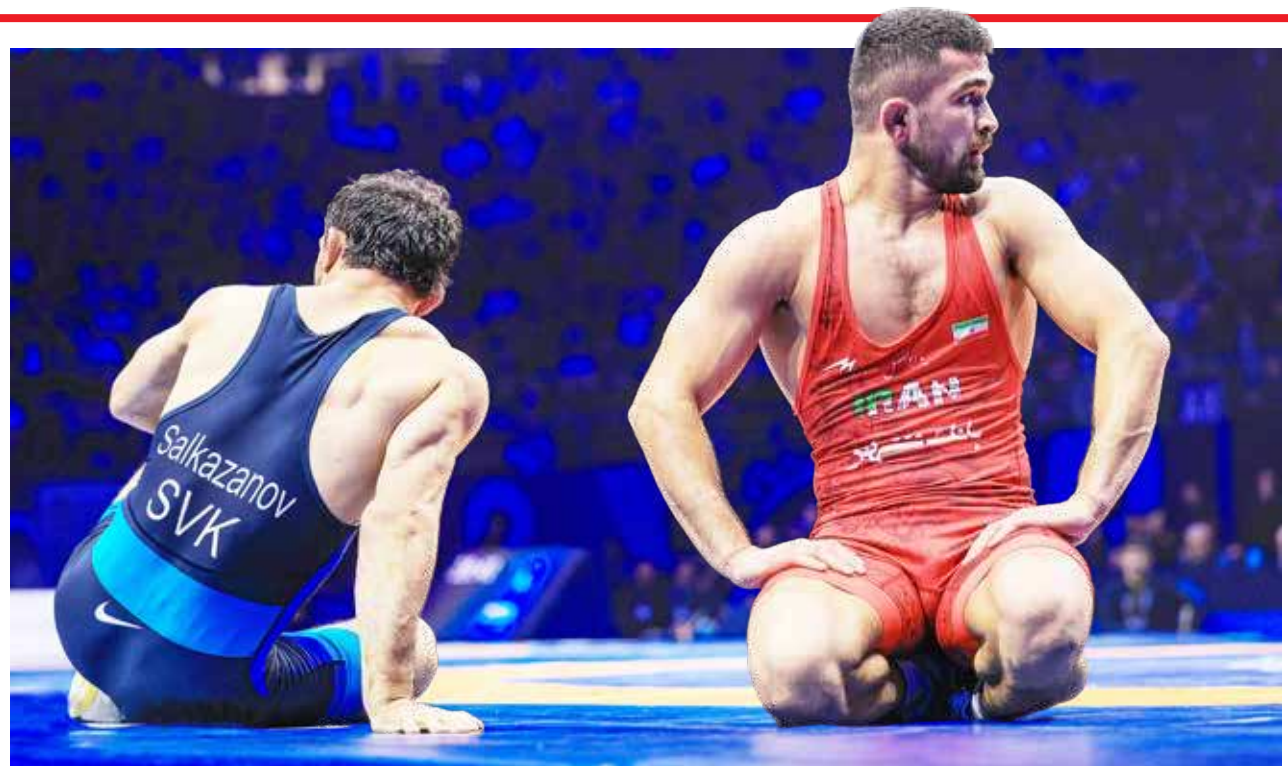
We should also remember that Russia was absent from the main international wrestling circuit last year because of the circumstances surrounding its participation in international competitions. The team still does not appear to have returned to its usual level. I am certain the Russians will be much stronger by the next Olympics.

The United States, meanwhile, relied on talented young wrestlers in several weight classes, although it also fielded a few experienced, ageing competitors. Those youngsters made a name for themselves at this competition. I believe the Americans performed exceptionally well and demonstrated that they have a clear plan for the future and the Los Angeles Olympics.

Given Iran's Greco-Roman team won the world title at the same competition, why did the freestyle team fail to achieve a similar result? What do you see as the main difference between the two teams?

Competition in freestyle wrestling is more intense because the three major powers – the United States, Russia and Iran – are consistently the leading contenders.

Greco-Roman wrestling is somewhat different, with points distributed among a larger number of teams. Countries such as Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Russia and several other European nations have traditionally been major forces in Greco-Roman wrestling.



Iran's Amir-Mohammad Yazdani (R) wrestles Slovakia's Tajmuraz Salkazanov in the freestyle 74kg third-place bout at the Wrestling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on November 1, 2026.
IAWFIR

As I mentioned, Russia spent some time away from international competition and naturally needs time to return to its previous level. The team will certainly be stronger at the next Olympics.

As for the difference between Iran's two teams, I believe the Greco-Roman squad made the most of its potential and opportunities. In terms of physical fitness and conditioning, I also felt the Greco-Roman team was in better shape than the freestyle squad.

Hassan Rangraz and his wrestlers deserve tremendous credit for their performance and the outstanding result they achieved.

How do you assess the coaching staff's role in the freestyle team's results? Do you believe Pejman Dorostkar should remain in charge until the Olympics?

I have no doubt that Pejman Dorostkar should continue in his position until the Olympics. He has been working with this team for several years, and changing the head coach at this stage could harm the squad. A new coach would need time to get to know the wrestlers, establish coordination and settle into the team.

However, I believe the coaching staff needs to be strengthened. A closer analysis of the matches shows that we could have performed better in certain weight classes.

It would be unfair to suggest that the coaching staff has not made an effort. Dorostkar and his colleagues have done everything within their capabilities for the team. Alireza Dabir [the chairman of the federation] has also provided considerable support to both the freestyle and Greco-Roman national teams in terms of facilities and resources.

One issue that stood out at the competition was the difference in physical fitness and strength between some Iranian wrestlers and their foreign opponents, particularly the Americans. Do we need to reconsider our conditioning methods?

Yes, I believe there is considerable room for improvement in this area.

As I mentioned, the Greco-Roman team was in excellent physical condition and worked with Bahman Mirzaei, whom I consider one of the world's outstanding strength and conditioning coaches. The freestyle team would benefit from greater cooperation with specialists in this field and from drawing on their experience.

However, we should not attribute every decline in a wrestler's physical condition solely to strength and conditioning. Weight cutting is another major factor.

For example, we need to compare Mohammad Nokhodi's condition in the 86kg category at the Asian Games with his performance at 79kg at the World Championships and examine all the factors that affected his physical readiness.

We must identify what causes improvements or declines in wrestlers' physical capabilities. Nutrition, weight reduction, training schedules and other factors all play a role. We need a comprehensive assessment before taking steps to improve the situation.

Another issue with Iranian freestyle wrestling is the declining variety of techniques. In many matches, wrestlers seem more focused on pushing opponents out of bounds to score stepout points. Why has Iranian wrestling struggled to maintain its technical diversity?

I believe this is one of the fundamental problems in our wrestling. Technique is gradually disappearing from our game, with a large proportion of matches increasingly revolving around pushing opponents and forcing them out of bounds.

Wrestling, however, should feature a wide range of techniques, and wrestlers must be able to use different moves to overcome their opponents.

To address this problem, we need to draw on the expertise of more coaches and individuals across the country. We have many great champions and experienced coaches who can contribute to improving the technical level of our wrestlers.

We should not limit ourselves to a closed circle of people who share a narrow set of views and ideas.

We must allow capable individuals with different perspectives to join the setup and work alongside the coaching staff. This process should begin at the grassroots level, including youth and novice categories, and be expanded across cities and clubs. The next generation of wrestlers must receive proper instruction and develop a diverse technical repertoire from the outset.

Could bringing in foreign coaches and former champions help improve the technical level of Iranian wrestling? For example, could we work with Russian coaches or prominent world champions alongside Iranian coaches?

I believe we already have enough top-class coaches in the country, but we can also benefit from the expertise of great foreign champions. The important thing is to bring them in alongside Iranian coaches rather than hand complete control of our wrestling over to foreigners.

For example, the Americans make good use of their own great world and Olympic champions. Figures such as Adam Saitiev and other renowned wrestlers can help athletes alongside the coaching staff and domestic coaches.

They do not necessarily need to become head coaches or members of the national team's coaching staff. They can work at training camps, clubs and even in different cities, focusing on improving wrestlers' techniques.

At the World Club Championships, I saw one prominent coach working with his wrestler on a particular move for around an hour and a half, well before the competition. It showed how much attention they devote to technical details and the teaching of individual moves.

We should adopt similar methods. Great Russian champions, for instance, could work alongside Iranian coaches to raise the technical standard of our wrestlers. The objective should be to improve Iranian wrestling technically, not make ourselves dependent on foreign coaches.

The second part of the interview will be published in the next issue of Iran Daily.

Persian carpet art finds place in Yazd's historic bazaar

Iranica Desk

Amid the historic alleyways of Yazd, between traditional shops and the captivating colors of Persian carpets, lies the story of a city where art and everyday life are intricately woven together. Here, every pattern offers a glimpse into the world of Persian artistic expression, while every carpet invites visitors to step into the memories and heritage of the city.

In some bazaars, visitors must look up to appreciate their beauty. But in Yazd's carpet bazaar, all it takes is a moment to pause and look down at the intricate designs spread across the floor. Colors spill out from the traditional shops into the market corridors: reds sit alongside deep blues, delicate borders frame elaborate patterns, and each carpet seems like a window into a home, a memory or a distant era, according to IRNA.

Located in the heart of Yazd's historic urban fabric, the carpet bazaar is more than a place to buy and sell goods. It is part of the image the city has preserved of itself through the generations. Amid old walls and passageways that have witnessed decades of daily activity, carpet shops continue to play a role in the life of the bazaar, bringing together traditional craftsmanship, customers' tastes and the experience of local merchants.

A walk through Yazd's historic bazaar, even before reaching the carpet shops, offers an opportunity to discover a city where history remains part of everyday life. Its narrow passageways, aged walls and architecture adapted to the desert climate create an atmosphere in which the past is not merely displayed for tourists but remains woven into the rhythm of the present.



IRNA

Inside the carpet bazaar, this historic setting is enriched by the colors and patterns of handwoven rugs, as though a part of the spirit of traditional Iranian homes has found its way into the marketplace.

At first glance, it is the variety of colors and designs that captures the eye. Each carpet brings together geometric and curved motifs, intricate borders and fine details to create a harmonious visual composition. Some designs are richly detailed, drawing the eye from the centre towards the edges, while others offer a more understated appearance through their subtle combinations of color and pattern. These contrasts serve as a reminder that a carpet's beauty lies not only in its colors but also in the balance of its designs and the precision of its craftsmanship.

A closer look reveals that a carpet is far more than a colorful image. The minute details of its patterns, the regularity of its knots and the interweaving of its warp and weft all tell a story of patience and precision. Behind every handmade carpet are countless hours of work and a level of skill developed through years of practice and experience. What initially appears to be a complete design is, in fact, the result of countless small details carefully brought together — much like a city whose identity is shaped by the combined memories, people and trades of its past and present.

Inside the carpet shops, rugs are sometimes arranged side by side, while others are partially unfolded to reveal their patterns and colors more clearly. This arrangement transforms each shop into a collection of colorful frames. Here, looking at carpets goes beyond choosing an item for the home. The eye moves from one design to another, pauses over intricate details and compares subtle differences in color and pattern. At such moments, the bazaar becomes both a centre of commerce and a place to appreciate and discover traditional craftsmanship.



A historic bazaar remains alive when it retains its everyday commercial function alongside its architectural and cultural significance. Carpet shops are an important part of this relationship. They provide a space where goods are displayed, customers enquire about materials and designs, and merchants draw on their experience to guide buyers. The presence of these businesses demonstrates that historical heritage extends beyond old buildings and monuments. The trades and daily activities that continue within these spaces also play an essential role in preserving the identity and vitality of the bazaar.

Yazd's carpet bazaar can be viewed from two perspectives: as an expression of Persian art and creativity, and as part of the traditional urban economy of a city whose historical identity has evolved over time. Its significance lies not only in the carpets displayed in its shops but also in the relationship between architecture, commerce and the cultural traditions that give the marketplace its character. Preserving such places means more than maintaining their old walls and ceilings; it also requires sustaining the livelihoods, crafts and activities that continue to breathe life into them.

At the end of a visit, what remains in the memory may not be one particular carpet, but rather the interplay of colors inside the shops, the intricate patterns that draw the eye and the quiet sense of calm that comes from walking through the historic fabric of the city.

Through its countless threads and patterns, Yazd's carpet bazaar preserves a story of art and everyday life — a story that will continue for as long as these designs remain on display and these traditional shops retain their place in the life of the city.

Fakhruddin As'ad Gorgani Hall blends art, heritage

Iranica Desk

Fakhruddin As'ad Gorgani Hall, located on Shahid Namju Street at the square bearing its name in Gorgan, Golestan Province, reflects a blend of specialized performance-space design and the traditional arts of the region. From the motifs adorning its waiting halls to the technical details of its stage, the building offers a glimpse into how local artistic heritage has been incorporated into a major cultural venue.

The story of the hall dates back to 1971, when Hassan Rahimian, then head of the Department of Culture and Art, submitted a proposal for its construction to the ministry. Following approval of the plan and the selection of a site, 5,000 square meters of agricultural land in the Fowj area of Gorgan were allocated to the project. Twenty plots occupied by buildings along the northern side of the site were also earmarked for purchase, according to chtn.ir.

A construction contract was signed with Aftandelians Company, and work began in June 1972. The agreement called for a fully equipped, purpose-built theatre in Gorgan that would meet professional standards. The company, which had previously built Roudaki Hall, now known as Vahdat Hall, also took responsibility for the interior design and stage equipment.

The hall was officially opened on a semi-formal basis on May 7, 1978. Its design extended beyond the auditorium to include specialized stage facilities, lighting and sound systems, and backstage spaces to support performances.





chtn.ir

One of the building's most distinctive features is its use of decorative motifs inspired by the region's traditional handicrafts. Mirror work, plasterwork and metalwork incorporate symbols drawn from the arts of local ethnic communities, as well as patterns found in traditional textiles and woven products such as carpets, Kilims, Chador-Shabs and Jajims. Motifs traditionally seen in local weaving have thus been reinterpreted as architectural ornamentation.

This connection is particularly evident in the waiting halls, where Turkmen carpet-flower designs are reproduced on the wooden parquet flooring. Ceiling and wall chandeliers further contribute to the interior's distinctive appearance. The central chandelier hangs at a height of 14 meters, while smaller clusters of lights are positioned beneath the balcony. The parquet flooring is made of treated walnut wood.



The use of local motifs continues into the outdoor grounds. The design of the pools and flower beds in the western courtyard draws inspiration from Turkmen carpets and palas, a traditional flat-woven textile. The grounds feature three hexagonal pools and a larger pool measuring six by 20 meters, reinforcing the visual connection between the building's interior and exterior spaces.

The entrance route begins with five steps leading to a large landing, followed by five substantial doors opening into the building. Columns on either side of the entrance extend to the ceiling, where arches connect them near the top. Beyond the entrance lies a high-ceilinged reception area providing access to the main auditorium and other sections of the complex.

The main auditorium, comprising the ground floor and balcony, can accommodate 520 spectators. A smaller hall of approximately 100 square meters was also designed for review and discussion sessions, cultural and artistic association activities, play readings and smaller performances. These facilities indicate that the complex was conceived from the outset to accommodate a range of cultural and artistic activities.

The backstage areas form another important part of the hall's specialized design. They include dressing rooms, costume and curtain facilities, technical installations, and a 60-square-metre rehearsal space for artistic groups. Five professional dressing rooms were planned for the eastern section of the second floor, each equipped with facilities such as cupboards, showers and illuminated mirrors. A separate mirror room on the same floor was designated for receiving and accommodating distinguished guests.

The stage itself was designed to meet the requirements of different types of performances. According to the building's registration dossier, it includes 12 upright wooden panels and four ceiling panels, which can be arranged to create a suitable setting for symphony orchestra performances. Side-stage areas, lighting equipment and a dedicated entrance for transporting large sets further demonstrate the technical scope of the design.

The hall has undergone several changes over the years. In 2003, a shadow-screen curtain was purchased and installed for the stage. In 2013, a space previously used as a storage area was converted into a performance hall for smaller productions. The new venue has a seating capacity of 142 and is equipped with specialized lighting and sound systems.

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Address: 208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran
Advertising Dept. Tel/Email: +98 21 88500601/irandaily@iranagahiha.com
Website: www.irandaily.ir/newspaper.irandaily.ir
Email: irandaily@icpi.ir

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Mobile library opens in memory of Minab schoolchildren

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened its first mobile library in Minab, a southern Iranian city, dedicating the 1,500-book collection to children who killed in a US missile strike on a school.

The Shajareh Tayyebeh school in Minab was hit by a US missile strike on February 28, the first day of the US-Israeli war against Iran, killing 168 people, most of them children.

Reza Salehi-Amiri, Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, inaugurated the library during a two-day visit to Hormozgan province, southern Iran.

The service aims to promote reading and improve access to books, especially for children and teenagers in areas without fixed libraries.

Anoushirvan Pishdar, head of Hormozgan's public libraries department, said it would serve children, teenagers and other readers.

"Two mobile libraries had previously operated in Bandar Abbas, the provincial capital," Pishdar said.

He said naming the library after the students killed at Shajareh Tayyebeh was intended to preserve their memory and link cultural activities with the values of sacrifice and remembrance.

Salehi-Amiri also visited the school, where students and teachers were killed, and met some of the victims' family members.

He viewed documents and other material about the incident and heard accounts of efforts to preserve the memory of those killed.

"Minab today is no longer just a city, but has become a symbol of unity, solidarity and national resistance," he said.

The minister also pledged government support for Minab residents. He described serving the victims' families and the wider community as an important way to honor those killed.

The mobile library combines a memorial initiative with an effort to expand access to books. Its reach will depend on how regularly it operates and how many communities without permanent libraries it can serve.



Children gather at the at the entrance of of a mobile library in Minab, southern Iran, on November 4, 2026.
IRNA

Over 150 artifacts brought back after two-year exhibition in China



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has returned 151 historical and cultural artifacts after a two-year exhibition tour of five Chinese cities, with all items transferred safely to storage under security and preservation measures, a provincial heritage official said on Tuesday.

"The collection, drawn from museums in Tehran province, arrived in Iran on November 3 after the tour's final exhibition in Lushun, northeastern China," said Ali Tolouei, head of Tehran province's cultural heritage department.

The artifacts were transferred to storage after administrative and customs procedures were completed. The operation involved the customs office at Imam Khomeini International Airport and the Tehran provincial heritage protection unit.

The deputy cultural heritage minister, museum directors and specialist staff also took part in receiving and transferring the collection.

Tolouei said the return, carried out under sensitive conditions in Iran, required careful planning and close coordination among the agencies involved.

"The mission was completed through cooperation between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and other government bodies," he said.

He thanked Chinese partners for hosting the "Land of Affection" exhibition and praised the managers, experts and specialists who had worked on its design, organization, staging and support over the past two years.

The exhibition featured 151 artifacts from museums across Tehran province and traveled to five major cultural and historical cities in China.

It attracted considerable interest from Chinese visitors, Iran's IRNA news agency reported.

The return ends the collection's two-year tour, which brought Iranian historical and cultural objects to audiences in China.

740m saplings produced to plant 1b trees

Social Desk

Iran has produced about 740 million saplings under a four-year campaign to plant one billion trees, the head of Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization said.

Reza Aflatouni said the saplings were produced over the campaign's first three years at state-run natural resources and watershed management nurseries and by private-sector producers.

The actual number of saplings planted is estimated to be at least twice the registered figure, Aflatouni said.

"However, only plantings recorded in the organization's tree production and planting registration system, with their locations and implementing authorities identified, count as official results," he said.

Iran must produce another 250 million to 260 million saplings this year to meet its one-billion target by the end of the campaign, he said.



Mosleh Pirkhezranian/IRNA

Aflatouni acknowledged that the planting target might not be met. Still, he said planting 500 million saplings, or half the planned total, would be a significant achievement.

He also said about 1.4 million hectares had been afforested across Iran over recent decades, a figure covering national efforts beyond the current campaign.

Aflatouni said protecting water, soil and the country's ecosystems was a responsibility shared across generations. Tree planting, he added, should remain part of efforts to safeguard natural resources beyond the campaign's four-year term.

Arabian horse festival to attract tourists, investors in southern Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is seeking to turn its Arabian horse industry into a driver of tourism and regional trade, with a festival planned for February 2027 in the southwestern cities of Khorramshahr and Abadan, a local official said.

Ahmed Sharifat, head of the tourism commission at the Khorramshahr Chamber of Commerce, said the event aims to establish southwestern Khuzestan as a regional destination for horse-related tourism, IRNA reported.

"Iran has about 10,000 purebred Arabian horses, more than 6,000 of them in Khuzestan province," Sharifat said.

The province's location near Arab countries gives it opportunities to expand horse breeding, tourism and trade.

But the industry lacks standard racetracks, quarantine facilities and a legal framework for horse exports. Some Arabian horses are transferred illegally to Iraq because breeders cannot access proper export channels, Sharifat said.

He described Iraq as an important and accessible market that could generate foreign currency earnings if legal exports were facilitated.

Organizers have invited prominent Iraqi horse industry figures to attend the festival and are seeking their participation as guests and financial sponsors.

At a meeting in Khorramshahr, horse club owners, riders, breeders and officials discussed industry challenges, including sponsorship, support for clubs and the development of festival infrastructure.

An Arvand Free Zone representative outlined efforts to allocate land for an equestrian club.

The provincial agriculture department also offered to cooperate, including by exploring ways to use existing systems to facilitate the purchase and supply of horse feed.

Participants also proposed a specialist working group to address the concerns of breeders and club owners.

The head of the tourism commission at the Khorramshahr Chamber of Commerce added that the festival was intended to go beyond a one-off event and help establish permanent facilities for regular international competitions.

"Investment in racetracks and related infrastructure could create jobs, support local businesses and strengthen Khuzestan's role in regional tourism," he added.

