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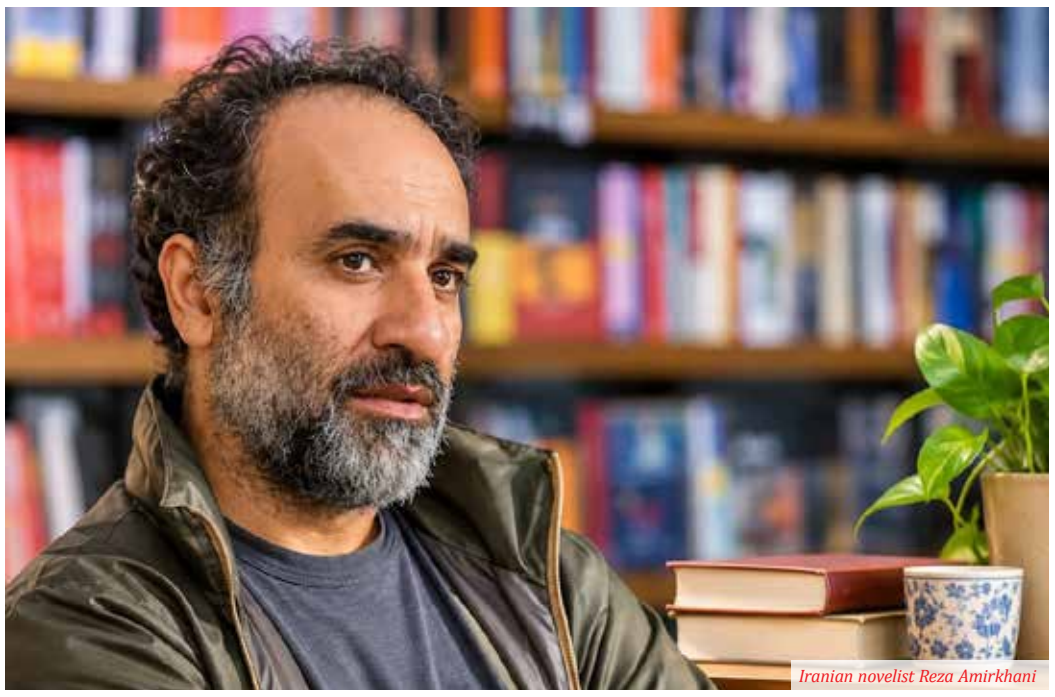
Novelist Reza Amirkhani,known for his distinctive prose, dies at 53

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian novelist Reza Amirkhani died on Monday, November 23, aged 53, nearly a year after suffering severe head injuries in a paragliding accident near Tehran.
Amirkhani was injured on November 30, 2025, when his paraglider crashed in Mosha, near Mount Damavand, east of the capital. He was initially treated in a Tehran hospital's intensive care unit and later transferred home, where he remained under medical and nursing supervision.
Amirkhani published 13 books, spanning novels, travel writing, short stories and essays. His prose had a distinctive style, marked by wordplay, unconventional spelling and shifts between formal and colloquial Persian.
Ali Ilent, a writer and friend, told the Iranian Book News Agency that Amirkhani developed a severe lung infection in the final days of his life, while still unconscious.



Iranian novelist Reza Amirkhani

Born in Tehran on May 17, 1973, Amirkhani graduated in mechanical engineering from Sharif University of Technology. He began his literary career in the 1990s, publishing his debut novel, "Ermia", in 1995. His 1999 novel "Man-e Ou" helped establish his reputation.
His novels covered a range of subjects, from the experience of war and questions of faith and identity to love, migration and urban change.
"Man-e Ou," one of his best-known works, drew on the social and cultural life of old Tehran, while "Beyoutan" followed its recurring protagonist Ermia as he confronted questions of identity and belonging in the United States.
In "Rahesh" (Salvation), which won the Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Award in 2018, Amirkhani turned his attention to Tehran's changing urban landscape and the impact of development on the city.
His other works included "Naser Armani" (Armenian Nasser- 11 Stories), "Az-Be" (From-To), and "Qeydar".
Beyond fiction, Amirkhani wrote travelogues and essays on social and economic issues. In "Nasht-e Nesha" (Brain Drain), he examined the emigration of educated Iranians, while "Nafahat-e Naft" (Good Smell of Oil) explored the influence of oil wealth on the country's management culture.
His travel writing included "Janestan-e Kabulestan," based on a journey to Afghanistan, and "Nim-Dang-e Pyongyang" (A Half of One-Sixth of Pyongyang), about North Korea.
President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a message that Amirkhani had brought new perspectives to contemporary fiction through his attention to human and social concerns.
In another message, Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi praised his energetic prose, imagination and efforts to explore the possibilities of the Persian language.
Details of his funeral and memorial services will be announced later, state media reported.

Stone and community earn Iranian guesthouse global award

Arts & Culture Desk

A community-built guesthouse in southeastern Iran has won the Best Use of Stone award at the 2026 World Architecture Festival.
The Nedarag Guesthouse, in Kahnanikash village in Dashtiari County, Sistan and Baluchestan province, received the award for highlighting how traditional Baluch building techniques and local participation can shape contemporary tourism projects.
The festival's closing ceremony was held on November 20 in Florida, United States. Held from November 18 to 20, the festival presented the prize, supported by Turkish Stones, for innovative and exemplary uses of stone in architecture.The guesthouse is designed by Tehran-based Nextoffice, led by architect Alireza Taghaboni, and was completed in 2023. It has three accommodation units with five rooms and a service area, arranged around a central courtyard.
The design combines locally sourced stone, thick masonry walls and a lightweight roof inspired by traditional Baluch construction.
It also draws on local stone-laying methods and Kapar, a traditional lightweight local structure made of tamarisk and palm trees.
The materials and techniques link the building to its surroundings and regional architectural heritage.
The courtyard serves both visitors and residents. Children use it as a play area during the day. Women gather there in the afternoon, while villagers and travelers meet there at night. The guesthouse thus doubles as a community space.
The project was developed as a non-profit initiative to support the local economy through tourism and strengthen social ties.
Residents took part in every stage of design and construction, blurring the usual boundaries between architect, client and builder.
Kheironesa Amiri, head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department for Chabahar and Dashtiari counties, said the award showed that architecture rooted in local culture and adapted to regional climate conditions could gain international recognition.
"Backing local initiatives and encouraging investment that respects each area's cultural identity were key to sustainable tourism," Amir said.
She added that local involvement in managing tourism businesses could help preserve cultural traditions, create jobs and strengthen residents' sense of ownership.
She singled out Shanbeh Dehghani, the guesthouse manager, for his role in establishing and developing the project. Amiri also pointed to the Makran coast along Iran's southeastern shoreline as an area with strong potential for cultural, natural and rural tourism.
Greater exposure, she said, could attract visitors and investment and create new economic opportunities for local communities.
The design team included Taghaboni, Niloofar Ghabadi, Hadi Al-Davood, Ali Ghods and Meysam Feizi, as well as local participants Abdollah Dehghani, Mozamel Nouhani, Abdolrahim Deloshzahi, Mehrdad Makaremi, Sattar Ganjalipour, Masoud Sufiani, Farzad Ferast, Hadi Irani and Dorsa Sadeghi. Roostatish, a platform for developing and marketing rural products, and Mina Kamran served as social facilitators.
The graphic design team included Homa Asadi, Asal Karami, Marzieh Norouzi and Ehsan Ahani. Ehsan Hajiresouliha and Taraneh Eftekhari handled photography. Nedarag was also named a finalist in the 2026 Architizer A+Awards, a separate international architecture competition.



The courtyard of Nedarag Guesthouse in Sistan and Baluchestan province serves both visitors and residents.
nextoffice.co

WHO backs access to medicines in Iran

Social Desk

The World Health Organization (WHO) will fully support Iran's Health Ministry in ensuring that medicines, vaccines and other essential health supplies remain available to the public, its representative in Iran said, as the country faces mounting pressure on its healthcare system from war-related damage and international sanctions.
Iran has faced two wars waged by the United States and Israel, a 12-day war in June 2025 and a second, 40-day war that began in late February 2026.
Jean Jabbour, the WHO representative in Iran, made the remarks during a meeting with Iran's health minister, thanking him for the opportunity to discuss key health issues.
Jabbour said the WHO's cooperation with member states was guided by a bottom-up approach, in which countries first identify their national priorities before these are reflected in the organization's local programs, country support plans and regional and global initiatives.
He said the WHO worked closely with the Iranian government and the Health Ministry, adding that placing medical education within the ministry's structure played an important role in strengthening the healthcare system by training the workforce needed to provide health services to the population.



EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP PHOTO

A July 2026 humanitarian update by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that about 245 health facilities and 90 pharmaceutical facilities had been damaged in Iran. It also documented shortages of nearly 1,000 types of medicines and rising prices for some drugs. In a separate statement on May 12, 2026, the WHO said airstrikes since February 28 had damaged an estimated 229 healthcare centers, 49 hospitals and 78 pharmaceutical facilities, laboratories and warehouses.
It also added that 56 emergency bases had been struck, nine hospitals evacuated, and 47 ambulances and 10 support vehicles destroyed.
Attacks on or near pharmaceutical and diagnostic production facilities had disrupted domestic medical supply chains, the organization said.
International sanctions have added to the difficulties. Although medicines are not directly targeted by US sanctions, restrictions on financial transactions have made it harder for Iranian importers to pay foreign suppliers.
Jabbour also highlighted Iran's role in regional and international organizations, saying the country had an important part to play in sharing its medical experience.
He said the WHO would work to provide the support needed to help Iran develop and maintain healthcare services for its population.
He stressed that the organization had both a development mandate and humanitarian responsibilities, working with governments to ensure access to medical care, medicines and vaccines, even in difficult and challenging circumstances.
He also announced joint plans with Iran to hold an event on health diplomacy, saying the initiative could use diplomatic channels to build bridges for development, peace and better public health.