

First footage of giant London-sized iceberg reveals its breathtaking scale



● BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY

Researchers have revealed the first aerial footage of the massive iceberg that broke free from an Antarctic ice shelf in January. Designated A81, the Greater-London-sized chunk of ice had finally calved from Antarctica's Brunt Ice shelf a decade after the first cracks appeared, joining other glacier fragments floating in the Weddell Sea. This is the second giant split recorded in two years, and while calving is a natural process in this frozen landscape, it can still wreak havoc on its surroundings, according to ScienceAlert. "An iceberg of this size will have a big impact on the ocean ecosystems which support the rich diversity of marine wildlife found in this Antarctic region," explains ecologist Geraint Tarling. "These impacts may be both positive and negative."

The dynamic aerial footage, recorded by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), shows just how massive this ice block is, looking like an endless sheet even from high in the air. But what we can see is still only a fraction of the iceberg's mass, with most of their bulk extending hundreds of meters into the depths. BAS relocated an entire research station to avoid being cast adrift on the now floating piece of ice sheet. The Halley Research Station was moved 23 kilometers in 2016 after high precision GPS instruments and satellite data revealed the Chasm along the Brunt Ice shelf was widening.



Scan to watch the footage.

Unfortunate distortions of a beautiful tradition



Ali Amiri
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EXCLUSIVE

Chaharshanbe Suri, an ancient Persian festival, is celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday before Nowruz – the Persian New Year.

With its roots arguably in Zoroastrian tradition, this 'festival of fire' – as it has come to be known – is one of the few remaining traditions of ancient Persia. Although in recent decades, the tradition has undergone serious content distortions. There are two different theories about the meaning of the term *Chaharshanbe Suri*: some believe that it means Wednesday festivities, arguing that the word *sur* in this context means celebrations and festivities. Others, however, argue that in this case, *suri* means red, as it's driven from the Pahlavi word *surik* (red). Thus, some call the tradition The Red Wednesday, with red referring to the burning fire, which is central to the whole tradition.

Regardless of its meaning, *Chaharshanbe Suri* as it was is no more. The surviving ancient tradition was in many ways a celebration of life and strengthening social bonds for Iranians, as well as giving thanks to *Ahura Mazda*, whose presence was embodied in the sources of light such as rays of sun or fire.

On the eve of the last Wednesday of the year, Iranians used to set up bon-



fires on the alleyways and streets, jumping over them while reciting "My paleness for you, your redness for me."

The recitative directly served the purification aspect of *Chaharshanbe Suri*, as those who jumped over fire, saying these words, thought that they are exchanging all their sickly paleness for the robust, healthy redness of the flaring fire.

The 'festival of fire' is the first among a series of ceremonies regarding the arrival of spring, which is only natural to begin with getting

rid of all that does not fit the New Year.

There are a few other – and still practiced – customs related to *Chaharshanbe Suri*, such as *qashoq-zani* (spoon-banging) which resembles trick-or-treat. Children and young adults go from door to door, banging their spoons against a bowl, waiting to receive a handful of nuts or sweets.

Yet despite all its beauty, glory, and joy, *Chaharshanbe Suri* has undergone massive content changes during the past decades in Iran. It is now more a festival of loud bangs than fire, as younger

people are keen on getting their hands on explosives and fireworks that make the loudest noises. You barely see any bonfires on the alleyways and streets these days, as most of the families decide against going out, lest they get hurt by the careless youth who mindlessly forgo their sense of logic for a night of excitement and noise.

Now, instead of enjoying an age-old festivity which has the potential to bring together citizens in harmony and health, every *Chaharshanbe Suri* we are facing sad – tragic, indeed

– news of people losing an eye, losing their lives, or becoming disabled for life.

I believe that society is a self-regulatory entity, with the ability to filter out harmful elements and replace them with safer ones. The process, however, might take a lot of time, as we have witnessed a slow decrease in the number of casualties of *Chaharshanbe Suri* in recent years. But there is no alternative for the self-regulation of the society itself. The newer, dangerous customs of the tradition will not instantly and miraculously disappear.



● MAHDIEH QAZVINIAN/IRAN DAILY

PIC OF THE DAY

The photo shows celebration of *Chaharshanbe Suri* in Kahrizak Charity Foundation for the benefit of the elderly and physically challenged residents of the institution.

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