

Iran's immense health-tourism potential

Social Desk

Iran's health tourism sector has generated one billion dollars in foreign currency income, according to the vice president of the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education.

Speaking at an international conference and exhibition of hospitals and medical centers held on Monday, Saeed Karimi highlighted the advanced state of Iranian medicine, which he described as the best in the region, according to IRNA. "Currently, no patient is sent abroad to be treated, but we receive millions of foreigners in the country every year," he said.

Karimi noted that Iran has approximately 1,100 hospitals, 700 of which are state-run, and 250 are licensed to accept and provide medical services to international patients.

"We have 155,000 hospital beds that provide services to patients with the best equipment and treatment staff," he said, adding that the occupancy rate of Iran's hospitals is 70 percent, and the other 30 percent should be allocated to health tourism.

The deputy minister of health also mentioned the recent opening of two modern mega-hospitals — Mahdi and Ghadir — and the ongoing construction of similar facilities in major cities. These hospitals, he said, will not only provide treatment but also operate in the field of health care and health education, and can cater to foreign patients. The official emphasized that the majority of foreign patients' referrals are related to issues of infertility, obstetrics, gynecology, ophthalmology, cosmetology, orthopedics, and transplantation.

Mohammad Ali Mohseni Bandpei, a member of the parliament, echoed Karimi's sentiments, citing the country's specialized and experienced medical personnel, lower medical tariffs, and high-quality services as key advantages in attracting health tourists. Mohseni Bandpei also highlighted the government's efforts to boost health tourism, stating, "Within the country's first six development plans, health tourism did not have a strong presence, but in the bill



proposed by the government in the seventh plan, we have dedicated a special chapter to tourism."

He further stressed the need for domestic insurance organizations to increase their insurance relations with different countries that are going to send health tourists to Iran. "The establishment of insurance coverage can create a double incentive to treat foreign patients in Iran," he said.

Mohseni Bandpei also

revealed plans to attract more than 15 million tourists from different countries and for different purposes by the end of the Seventh Development Plan. He noted that Iran has a lot of potential in the field of health, having exported one billion Euros in the pharmaceutical sector, and can also be successful in the field of health tourism. Mehdi Karimi, head of the Policy Council of the Health Tourism Development Center of Islamic

Countries, also spoke at the conference, stating that Iran, despite sanctions, has been able to launch a good medical system in the West Asian region due to the country's size and facilities. He further emphasized the importance of developing medical centers and hospital cities for the growth of health tourism, noting that it could generate income equivalent to one-third to half of Iran's revenue from the sale of oil and gas condensate.

Agricultural water consumption down by 27% in Lake Urmia catchment



IRNA

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Iran's wetlands protection plan has led to a significant reduction in water and chemical input consumption in Lake Urmia water catchment region, according to the sustainable agriculture coordinator of the plan, Mohammad Reza Akbari.

Agriculture, a major consumer of the nation's water resources, has been a particular concern in the catchment area of Lake Urmia. The wetlands protection plan, backed by the Department of the Environment and financially supported by the Japanese government since 2013, has been implemented in the provinces of West and East Azarbaijan with the goal of mitigating the conflict between agriculture and wetlands, IRNA reported.

The plan, which also covers satellite wetlands, has been carried out with the help of local communities, companies, and those involved in agriculture at the provincial level.

"To implement the establishment of sustainable agriculture in the target villages, capacity expansion measures should be carried out and followed by benefiting from cooperative approaches of farmers' trust to reduce water consumption at the farm level," Akbari said.

From 2013 to 2020, the plan covered 183 villages in West and East Azarbaijan, making changes at the local community and farm levels. After successful experiences in these villages, the plan expanded to Fars and Khuzestan provinces in 2022, adding 39 villages in West and East Azarbaijan, and 16 villages each in Fars and Khuzestan provinces. Since the project's inception, the Agricultural Engineering and Technical Research Institute of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad has been monitoring and evaluating data based on field observations of the farmers.

"We have seen an average of 27 percent reduction in irrigation water consumption, and between 25 percent and 40 percent reduction in chemical input consumption," Akbari said. Despite these reductions, agricultural production has increased by 16 percent, demonstrating the effectiveness of the sustainable agriculture practices implemented by Iran's Wetlands Protection Plan.

Iran, Tajikistan aim to enhance cooperation in health sector



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In a step towards bolstering collaboration on healthcare, the Minister of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education of Iran engaged in a joint meeting with his Tajik counterpart. The meeting, which aimed at promoting bilateral cooperation in health indicators growth, witnessed discussions between Bah-

ram Einollahi and Jamoliddin Abdullozoda, Tajikistan's Minister of Health, according to ISNA.

During the meeting, Einollahi highlighted the remarkable progress made by Iran's health sector following its Islamic Revolution. He emphasized the establishment of a comprehensive health network spanning all regions of the country. Furthermore, Einollahi un-

derscored Iran's successful efforts in eradicating polio through extensive nationwide vaccination programs. He emphasized that Iran possesses valuable experience in controlling infectious diseases, which can be shared with Tajikistan. Aware of the challenges posed by years of sanctions, the Iranian minister asserted that these obstacles have not only failed to impede progress but have actually spurred it.

In the field of health, Iran has developed short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans for specific engagements with Tajikistan, Einollahi pointed out. Moreover, he emphasized the need to streamline the procurement of Iranian

medicines in Tajikistan, which currently faces unusual pricing and hurdles due to bureaucratic inefficiencies. By removing these obstacles, Iranian medicines can be made available to the people of Tajikistan at reasonable prices.

Einollahi further emphasized that Iran possesses advanced laboratories and highly skilled scientists, whose expertise can contribute to improving health indicators in Tajikistan. Notably, Iran's scientific community has made strides in the development of highly advanced drugs, particularly in the area of tuberculosis therapy. Abdullozoda, the Minister of Health and Wellness of Tajikistan, shared his ad-

miration for Iran's achievements in healthcare during the meeting. He noted that his visit to Iran had provided valuable insights into various aspects of health, healthcare, and treatment. Tajik minister particularly highlighted the significance of dental and laboratory equipment, which he deemed worthy of attention. Expressing a desire to capitalize on Iran's experiences, Abdullozoda emphasized the potential for the transformation of Tajikistan's health sector through the exchange of Iranian expertise. He suggested organizing re-training courses for Tajikistan's medical specialists conducted by Iranian professors and exploring the

export of medicines and medical equipment from Iran to Tajikistan.

Currently, Tajikistan's medicine requirements are met through agreements with 11 Iranian pharmaceutical companies. Abdullozoda proposed further cooperation in pharmaceuticals, mentioning the potential for sharing Tajikistan's herbal and healing medicines with Iranian pharmaceutical specialists.

He also acknowledged Iran's self-sufficiency in meeting its medicinal needs and expressed Tajikistan's need for Iran's cooperation in implementing international agreements to address its medicine requirements.

PIC OF THE DAY

Children are making the most of these scorching summer days. The beautiful, historic Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan has turned into a lively oasis for kids to splash and swim in the large pond. Their joyful laughter and endless memories created here will be cherished forever.



HADIEH MANIYAN/ISNA