

Call for coordinated measures to save Anzali Wetland

Social Desk

Iran's vice president and head of the Department of the Environment (DoE) Ali Salajegheh has underscored the urgency of implementing a comprehensive watershed management plan to preserve the Anzali Wetland. He stressed the need to harness all national, international, and private sector resources to achieve this goal.

In a meeting of the Anzali Wetland task force, attended by the governor of Gilan, Salajegheh highlighted the national significance of the project, according to IRNA.

"The Anzali Wetland naturally drains an area exceeding 370,000 hectares, and its preservation requires a comprehensive watershed management approach that could serve as a model for the country," head of DoE stated.

Salajegheh emphasized that the primary responsibility for the preservation of the wetland lies with the Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization. He outlined a two-year timeline for the completion of watershed management operations in the Anzali Wetland and called for a detailed schedule for all planned operations.

"The comprehensive watershed management plan," Salajegheh



IRNA

noted, "would halt sediment inflow into the wetland, thereby eliminating dredging costs."

He also called for the use of knowledge-based companies to address water hyacinth growth. The vice president insisted that the wetland's boundaries should be finalized by the end of the week and called for a ban on the use of fertilizers and poisons

in the watershed. He suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture provide alternatives to users.

Two important steps to save the wetland

Gilan Governor Asadollah Abbasi also spoke at the meeting, outlining the current state of the Anzali Wetland and the steps taken towards its restoration.

He emphasized the need for unity among the institutions responsible for the wetland's restoration, citing inconsistency as a major issue.

Abbasi identified the implementation of watershed management and pollution removal operations as two crucial steps toward saving the Anzali Wetland. He criti-

cized the lack of action to address pollution from the Rasht Industrial Town, but noted progress in the Mehr Housing treatment plant project and the wastewater management of hospitals.

Abbasi also announced the assignment of the Rasht water treatment plant construction project to an experienced con-

tractor and discussed measures taken to combat water hyacinth in the Anzali lagoon. He highlighted the threat of fire in the region and called for increased precautions.

Representatives from the task force's member organizations also presented reports on their actions and plans to save the Anzali Wetland.

Health tourism revenue could equal 0.5m barrels of crude oil: Official

Social Desk

A member of Iran's Supreme Medical Council said Tuesday that the country could increase revenue from health tourism to the equivalent of about 500,000 barrels of crude oil per day by better utilizing existing capacities in its health care system.

The official, Dr. Dabbagh, said Iran currently receives a maximum of 1.2 million health tourists annually. He estimated that if each visitor spent an average of \$2,000 on medical treatment in Iran, "plus around the same amount on travel and accommodations," the total revenue would be close to \$5 billion,

ISNA reported.

By making better use of the 150,000 hospital beds that are currently only around 70 percent occupied, Dabbagh said revenue could easily grow to at least \$18 billion, or the equivalent of 500,000 barrels of oil daily, without oil extraction costs.

"In recent years Iran has worked to expand health tourism but has not done enough," Dabbagh said. He pointed to India attracting many health tourists from Islamic nations despite cultural differences. He said sanctions, although having some effects, have not prevented tourists from coming to Iran

and, with better planning, the country could significantly draw revenue from health tourism.

Dabbagh said Iran needs a more coordinated effort between its Health Ministry, tourism officials, hospitals and others to attract patients, care for them and send them home. He suggested opening an insurance agency to gain the trust of overseas patients.

The Medical Council official said there is no documented record of how much profit intermediaries make from health tourism in Iran, but he believes an "important share goes to brokers rather than to the country," due to the lack of a proper mechanism.



Dabbagh also said Iran could attract more medical tourists through online advertising and

promotion and by emphasizing its quality care and lower costs compared to other countries.

'Ashura is a sweeping tableau of all qualities'



By Mahdieh Qazvinian
Staff writer

A sweet-spoken and lovable boy with a drum hanging around his neck and a mourning shawl draped around his shoulders walks around his father and grandfather. He sometimes plays the drum and recites ta'zieh with childlike gestures. It's as if this family's very flesh and blood is intermingled with ta'zieh.

The boy sits on his father's lap. Mojtaba Heidari caresses his son and slowly sings poems of Ali Asghar's lullaby in his ear. Mojtaba Heidari, the last child of Reza Heidari, a master performer of ta'zieh, was born in 1981. He is an employee of Tafresh University and holds a third degree badge

in culture and art in the field of ta'zieh. He is married with two children – a daughter and a son. His daughter Yasamin also plays the roles of Sakineh and Roqayyeh (Imam Hossein's daughter) alongside her father, Mojtaba.

Heidari has been interested in ta'zieh for thirty-five years and entered the field through his father.

"The first ta'zieh I remember seeing as a child was that of 'Hamzeh Seyyed al-Shohada', and I cried silently in a corner over his oppression. In general, ta'zieh, which is a form of our national and religious theater, is very impactful because seeing has a much greater effect than just hearing. Every age and level of literacy and insight will have its own perception."

Mojtaba describes the memory of his first performance. "I

was a five-year-old boy who could not even read or write. In a hosseiniyeh in Tafresh, I met an enthusiastic crowd that had gathered there hours before the start of ta'zieh. I had memorized the copy of ta'zieh with my grandfather, Mohammad-Taqi Heidari, and my father, Reza Heidari."

Mojtaba tells us about the background of ta'zieh in the city of Tafresh.

"According to research, the history of ta'zieh in Tafresh and in our family goes back about 200 years. We are the seventh generation of ta'zieh performers in the Heidari family, and even my two-and-a-half-year-old son, Mohammadreza, already has a soft spot for ta'zieh, and God willing, he will continue this art."

Mojtaba believes that ta'zieh has important messages for its

audience. "The messages are precisely those of Ashura and Karbala – martyrdom, love, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, and giving it all in the way of God, refusing to succumb to oppression and oppressors, among many others. In my opinion, the event of Ashura, which transpired in half a day, is a sweeping tableau of all qualities, good and evil, at their highest level. Ashura is a shortcut university for anyone seeking any goal or field – anyone can find whatever they are looking for in this story."

Mojtaba continues, "Preserving Iranian religion and traditions builds our national and cultural identity, and in my opinion, ta'zieh is our most important national theater and religious ritual, which was registered by UNESCO in 2010. We should be able to continue ta'zieh in the



same traditional and authentic style without allowing it to be distorted. We should not introduce innovations into ta'zieh." Mojtaba enjoys epic and martial roles, wearing armor and going to war in ta'zieh. According to the audience, he performs these roles exceptionally well.