

# Iran Confiscates US Oil Cargo

Iran will unload about \$50 million worth of crude owned by the US from a Marshall Islands-flagged tanker following a Tehran court order in favor of Iranian patients of Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB). 7 >

**National Desk** Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi visited flood-stricken regions in the south-eastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan to take necessary measures to prevent further damage to the province's infrastructure, houses and roads in case of floods in the future.

President Raisi referred to the construction of dams as a measure that must be taken to prevent floods in the province. He said that construction of more dams in the province is on the government's agenda. He noted that dams would help the province to store rainwater that is a blessing for the people of Sistan and Baluchestan, which has been facing severe drought in recent years.

Rescue operation is underway in the flood-hit areas of the province, which have been inundated by the recent floods.

The province's Deputy Governor Mansour Bijar said on Tuesday that most of the problems caused by recent floods in the province have been solved but "we are still facing problems in reaching 46 villages" cut off by rising waters.

Bijar said that power and water have been restored in most parts of the flood-hit areas and most of the roads, which had been closed due to the floods, have been reopened. However, he said that 31 villages still have no access to water, adding that authorities have promised to solve the problem very soon.

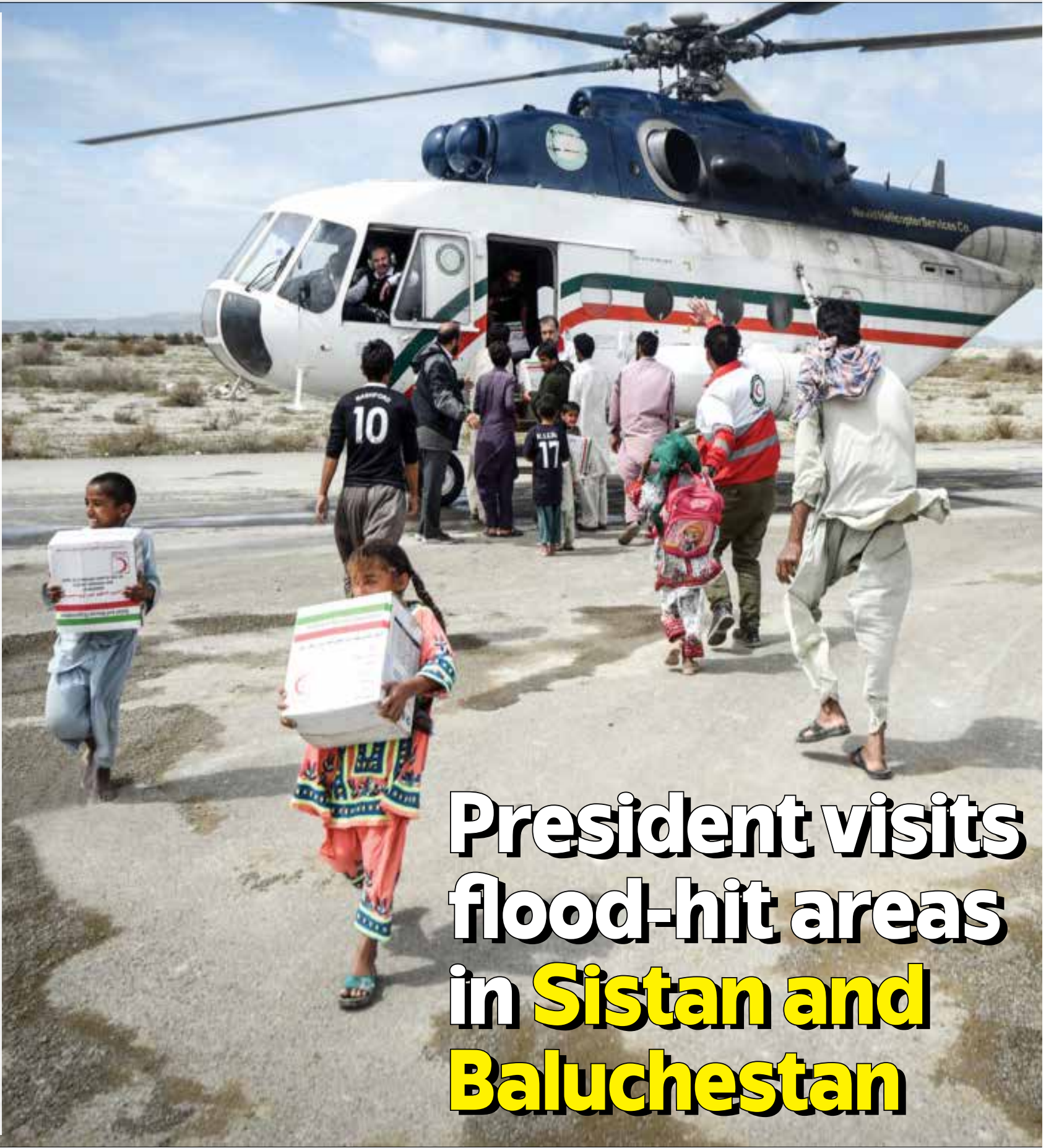
Caused by heavy rains, the floods have hit 16 cities and 1,947 villages. Vast areas in the province have been inundated by floods.

The cities of Dashtiari Qasrqand, Nikshahr and Chabahar are the hardest hit.

According to the head of the province's crisis management, Majid Mohebbi, floods have caused more than \$40 million in damage so far. Over 10,000 people have been affected by the flood.

On Tuesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called for continuation of relief aid by state and private sectors for the country's flood-stricken province.

Government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi said that the government has allocated more than \$8 million to provide relief for the affected people and compensate the damage caused by the floods.



## President visits flood-hit areas in Sistan and Baluchestan

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## Two European states imported Iranian oil in 2023: Eurostat

### Economy Desk

European statistics, in its latest data, reported that Iran exported oil to two European countries including Bulgaria and Georgia in 2023 despite sanctions.

Despite the EU's oil sanctions on Iran, Bulgaria, as an official member of the EU, imported oil from the country. In 2022, Bulgaria had only imported 168 tons of oil or oil products from Iran, but in 2023, the import of oil or oil products from Iran increased sixfold to 1,058 tons, as cited by IRNA, quoting European statistics releasing the data.

Although the amount of Bulgaria's oil imports from Iran in 2023 is not a significant figure, it indicates the willingness of European countries to ignore the sanctions against Iran.

Eurostat had previously reported Germany's import of 70,000 tons of Iranian oil or oil products for the first time since 2018, but when this news became public the German government was forced to take a stance, claiming that this figure was mistakenly included in the import statistics from Iran, and, in fact, Germany had imported this oil shipment from Mexico.

Eurostat's data also revealed that Georgia, as an observer member of the European Union, imported 4,438 tons of oil or oil products from Iran last year. Georgia's oil imports from Iran underwent a six percent growth compared to the previous year. In 2022, Georgia imported a total of 4,161 tons of oil or oil products from Iran.

The United States, under former president Donald Trump, reinstated crippling sanctions on Iran after unilaterally walking out of the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018, despite Iran's full compliance with the terms of the agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

## Fed's progress against inflation 'not assured': Powell

The US Federal Reserve's progress in bringing down inflation is "not assured," the chair of the country's central bank said Wednesday ahead of two days of hearings in Washington.

The Fed has hiked its key lending rate to a 23-year high to tackle stubborn inflation, successfully bringing the rate of price increases down from multi-decade highs toward its long-run target of two percent, AFP reported. But inflation remains elevated, and recent data indicate that the road to two percent could be a bumpy one.

# Iran ranks first in collecting flare gases among 70 countries: Minister



IRNA

### Economic Desk

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said on Wednesday that Iran's oil and gas industry has achieved the first rank in collecting flare gases among gas-producing and exporting countries.

On the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, he referred to a report by the recent Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) held in Algeria, adding that Iran's oil and gas industry

has successfully secured the first rank in collecting flare gases and operationalizing them among the countries supplying 70 percent of the world's gas, ISNA reported.

According to Owji, a comprehensive report was given at the forum on the situation of gas reserves and gas production among member states which supply 70 percent of the world's gas.

According to the secretariat of the GECF, the average

natural gas production growth stands at 2.5 percent, with Iran managing to register a 5 percent gas production growth, he added.

The next edition of the GECF will be held in Iran in November 2024, the oil minister revealed, adding that Iran presented its up- and downstream capabilities in the oil and gas industry at the Algeria forum.

In addition, Iran unveiled a new format of contracts

in developing the country's gas fields to attract foreign investors, Owji said.

He further pointed out that Iran concluded good agreements with the member states of gas exporting countries in the fields of exporting technical and engineering services, selling gas byproducts, developing gas fields, and developing gas pressure-boosting stations.

The minister said that Iran's oil and gas pipeline infrastructure for energy

transit from north to south, east, and west is fully prepared, and good proposals were made by President Ebrahim Raisi to this global assembly.

Raisi on Wednesday praised the Oil Ministry for the successful implementation of projects for capturing associated petroleum gas (APG) over the past two years.

In a cabinet weekly meeting, he expressed his satisfaction with the ministry's performance after Iran re-

ceived the GECF Award for Long-Term Commitment to Natural Gas in 2024 for doing unique research into flare gas collection and putting the research into practice on the sidelines of the 7th GESF Summit of Heads of State and Government in the Algerian capital Algiers.

Raisi urged the acceleration of the implementation of APG collection projects in an effort to prevent the burning of national wealth and the polluting of the air.

## Iran adds 20 new countries to its saffron destination list



By Sadeq Dehqan

Staff writer

The head of Iran's Saffron Exporters Association said with the addition of 20 new destinations for saffron exports this Iranian year (began on March 21, 2023), the number of importing countries has increased to 67.

Talking to Iran Daily, Gholamreza Miri said that major saffron exports go to the UAE, China, Spain, Afghanistan, and Italy, with countries like the Netherlands, Taiwan, France, Kuwait, and Oman following in the subsequent rankings.

He added that, however, the countries that receive the largest share of Iran's

saffron imports repackage a significant portion of their imported product into smaller packaging for re-export.

According to the official, Iran holds over 90% of the world's saffron in the global market and, in this respect, no country can compete with Iran. Nevertheless, due to Iran mainly exporting its saffron production in bulk or large packaging, while not having a significant role in saffron processing and secondary product manufacturing, it has had a small share of the added value of this product.

The official mentioned that saffron is utilized in various industries worldwide, such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and food, etc.

Explaining the current

status of saffron exports this year, Miri said despite a 12% increase in weight-based saffron exports in the first ten months of this year, the value has decreased by 4% compared to the previous year, reaching \$165 million. Price fluctuations have affected export trends, with sudden increases impacting market dynamics.

He said Iran's saffron exports in the first ten months of the year have reached approximately 173 tons, showing a 12% growth compared to the same period last year when it was 154 tons.

However, in terms of value, the country's saffron exports in the first ten months of this year have decreased by 4% compared to the previous year, dropping from \$173 million to \$165 million.

According to the association chief, due to water shortages and climatic conditions, saffron production in the country this year faced a 40 to 50 percent decrease compared

to last year, resulting in a price increase, almost doubling.

The saffron harvest season spans from October 17 to December 16, with this year's production estimated at 120 to 150 tons, he said.

The official highlighted challenges, including the price increases that have caused destination countries to consider it unjustified, resulting in a decline in recent months' saffron exports.

He also cited smuggling of saffron as another reason for the decrease in exports, mentioning that, unfortunately, at times, at least 10 tons of saffron are smuggled out of the country monthly, negatively impacting



the country's official export volume, while global demand for saffron is increasing day by day.

Miri emphasized the need for measures to combat saffron smuggling and suggested that facilitating official exports and removing export barriers would naturally reduce the inclination towards smuggling.

## Challenges to Pakistan's economic growth amidst political crisis



By Syed Ali Hassan

Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

The United Nations, in its World Economic Situation report, predicts a 2% GDP growth for Pakistan in 2024, rising to 2.4% in 2025. India's overall growth rate in 2023-24 is expected to be 7.3%, however, the inflation rate in India is high, which is weakening the purchasing power of the people and there is a risk of slowing down the economic growth rate.

Grappling with a longstanding budget deficit, Pakistan relies on foreign loans to bridge the foreign exchange gap. The four key sources for foreign exchange reserves include exports, remittances, foreign direct investment (FDI), and loans for development projects and aid.

Exports have dwindled since the military ousted Imran Khan's government at the behest of the US. Remittances hit a three-year low in June 2023, with a 6.81% decrease to \$13.43 billion in the first six months of FY24. Overseas Pakistanis express discontent with the political system, leading to protests and a decline in remittances. The weak global economy compounds the export slump.

The political upheaval, marked by the military's intervention and subsequent actions, has led to overseas Pakistanis disapproving of the political landscape. Protesters, especially against the ousting of Imran Khan in April 2022, faced oppression from security forces, impacting women in politics, who are now held without trial.

In a country with a history of military influence, women's political roles were already limited. Imran Khan's removal further decreased opportunities for women in politics, hindering remittance prospects. The State Bank reveals a growing reliance on remittances from Pakistanis in the Middle East.



# Nowruz,

## Nowruz diplomacy in Vietnam



By Ali Akbar  
Nazari  
Iran's Ambassador  
to Vietnam

**EXCLUSIVE  
PERSPECTIVE**

*At the outset, I offer my most sincere congratulations to all readers, especially my dear compatriots, on the occasion of Nowruz and its blessed coincidence with the Holy Month of Ramadan. Great Saadi has beautifully expressed this double happiness in his verses:*

*Tell the drummer to beat the drum twice for good news*

*Last night was Ghadr Night, Today is Nowruz*

*Nowruz means the new day, the beginning of spring and the New Year, not only in the political geography of Iran today, but also in Iran's ancient cultural-civilization domain.*

In 2009, Nowruz was inscribed as an element by UNESCO and later extended in 2016, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the International Day of Nowruz to "preserve and develop the culture and traditions related to Nowruz, encourage member states to make efforts to raise awareness about Nowruz as well as to organize annual events in commemoration of this festivity".

At present, Nowruz is a widely well-known event in America, Canada, and European countries. Internet and social networks have helped introduce Nowruz in other communities around the world.

Despite the fact that the Vietnamese people had been in contact with Iran (Persia) through the Maritime Silk Road for about a thousand years, they do not know much about the Iranian New Year, Nowruz, and its Haft Sin. They do not know much about the considerable similarities between the Iranian New Year and their traditional New Year celebration "Tet," which usually takes place between January 21 and February 20 according to the lunar calendar. There are many similarities between the two occasions, such as cleaning home, buying new clothes, visiting the elders and relatives, giving Eidi (lucky money) to the juniors, special feasts and receptions for the Eid, visiting graves before New Year, etc. Fortunately, in recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has paid special attention to the promotion of Nowruz diplomacy in order to strengthen cultural and people-to-people diplomacy, which lead to economic, commercial,

and tourism promotion. In this regard, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vietnam has made a lot of efforts to introduce Nowruz in this country through various articles in newspapers, interviews on television channels and setting up cultural exhibitions.

However, it is believed that Vietnam's 100-million population deserve and requires more facilities and equipment for a proper introduction of different dimensions and aspects of the Iranian culture and civilization, including Nowruz. High-quality professional documents and video clips with attractive contents about Nowruz and its rituals, along with necessary budget for organizing appropriate ceremonies as well as promoting media coverage on television, press, and social networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are among these requirements. Nowadays, advertising and propagating in the aforementioned social networks is very crucial in all countries, especially in Vietnam, because they are the fastest, most popular, and least expensive channels to reach the people of Vietnam and attract their attention. According to the current statistics, Vietnam is at the top list of countries in the world in terms of number of social network users. This country has 66.2 million Facebook users, 63 million YouTube users, 50.6 million TikTok users, and about 10.35 million Instagram users.

In summing up and in line with better realization of Nowruz diplomatic policies in other countries, including Vietnam, with the aim of further introducing the culture and noble people

of Iran for the sake of promoting cultural, tourism, and economic and commercial exchanges between the two countries, I recommend the following solutions:

- Cultural patrons should give serious support to actions and efforts of the Embassies of the Islamic Republic of Iran abroad in introducing and promoting Nowruz by providing high-quality photos, writings, and short video clips for the purpose of publication in the media and famous social networks in Vietnam.

- Cultural patrons should extend necessary support to send artists and cultural activists in furtherance of showcasing Nowruz rituals and traditions in Vietnam.

- Cultural patrons should support holding seminars for the introduction of Iranian ancient culture and civilization, particularly on the subject of Nowruz, with the participation of Vietnamese and Iranian researchers conducive to increase the knowledge and understanding of Vietnamese people as regards Nowruz.

- Cultural patrons should assist and support the organization of familiarization tours (FAMTRIP) to Iran for Vietnamese travel companies, journalists, filmmakers, influential bloggers, and tourism experts to have their own experience of Nowruz as well as produce news, reports, and short films about Iran, the Iranian culture, and Nowruz, as their reflection and introduction will absolutely attract Vietnamese tourists. It should be noted that in recent years, Vietnam's middle-class population has been increasing thanks to the fast economic growth of this country, which has led to sharp rise in the number of Vietnamese travelling abroad. Statistics quoted by Vietnam General Statistics Office indicate that in 2023, about 5 million Vietnamese have traveled abroad. It is worth mentioning that in 2018 and before the Covid-19 pandemic, this number was close to 10 million people. In five consecutive years from 2013 to 2018, the number of Vietnamese travelers abroad has grown by about 20% per year. Therefore, it can be said that Vietnam is a potential tourism market for Iran, especially considering the unilateral visa abolishment for Vietnamese citizens effective from February this year.

- Finally, cultural patrons should also cooperate with Embassies in Vietnam that share the common culture of Nowruz celebration in organizing cultural events on the occasion of Nowruz, such as food and music festival.

Nowruz Diplomacy  
and  
The Nowruz Trophy



## Developing a Nowruz narrative a strategic necessity



By Abed  
Akbari  
International affairs  
expert

**EXCLUSIVE  
PERSPECTIVE**

*Presenting a strategic narrative of Nowruz by countries that traditionally celebrate it is a necessity. If the shared history and geography of these countries are transformed into a strategic narrative through dialogue among the elites of these countries, it can provide the groundwork for this ancient culture to make significant changes on a global scale.*

It seems that countries within the Nowruz cultural sphere are, more than anything, captive to their historical narratives of traditions and shared culture, especially Nowruz. This captivity is the result of certain political relations, nationalistic ambitions, and sometimes trans-regional interventions. This captivity has inflicted considerable damage on these culturally similar countries in the era of global regionalization, particularly by missing out on opportunities for cooperation and convergence.

The narrative of Nowruz can be seen as a powerful tool for shaping the desired image of its observing countries in the region and the world. This necessity will help expand the effective influence and create a joint sense of the past, present, and future for all countries that celebrate Nowruz. These countries have unparalleled capacities in human resources, economic opportunities, and socio-political advantages. Initiating dialogue among the elites of these countries about their common historical and cultural foundations is one way to consolidate these capacities and turn them into a potent regional force.

On a national level, presenting a narrative of Nowruz as a historical and geographical bedrock is an urgent necessity for our country, especially now that powerful global networks are seeking to strip Iran of its Iranian identity and induce Irano-phobia.

The Fourth International Conference on Nowruz Diplomacy, which will be held on March 9, with the participation of diplomatic and cultural elites from countries that celebrate Nowruz and the presence of high-ranking officials from 21 countries worldwide, is an effort to achieve this strategic narrative, which must continue with the collaboration of official and non-official institutions in the country's diplomatic sphere. It is hoped that in the continuation of this event, decision-makers, policymakers, and the scientific community in the country will take the lead in achieving this lofty goal in the cultural sphere, which has abundant economic, social, and political implications for the region.



Tehran's Ambassador to Hanoi Ali Akbar Nazari (2nd-L) participates in Vietnam's traditional New Year celebration Tet at the invitation of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 10, 2024.

● INSTAGRAM



## Shared regional heritage from Herat to Konya



By Mehdi Mirmohammadi  
Director of Research  
Institute for Strategic Studies

### EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

Although Abdullah Ansari was born and lived in Herat, his legacy is now considered part of the cultural and intellectual heritage of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Iran. This shared heritage extends beyond Ansari to include luminaries such as Jami, Rumi, Magtymguly Pyragy, Nezami Ganjavi, Rudaki, Ferdowsi, Attar of Nishapur, and many others, who are revered in the regions. Nearly all countries in the "Nowruz region" consider these figures part of their cultural and intellectual heritage. What is even more remarkable is the intellectual similarity among many luminaries of this region, forming a cohesive cultural system. This interaction has occurred both among contemporaries, such as the meetings between Ansari and Abu al-Hassan al-Kharaqani or the relationship between Rumi and Attar, and through the systematic influence of members of this cultural system on each other through the study of their works and ideas.

This systematic interaction has led to a unity and similarity of minds among intellectuals and ordinary people in this region. The spiritual teachings of Ansari, with slight variations, are recognizable in Samarkand, Bukhara, Nishapur, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Ganja, and Konya. This unity extends beyond intellectuals to the social and pragmatic nature of thought in this cultural system, leading to a similarity in general culture and even daily life among ordinary people. Thus, the Nowruz region possesses a common mental framework, which, if considered in foreign policy by member countries of this region, would be the best basis for co-operation and peacemaking.

However, researchers and political leaders of this region have paid little attention to this concept and have overlooked this unique opportunity for developing more collaborative and peace-oriented regional arrangements. It seems that the continuous organization of "Nowruz diplomacy" events with the participation of university researchers and intellectuals from all parts of this intellectual region, from the subcontinent to Anatolia, would be the best initiative to utilize this common mental framework for establishing cooperative structures. Nevertheless, researchers of this region, in constructing theoretical structures based on this common system, must observe the following principles.

First, they must avoid nationalistic appropriation of personalities and their ideas. These figures had identities transcending their birthplaces or lives, symbolizing a regional intellectual identity. Confining them to a modern geographic or land-centric framework diminishes their influence and reduces their potential for creating peacemaking arrangements.

Second, governments should strive to represent all these figures as part of the common cultural heritage of the region, with the involvement of all countries in this region. For example, Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi, known as Rumi, is not just a Turkish or Persian figure but a shared cultural heritage of the people of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. Based on these principles, it is proposed that the role of this cultural system in shaping regional arrangements be examined and studied in the form of a collection of articles, with the joint collaboration of Iranian, Turkish, Afghan, Tajik, and Azerbaijani researchers.



Participants take a selfie during a festival marking 'Nauryz' (Nowruz), an ancient holiday celebrating the spring equinox, in Kazakhstan.  
● PAVEL MIKHEYEV/REUTERS

# Cultural region called Nowruz



The photo shows a Haft Sin (a tabletop arrangement of seven symbolic items traditionally displayed at Nowruz) at the United Nations' headquarters in New York, US, on March 22, 2022, in front of ambassadors from 11 countries that commemorate Nowruz.  
● IRNA



By Mandana Tishehyar  
Board Chairman of  
Iranian Peace Studies  
Scientific Association

### EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

Hans Morgenthau, an American professor of international relations, in his 1948 book *Politics Among Nations*, wrote, "To paraphrase a statement of Palmerston: While the holder of the balance has no permanent friends, it has no permanent enemies either; it has only the permanent interest of maintaining the balance of power itself." In the aftermath of World War II, when extensive destruction occurred in various countries worldwide, Morgenthau's words held much appeal and laid the foundation for the establishment of realism in international relations.

However, the world witnessed many ups and downs, and international relations expanded in various dimensions, giving rise to new patterns of friendship and enmity. The realist approach, which was among the most important scientific theories during the Cold War era, could not fully explain the emerging events and trends in relations between states and nations. The formation of the European Union and other regional entities indicated the emergence of new elements in international relations. Even the definition of "interests" changed, and, as Alexander Wendt proposed as part of his constructivist theory in the late 1990s, identity-based and cultural affinities were considered the basis for the formation of interests.

As a result, with the end of the Cold War era, instead of witnessing the formation of a unipolar world and globalization of economy, politics, culture, and society, ties between political units with similar identities in various regions increased. Relations at the regional level shaped new patterns of international interactions. Note that identity ties, which had been designated as the building block of common interests, itself stemmed from cultural affinities. In fact, identity can be regarded as a construct of the cultural characteristics of individuals and societies.

Thus, today's world is a "regionalized" world where the bond between culturally similar communities serves as the main basis for cooperation between nations and states. Innovative technologies have provided a suitable platform for advancing such new patterns. Key elements such as borders have become much less prominent in inter-state politics, and even traditional interpretations of the concept of sovereignty have found a different form in this astonishing new world. The concept of region, too, has undergone a transformation. A region is no longer something that could be delineated on geographical definitions alone; rather, in today's world, it refers to a collection of societies that, based on common cultural and identity elements and within the framework of economic, political, scientific, and other relations, have come together to cooperate for the realization of common interests. Therefore, it can be seen that a region can also be a novel construct of redefining common elements that tie societies to-

gether.

In recent years, countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have endeavored to register the Nowruz tradition as an intangible cultural heritage with UNESCO. Since 2010, through resolution A/RES/64/253 in the United Nations General Assembly, March 21, or the first day of the month of Farvardin in the solar calendar, has been designated as the International Day of Nowruz. This is while the list of countries celebrating Nowruz is much longer than the current list and includes countries from Albania in Eastern Europe to China and Mongolia in East Asia. It can be clearly observed that the countries within the Nowruz cultural region enjoy significant diversity. Geographically, these countries encompass regions in West Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and South Asia. From a religious perspective, followers of various religions, from Christianity and Zoroastrianism to Judaism and various Islamic sects, celebrate Nowruz. From a national standpoint, the Nowruz cultural region includes numerous ancient ethnicities that have coexisted in this cultural domain since ancient times, shaping the Nowruz culture alongside each other. Finally, linguistic diversity is another characteristic of the Nowruz cultural region. The speakers of these languages have not only fostered deep linguistic connections among their communities, facilitating a more empathetic understanding of shared cultural and identity-related concepts, but have

also contributed to the vibrant cultural mosaic of this region through the preservation and utilization of various dialects and languages.

In this way, it can be seen that the Nowruz culture, by relying on norms such as compassion, tolerance, and mutual respect and by promoting values such as friendship and kindness towards one another, has been able to serve as a unifying force among many civilized societies in today's world. The universality of Nowruz's cultural values has also empowered it to play an identity-building role in peripheral areas and contribute to the formation of a cultural region. Moreover, it can strengthen humanistic perspectives based on traditions and ancient rituals in today's world.

The Nowruz culture, as a shared heritage of the nations within the Nowruz civilization, requires formulation within the framework of modern international relations theories, especially regionalism theories. Then, based on common strategies, it should shape a broad social movement that secures the economic, political, and security interests of governments and nations. Shaping the discourse of the "Nowruz Cultural Region" requires more than just cooperation among political leaders; it necessitates collaboration and support from intellectuals and academics of the countries in this region to present fresh definitions of national interests, national security, governance, borders, homeland, land, identity, friend, and foe within the framework of common cultural values.



# Ancient cross-cultural peacebuilding experience in tense Middle East



By Navid Kamali  
Foreign affairs expert

**EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE**

*Nowruz, the ancient celebration marking the arrival of spring, transcends being merely a historical tradition within Iran's cultural sphere. It presents a golden opportunity for fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting peace and stability in the perpetually turbulent Middle East. This ancient festival, with roots dating back 3,000 years, is deeply intertwined with the history and culture of various nations. Under a unified reign, it once fostered the most advanced form of human civilization, emphasizing coexistence,*

*peace, and hope for a brighter future.*

*To better understand this claim, it's essential to note that during ancient times, the Achaemenid Empire, which ruled over a vast swath of the world for over 200 years, embraced a wide diversity of peoples and cultures. Educated estimates suggest that over 100 nations, with different languages, customs, and religions, coexisted peacefully within the empire's expansive borders.*

Historical records attest that the Achaemenids, by adopting a policy based on tolerance and respect towards diverse societies and cultures under their dominion, effectively established one of the most stable periods in Middle Eastern history. They allowed various ethnic groups to speak their own languages, practice their own religions, and adhere to their own customs.

It's important to note that the Middle East has been the cradle of various civilizations since the dawn of history, fostering its unparalleled diversity in ethnicity, religion, and culture. However, in the absence of policies promoting peaceful coexistence, this diversity has often provided fertile ground for security challenges, both internally and internationally.

Consequently, the Achaemenids, within the framework of their strategic national security policy aimed at preserving and promoting peace and stability across their empire and preventing the emergence of costly internal security threats, established celebrations and rituals that were revered and respected among all communities and cultures residing within their dominion. By emphasizing common values among all societies and cultures in the design of these celebrations and rituals, they gained appeal and respect among all communities and cultures residing within their dominion. Indeed, no culture or society in the past few centuries has confronted these celebrations and rituals with hostility; rather, they have all embraced

them with open arms.

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant examples of these celebrations is Nowruz, an ancient festival that, despite lacking Islamic origins, garnered respect and reverence, as Islam regards its customs and traditions as correct and godly. For example, in the famous letter of Imam Ali (PBUH), the first Shia Imam, to Malik al-Ashtar in Nahj al-Balagha, it is stated: "Do not violate the accepted customs that the subjects of this Islamic nation observe, have been attached to, and have been rectified by."

The renowned Islamic scholar Allama Muhammad Baqir Majlisi recounts that a group from Iran who had recently converted to Islam brought a silver cup filled with sweets as a gift for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during one of the Nowruz celebrations. He asked, "What is this?" They replied, "Today is Nowruz, the great Iranian festival." He said, "I wish every day was Nowruz for us."

Nowruz, which is considered to be one of the most lively and enduring ancient festivals, is celebrated and revered today from Mongolia in Central Asia to Albania in Eastern Europe and from India to Tatarstan in Russia.

Studying and reflecting on the cultural management experience of the Achaemenids reveals that wise management of cultural diversity and focus on the ancient Iranian civilization in cultural diplomacy could play a key role in preventing regional and international tensions, especially in the tension-prone

Middle East, which has been notorious for decades as a powder keg. Since Nowruz is a common celebration among all nations living under the Iranian civilization, it can be used to solidify this regional identity among these communities. Moreover, due to its cultural functions such as paying attention to nature, respecting the elderly, and promoting forgiveness, Nowruz can contribute to the formation of a peaceful, calm, secure, happy, and cohesive region.

It is abundantly clear that revitalizing and developing this ancient experience in the present era, especially in modern forms such as cultural and public diplomacy, can be the key to preventing and resolving many conflicts and tensions in the Middle East. In other words, Nowruz, as a common tradition among different nations, provides an excellent platform for cultural exchange and fostering understanding among cultures. Sharing customs, foods, music, and other cultural elements associated with Nowruz can deepen mutual understanding between cultures and create bridges among diverse communities. Therefore, it is hoped that Nowruz and its diverse capacities will receive more attention and understanding from policymakers, especially the elites of countries that once comprised the ancient Iranian civilization. Subsequently, we can witness these countries more effectively harnessing the unparalleled capacities of Nowruz to promote peace and stability in the Middle East.



A bas-relief at the Apadana, Persepolis, Iran, depicting Armenians bringing gifts to the Achaemenid king.

# A culture of peace, global convergence

Nowruz belongs to Iranian civilization



The painting depicts several men waiting for the arrival of the first day of the spring (Nowruz) in older days.

WIKIPEDIA



By Alireza Habibi  
Scholar

**EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE**

*Nowruz holds a revered position in Iranian culture and Persian literature as it dates back to the third to fourth centuries CE, which coincides with the national literary renaissance, especially during the Samanid period. Persian-speaking writers and poets, aiming to revive the Iranian identity, authored works that celebrated Nowruz as a national festival. Luminaries such as Ferdowsi, Rudaki, Unsurī, Manuchehri, Farrukhi, Beyhaqi, Avicenna, Khayyam, and others paid tribute to Nowruz as a celebration deeply rooted in Iranian mythological history.*

Ancient Aryans recognized two seasons, warm and cold, each marked by celebrations. Beyond Iran, we find the observance of festivals and rituals at the onset of spring in regions such as Anatolia and Greece, but the grand, collective celebration of this festival within governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations and among all social strata is a distinct characteristic of the Iranian plateau. Despite all the ups and downs in the history of this land, including wars and various political, social, and cultural transformations, Nowruz has persisted from ancient times and has even found its way into other societies and cultures.

Nowruz was celebrated with special ceremonies in the courts of the Achaemenid and Sassanian kings. Representatives from 23 countries that had relations with Iran would attend the Iranian kings' court and present gifts from their respective governments. Abu Rayhan al-Biruni mentioned in his book *Al-Tafhim* that this celebration was attributed to Jamshid. He notes that Nowruz was significant and revered even before Jamshid made it grand. Roman Ghirshman, a French archaeologist, wrote about the Nowruz ceremony in the Achaemenid court, stating that everything in Persepolis was organized to celebrate this national festival.

Evidence of Nowruz ceremonies during the Umayyad era is scarce, but during the Abbasid era, caliphs occasionally welcomed the observance of Nowruz if it meant accepting people's gifts. With the rise of Abu Muslim Khorasani, the influential Barmakids, and Samanid and Buyid dynasties, Iranian celebrations flourished anew each time. Existing evidence suggests that Nowruz celebrations have been ongoing from one era to another since the advent of Islam, despite undergoing

some changes.

The region where Nowruz celebrations were held now includes many countries. So far, 54 countries celebrate Nowruz. Some of the Nowruz rituals in these countries differ from one another. The geography of Nowruz spans Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Tibet, China, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, a part of Yemen, Oman, the UAE, Kuwait, Egypt, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Balkans, part of Sudan, Zanzibar, Turkey, the entire Caucasus to Astrakhan, and more. In 1925 AD, the solar calendar was officially adopted in Iran. The previous accurate calculation was for the large part respected, and instead of adding five days to the year, the first six months of the year since then have 31 days, the second six months have 30 days, and the last month of Esfand has 29 days, with an additional day every four years. A year with 31 days in Esfand was called a leap year. In the Iranian Constitution, the basis for calculating the year is solar, and the lunar year is also emphasized alongside it as the religious calendar.

Nowruz has been registered as a celebration with Iranian roots, dating back more than 3,000 years. Today, close to 400 million people celebrate it. The first World Nowruz Celebration was held on March 28, 2010, in Tehran, and the city of Tehran was recognized as the "World Nowruz Secretariat".

On March 30, 2009, the Parliament of Canada officially designated the first day of spring each year as Nowruz Day, the national holiday of Iranians and many other ethnic groups. On February 24, 2010, the United Nations General Assembly officially recognized March 21 as the International Day of Nowruz within the framework of the culture of peace.



Intellectual diplomacy of Nowruz

## Building Bridges for Peace and Prosperity



By Majid Afshani

Director of International  
Department at the Governance  
and Policy Think Tank

### EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

More than 300 million people around the world celebrate the first day of spring as Nowruz every year and this celebration has been alive for over 3000 years. Traditions, ceremonies, and cultural events on this occasion are held from the Balkans to India, from Kazakhstan to southern Iran. But what does this ancient ritual have to do with diplomacy?

Nowruz has been inscribed in 2009 on the list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO, and the United Nations has recognized March 21 as international day of Nowruz Day under a resolution adapted by general assembly on 2010.

The connection of this day with nature reminds us that we are all responsible for the Earth. Environmental crises are one of the major challenges of the 21st century, and their geopolitical consequences cannot be ignored. These cross-border crises, including climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events, require the participation of all and diplomatic solutions.

Diplomacy has been described as the art of persuading others and gaining their support. Diplomacy follows resolving conflicts between countries through means other than war. From this perspective, focusing on similarities, values, and common customs that make cooperation easier in the subconscious of nations takes precedence. The great lesson that Nowruz teaches us is the revival of relations after a cold and wintry period—a process that diplomacy always pursues. Just as families exchange old clothes for new ones during Nowruz and enjoy colorful and delicious sweets and dishes together, diplomats must also renew their approach and move towards collaboration to bring about a brighter future.

Another aspect of Nowruz is its emergence from the heart of a great civilization. A civilization that utilized its power for establishing security, peace, and prosperity during its glory days. The people of this great civilization have been hospitable and tolerant, preserving their cultural diversity. Three thousand years of history show that this civilization has been subjected to murder, plunder, and ignorance but has not sought revenge. Diplomacy in this ancient civilization was not hindered by religious or ethnic differences, as evidenced by the welcoming and honoring of foreigners at Persepolis. This illustrious past demonstrates that preserving and reviving the noble human values of this civilization is commendable, achievable, and valuable.

Modern civilization building is a global process achieved through the participation of all people in this vast geographic region and led by the intellectual elite. Therefore, the development of intellectual diplomacy alongside official diplomacy of nations can create and expand cultural power. A civilization's cultural power can establish stability and peace or else conflicts between countries will never cease.

Intellectual Diplomacy focuses on the role of non-governmental actors such as think tanks, research centers, universities, foundations, charities, non-governmental organizations, technology companies, and knowledge-based organizations in shaping and implementing foreign policy. Academic collaborations aimed at increasing commonalities and reducing differences fall under intellectual diplomacy when conducted with purposeful programs. The serious gap in diplomacy, among the geographical area of Nowruz, is the neglect of serious, constructive, and unostentatious dialogues among non-official intellectuals. Monopolizing diplomacy in official institutions does not fully utilize the vast cultural and historical capacities and distances the peoples of an ancient civilization from each other.

The increasing engagement of universities, think-tanks, professors, and students holds the key to resolving conflicts and fostering greater peace and security. This mission rests on the shoulders of the intellectuals of this region who know history and are far-sighted and enlightened. They are the heirs of a unique civilization, symbolized by the venerable tradition of Nowruz. It is hoped that the experts of the Nowruz region will embrace this human duty and, with high resolve, break down the barriers erected by differences, so that once again, the world will pay homage to the civilization that created Nowruz and stand united in respect.

# Nowruz an opportunity for increased int'l interactions

By Masoud  
BonabianVice-Chairman of the  
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### EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

Nowruz presents a suitable opportunity for strengthening a country's social capital and increasing international interactions with the aim of enhancing its economic potential. It has been proven that the economic prosperity of a country is only feasible through the optimal combination of both material and human capital. Developed countries, by making new investments in land, machinery, technology, and other tangible assets as well as human resources, have managed to create an environment for sustainable economic growth within their nations.

Developing countries, on the other hand, do not experience as much growth due to the lack of material capital. While some developing countries, especially those with abundant natural resources like oil-rich nations, possess significant material resources, their economic development and growth have not been substantial. One of the most overlooked values in developing countries is social capital. Neglecting social capital can impose undeniable costs on society, the economy, and the culture of a nation. Therefore, attention must be paid to social capital for the growth and enhancement of economic capacities within a country.

In Iran, there are many religious festivals and ceremonies that may strengthen relationships among community members, ethnic groups, and families, and highlight activities that revolve around common interests. One of the most important annual celebrations for Iranians is Nowruz. Nowruz is the oldest and most significant cultural symbol of Iran, an ancient cere-



A family gathers around a table adorned with the Haft Sin arrangement as part of their Nowruz celebration in northwestern Iran.

mony that has encompassed the highest human and cultural values throughout the history of this land. It is deeply rooted in the subconscious cultural heritage of Iranians, to the extent that it cannot be eliminated from any part of Iran's history.

As the oldest and most superior cultural symbol of Iran, Nowruz is a popular and pleasant ritual for all Iranian minorities. Therefore, in terms of cultural order and social cohesion, it has been beneficial for bringing Iranian ethnic groups closer together and enhancing national solidarity. Nowruz, with traditions such as visiting each other and reinforcing family ties, as well as mutual assistance in case of problems, plays an effective role in the unity of society.

Social capital, through engendering trust among people, promoting norms and common values, and creating various economic relationship networks, leads to a noticeable reduction in transaction costs. Most economists believe that since social capital is a source of collective action, its most important role in devel-

opment is reducing transaction costs. There is a reverse relationship between social capital and transaction costs, meaning that as social capital decreases, production becomes more expensive overall. Social capital acts as the ethics and rules of the game. If there are no rules in the economic game or if ethical principles do not govern individuals' behavior, then either the whole game stops or the game becomes very expensive. Conversely, the existence of ethical rules and adherence to the rules of social capital make the game less expensive, smoother, and more attractive. Therefore, Nowruz should be viewed as a renewed covenant among the people. By utilizing such a ritual, unity and social capital should be strengthened within the society, and with effort, dedication, and investment, the economic foundations of the country should be reinforced.

The impact of Nowruz on economic development can be highlighted from another perspective, which is an international viewpoint. It has been proven that not

all countries have access to all resources for economic growth. So, in order to meet their economic needs, they are obliged to have effective relations with other countries to provide a platform for exporting their surplus and importing to meet their deficits. This, in turn, provides the necessary ground for economic growth and development.

Nowruz is a ceremony celebrated in countries such as Iran, Turkey, Tajikistan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Syria, Iraq, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Albania, China, Turkmenistan, India, and Pakistan. Having shared rituals and customs with other countries lays the groundwork for strengthening friendly, economically beneficial relations with these countries and enhances the potential for economic prosperity. In other words, Nowruz is an opportunity for strengthening social capital both domestically and internationally, creating cohesion and unity among the people of our country through the cooperation and selflessness needed for economic growth and development.

## Nowruz diplomacy, neighborly relations

By Afifeh  
AbediRegional affairs  
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### EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

Nowruz, one of the old, beautiful, undying, and prominent celebrations and rituals left of the ancient Iranian civilization, is considered a cultural bond that ties together Iran and the countries that once were part of that great civilization. This ritual is celebrated not only in Iran but also in neighboring countries, such as Iraq and Turkey, and even distant countries that traditionally celebrated it, from Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Middle East. Therefore, this tradition can be utilized as an important tool in neighborly relations, as Nowruz has the power to foster convergence among nations and consequently enhance governmental interactions.

Within the realm of Iran lies a territory where the four seasons naturally unfold. Historically and culturally, the spring season, which follows the long and bleak winter and is marked by fatigue and the end of food shortages, is considered a season of transformation that heralds new life. Thus, spring represents a unifying force for people living within the geography of Nowruz. In Nowruz, there are no traces of conflict, idolatry, or hopeless matters; everything there embodies divinity and humanity.

Exercising diplomacy in neighborly relations requires various elements, including hard and soft instruments — each contributing to the realization of a particular aspect of politics. Nowruz stands out as one of these diplomacy instruments. One prerequisite for neighborly relations is finding common ground with your neighbors, which strengthens bonds. In the cultural geography of Iran, Nowruz is unquestionably one

of the most significant commonalities.

Nowruz can enhance tourism ties between Iran and countries located within the Nowruz geography. If harnessed, motivations for developing and completing joint transportation infrastructure would soon follow suit and increase. The tradition of "wearing new garments" in the new year, for example, can contribute to increased interaction in related industries, including textiles, clothing, and Nowruz-related foodstuffs.

The production of television programs about Nowruz and entertaining activities during the Nowruz period is also one of the industries related to Nowruz. Not only does Nowruz provide an avenue for the exchange of such programs for display on the television channels of these countries, but it also serves as a tool for public diplomacy and cultural solidarity.

The splendid and captivating celebration of Nowruz itself

and its promotion can even aid in attracting tourists from neighboring countries that fall beyond the Nowruz geography, including those in the Persian Gulf region.

These benefits of utilizing Nowruz in public and economic diplomacy have led to competition among countries that share Nowruz. However, in the cultural geography of Iran, Nowruz is a shared ritual for creating unbreakable bonds. Therefore, when discussing efforts to find connecting links in neighborly relations, attention should be paid to shared aspects such as Nowruz.







International Desk

Iran will unload about \$50 million worth of crude owned by the US from a Marshall Islands-flagged tanker following a Tehran court order in favor of Iranian patients of Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB). Advantage Sweet is a Suezmax crude tanker that had been chartered by US firm Chevron and was seized in April 2023 by Iran’s Army following a collision with an Iranian boat, which resulted in the injury and missing of a number of the Iranian crew members. The tanker had attempted to flee the scene

in serious breach of international laws and regulations. The unloading of the cargo follows a Tehran court order in favor of Iranian patients of Epidermolysis Bullosa or butterfly patients, a rare skin disease, who had filed a lawsuit against the “severe physical and mental harm” caused by the non-provision of Swedish-made medicine, which is said to be caused by US sanctions according to the lawsuit. They said that the Western sanctions, especially those by the US, have prevented the Swedish company, Mölnlycke Health Care, from selling medicines to Iran.

The United States reinstated its sanctions against Iran in May 2018 after leaving a United Nations-endorsed nuclear agreement with Iran and five other countries. Since then, Mölnlycke Health Care has stopped selling pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, including special bandages for EB patients, to Iranian companies, citing the unilateral US sanctions. The move has deprived EB patients of essential medical items, caused the deaths of many of them, and inflicted serious physical injuries such as amputation of some of the patients.

Biden-Trump rematch looks certain after Super Tuesday votes

The US presidential election looks all but certain to be a repeat of the 2020 poll, with Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump both sweeping to victory in nomination contests across the country. US President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump swept to victory in statewide nomination contests on Tuesday, setting up a historic rematch in November’s election, Sky News reported. On a day traditionally dubbed Super Tuesday – when the most states choose who they think should be candidates – both virtually secured the nomination from their respective parties. Republican Trump won in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Minnesota and Virginia, brushing aside Nikki Haley, who only won Vermont. Haley suspended her White House campaign Wednesday, declining to endorse former Trump but calling on him to earn the support of moderates and independents who backed her in the primary.

“It is now up to Donald Trump to earn the votes of those in our party and beyond it who did not support him, and I hope he does that,” Haley said in a televised address in Charleston, South Carolina. Meanwhile, Biden appeared to win easily in 14 states but faced a sizeable protest vote in Minnesota where he still won. He lost in the US territory of American Samoa. Despite their clear victories, a rematch between Trump, 77, and Biden, 81 – the first repeat US presidential matchup since 1956 – is one few Americans seem to want, based on opinion polls. Speaking to a crowd gathered at his Mar-a-Lago home in Florida, Trump described the president as the “worst” the country has ever seen. “There’s never been anything like what’s happening to our country,” he added, before wrongly adding 15 million people have crossed the southern border from Mexico to the US. But Biden warned his rival – who is facing a litany of criminal charges, including interference in the 2020 election – is “determined to destroy our democracy”.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



'Israel seeks to depopulate northern Gaza'

International Desk

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said Israel is attempting to depopulate the northern Gaza Strip by intensifying its attacks and escalating famine. “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemns in the strongest terms the war of genocide that Israel is carrying out against our people in the Gaza Strip for the 152nd day,” the ministry said in a statement on Wednesday. “The ministry confirms that more than 500,000 people live in northern Gaza under the most horrific acts of genocide: constant bombardment, deepening famine, and creating strife and chaos.” An aid mission to two hospitals in northern Gaza found horrifying scenes of children dying of starvation, amid dire shortages of food, fuel and medicines, the World Health Organization said. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Monday the agency’s visits over the weekend to the Al-Awda and Kamal Adwan hospitals “were the first since early October 2023 despite our efforts to gain more regular access to the north of Gaza”. The findings were “grim”, he said on X, adding that “the situation at Al-Awda was particularly appalling, as one of the buildings is destroyed”. The Palestinian Foreign Ministry’s statement came as negotiations are underway to establish a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas resistance group in Gaza. Jihad Taha, a Hamas spokesperson, said the negotiations were ongoing but “the ball is in the Israeli court”. He said Israel had thus far refused Hamas’ demands for people who fled northern Gaza to be allowed to return and for guarantees of a long-term cease-fire and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. “Hamas is open to proposals and initiatives that are consistent with its position calling for a cease-fire, withdrawal, the return of the displaced, the entry of relief convoys and reconstruction,” Taha said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly rejected Hamas’ demands and repeatedly vowed to continue the war until Hamas is dismantled and all the captives are returned.

Persian Gulf Arab states, Red Sea tensions  
Avoiding an unwanted war

By Hoda Yousefi  
Middle East affairs expert  
EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

The Russia-Ukraine crisis has had a significant impact on global trade, particularly on the Asia-Europe rail transit route. This route, which previously accounted for a significant portion of trade between the two continents, has become less viable due to the conflict. As a result, the importance of the Red Sea as a maritime trade route has increased. The Red Sea connects the Bab al-Mandab strait to the Suez Canal, a vital shipping lane that allows goods to be transported between Asia and Europe. Over 30% of the world’s maritime trade passes through the Red Sea, with an average of \$400 million worth of cargo transported every hour. The recent escalation of tensions between Israel and Hamas has also had an impact on the Red Sea. In response to Israeli airstrikes on Gaza, the Houthi rebels in Yemen launched drone and missile attacks on Israeli commercial and military vessels. This prompted the United States to form a coalition of countries, including the UK, France, Italy, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Norway, Seychelles, Australia, and Bahrain, to counter Houthi military attacks. Many analysts believe that the US-led coalition is a pretext for Washington to increase its influence over the Red Sea. The region is strategically important and the US has long sought to assert its dominance there. The current tensions provide an opportunity for the US to do so under the guise of countering Houthi aggression. The US and UK have already launched retaliatory strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen. However, these actions are likely to do little to resolve the underlying tensions in the region. Instead, they are likely to further destabilize the region and create a more dangerous environment for maritime trade.

Consequences of rising Red Sea insecurity

With the security of the Red Sea as a major international waterway compromised, shipping vessels are now forced to re-route around South Africa, a journey that takes at least two weeks longer. This has primarily affected Egypt’s revenue from the Suez Canal, with unofficial figures showing a 22% decrease in ship traffic in recent months. In addition to the longer transit time, the insecurity in the Red Sea has also led to increased transportation risks and higher tariffs for goods. This is because ships are now exposed to greater risks of piracy, terrorism, and other maritime hazards. These increased costs are passed on to consumers, which contributes to inflation. Even countries that have not been involved in the recent tensions are suffering from the current situation. For example, the cost of shipping a commercial vessel from China to Europe, which previously cost around \$1,500, is now estimated at \$4,000. This is a significant increase that will have a negative impact on businesses and consumers in both countries. In the long run, continued insecurity in the Red Sea could even disrupt the global supply chain. From a political perspective, the tensions in the Red Sea have the potential to exacerbate various layers of past and present conflicts. Firstly, the conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis could escalate due to the Houthis’ perception of Riyadh as a close ally of Washington. This could lead to a renewed military confrontation between the two sides.

Secondly, the tensions between Iran and the US will also be amplified in this context. The Houthis are part of the “Axis of Resistance” and a regional ally of Tehran. On the other hand, Iran has taken a strong and explicit stance against Israel and the US, and any military action they may take in the region.

Stance of Persian Gulf Arab states

When the United States announced its intention to form a coalition against the Houthi Ansarullah of Yemen, none of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, except for Yemen, welcomed such an initiative. There are several reasons for the lack of support for the US in this incident and the general avoidance of any tension in the Red Sea by the Gulf Arab states. Firstly, at the height of tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE with the Houthi Ansarullah, the United States did not provide the military support that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi expected. This issue particularly created resentment between these countries when the UAE requested military assistance after its facilities were attacked by the Houthis, but Washington did not respond adequately. Now, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are in a position of retaliation against this US action and seem to be making the most of it. Secondly, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have experienced the brunt of Houthi Ansarullah military attacks on vital targets within their territories and are seeking to adopt a position that will prevent such attacks from happening again with all their might. In its Vision 2030 document, Saudi Arabia seeks to become a regional commercial and economic hub. Under such circumstances, foreign military attacks are seen as potentially irreparable obstacles. The UAE, which has also improved its position in the field of tourism in the region and the world in recent years, avoids any conflict that could jeopardize its national security. In addition to the issue of tourism, the United Arab Emirates hosted the UN Climate Change Conference last year and committed to making large investments in the field of renewable energy. Abu Dhabi seeks to attract more foreign investment, so it will not participate in events that make its country unsafe. Abu Dhabi has also invested in important infrastructure in southern Yemen in order to achieve its commercial goals in the near future by increasing its influence in these areas. Increased tensions in the Red Sea will also threaten the UAE’s economic interests in Yemen. Thirdly, Arab countries are forced to take some actions to manage public opinion; in the case of Palestine, public opinion in the Arab world is entirely against Israel. In this context, even countries like the UAE, which have normalized relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords, or countries like Saudi Arabia, which have a vision of improving relations with Tel Aviv, will not be able to participate in Israeli-American plans in order to manage public opinion.

Conclusion

After the outbreak of tensions in the Red Sea, countries such as Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait considered the continuation of the conflict in this region to be crisis-prone and called for a de-escalation of tensions. However, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are more than other countries trying to reduce conflicts in the Red Sea because these two countries will not only be harmed by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, but will also be exposed to military confrontation.





# Persian stories being told during Iran-Bosnia friendship week



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran-Bosnia Children Friendship Week is underway with puppet shows narrating Iranian tales for children and adolescents in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The week-long event began on March 4 and will continue until March 8. Over the course of five days, four cultural centers will host Iranian artists,

offering diverse programs that explore cultural, historical, geographical aspects, as well as heroes, traditions of wrestling, and the life story of the martyr Saeed Toghiani. Puppet shows, narrating Iranian heroes' stories, introducing Iran's animation capabilities, familiarizing participants with Iranian songs, and showcasing traditional Iranian arts through workshops on making Iranian

dolls and block printing are among the scheduled activities for this week. The book 'Two Friends,' written by Mohsen Mashreghi and translated into Bosnian by Senka Bešlić, has also been introduced to Bosnian children and adolescents. Iranian artists will perform on March 4 at the Sarajevo Center for Culture and Youth of Center, March 5 at the Persian-Bosnian College campus, March

6 and 7 at the Novo Sarajevo International Center for Children and Youth, and March 8 at the Derviš Sučić Public and University Library, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Storytelling by Samira Khaan-zadi, puppet shows written and directed by Morteza Asadi Maram, and featuring the performance of Marzieh Ebrahimi are some of the highlights of the week.

# Iranian book named Thailand's best cultural, historical book of year

## Arts & Culture Desk

In a recent announcement by the Ministry of Education of Thailand, the book 'The Persian Rose in the Land of Siam' has been named the best cultural and historical book of the year in Thailand. The book, compiled by Kusuma Raksamani based on historical sources, was first published in 2000 and, due to its outstanding popularity, has been reprinted for the second time this year by the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre with new graphic illustrations, IRNA reported.

The center, affiliated with Princess Mahachakri, the daughter of King Rama IX and sister of the current king, actively engages in various cultural activities, particularly supporting the publication of valuable books. Given the significant research and valuable content of 'The Persian Rose in the Land of Siam' the institute has taken a keen interest in the book and supported its reprinting. Moreover, the book was among the top books of 2023 in the documentary category, showcasing the meticulous research conducted by the author on historical sources to establish its credibility as a reliable source in this field. Structured into four



main sections, the book explores the influence of Iranian culture, literature, and art in ancient Siamese society (old Thailand). It serves as a valid source addressing each topic, delving into the roots and presenting historical sources to substantiate its claims and effects. The book covers diverse topics such as the impact of Iranian culture on clothing, food, and cuisine, as well as Iranian literature's integration into Siamese culture. With a total of 300 pages, the book is available for purchase in Thai electronic stores and libraries, reflecting its popularity and widespread availability.

## PICS OF THE DAY



Ambassadors from various countries participating in the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) summit explore Iran's historic Zarch Qanat in Yazd Province, on March 6, 2024. With a history dating back over a millennium, this Qanat spans 71 kilometers, making it the world's longest.

● MAJID JARRAHI/IRNA



## Tehran, Dushanbe agree on joint medicine production

The health ministers of Iran and Tajikistan discussed bilateral cooperation in the health sector to manufacture medicines. Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi met his Tajikistani counterpart, Abdullozoda Jamoliddin Abdullo, on the sidelines of the first international conference on family health in Tehran on Tuesday, IRNA wrote. During the meeting, Einollahi said a new chapter has opened

in cooperation with Tajikistan, stressing the importance of forming a joint working group for pursuing bilateral ties in the area of health and other fields. Exchanging students and professors, holding scientific conferences, and working on research projects will help promote cooperation, he underlined. He also said the Islamic Republic is ready to export medical equipment to Tajikistan, joint-

ly manufacture medicine, and exchange medical experiences with the Persian-speaking country. For his part, the Tajik minister expressed appreciation for Iran's efforts to hold such an international medical conference. Tehran hosted the first international conference on family health with the participation of health ministers from various countries on March 5 for two days.

## Iran confirms release of Hirmand water towards its borders



## Social Desk

The Director-General of the Department of Environment in Sistan and Baluchestan, Mohammadreza

Alimoradi, affirmed the release of water from the Hirmand (Helmand) River towards Iran, stating that it is not based on the Iran-Afghanistan water treaty.

Instead, the agreement involves opening the gates of the Kamal Khan Dam to redirect water from the Godzareh Desert towards Iran. Tasnim news agency has reported that the rise in rainfall within the Hirmand River's catchment area, coupled with the

filling of the Kamal Khan Dam, has led to the release of water into Iran. A viral video on social media from last night reveals the released water reaching Jarikheh Dam at the Iran-Afghanistan border. Alimoradi confirmed the video's authenticity, noting that "This release started last night [Tuesday], and in the coming days, it will continue due to increased rainfall in Afghanistan." Responding to whether this water would flow towards the Hamoun wetlands, the official emphasized that, for now, it won't and clarified that the water would be utilized for drinking water resources.