

# Tourist arrivals surged nearly 51% last year

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran experienced a surge in foreign tourist visits last year, according to the nation's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ezzatollah Zarghami. Addressing a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, Zarghami revealed a substantial 50.8% increase in foreign tourist arrivals for the Iranian calendar year concluding on March 19, in comparison to the preceding year. This means nearly 14 million foreign tourists visiting Iran in the past three years, the minister highlighted. Zarghami attributed the growth to the unilateral visa waiver with 28 countries, implemented in cooperation with Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He noted that this decision opened Iran's doors to the world, and the number of visitors from some of those countries increased this year compared to the previous year, IRNA wrote.

"Despite Iranophobic activities and warnings issued by many countries advising their nationals not to travel to Iran, we had growth in visits," Zarghami said. The minister also acknowledged a decrease in tourist arrivals due to political issues with the Republic of Azerbaijan, which led to the cutting of land route relations between the two countries. In addition, Zarghami mentioned that Iran experienced a 20% increase in tourist arrivals during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, starting on March 20, compared to the same period last year. He also highlighted the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which postponed many world meetings, gatherings, sports events, and travels since its outbreak in February 2020. To further boost tourism, Zarghami mentioned the investment in 1,785 projects, including 5-star hotels, which are



expected to create 51,000 job opportunities. He added that 81 large tourism projects are set to be inaugurated by the end of the current

Iranian year. The minister also broke the news that Iran had been chosen as the host of the global handicrafts and tourism center in Isfa-

han, which is expected to boost the country's handicrafts sector. Zarghami concluded by emphasizing the importance of honoring pioneers and veterans

in the fields of handicrafts and cultural heritage, stating that it is a policy of the current administration to honor and celebrate elites.

## Iranian scientists develop gene therapy to prevent blindness



Iranian researchers made a breakthrough in the treatment of retinitis pigmentosa, a hereditary disease that can lead to blindness. A team led by senior researcher Maryam Haghshenas has developed optimized recombinant viral vectors that efficiently transfer genes through intravitreal injection, offering a less aggressive approach to gene therapy. Haghshenas highlighted the growing significance of gene therapy in treating genetic and acquired diseases, particularly in ophthalmology. She emphasized the importance of producing recombinant viral vectors optimized for effective gene transfer as a crucial step in treating retinitis pigmentosa, IRNA wrote. The research focused on X-linked retinitis pigmentosa, caused by a defect in the RPGR gene. Haghshenas and her team created a virus carrying a healthy version of the RPGR gene. This virus can be injected into the vitreous, allowing the gene to be expressed specifically in the photoreceptors of the retina, thus preventing blindness.

Retinitis pigmentosa affects about one in every 2,500 births, causing progressive retinal degeneration and eventual complete blindness. The development of optimized viral vectors offers a promising approach to preventing blindness in patients with this inherited condition. The team's invention involves creating mutations in the viral coating to enhance penetration and increase the transfer of the virus to different layers of the retina after intravitreal injection. The virus was successfully tested in a pre-clinical study on one-month-old mice, demonstrating its ability to effectively transfer and express the RPGR gene in the photoreceptor cells of the retina. This innovative approach eliminates the need for highly invasive subretinal injections, reducing the risk of severe inflammation and retinal detachment. The optimized viral vectors offer higher stability and permeability, making them well-suited for direct injection into the vitreous, a less invasive and safer approach.

## Iranian researchers' theory on Qur'anic translation available now in 12 languages

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An innovative theory in translation studies, developed by two Iranian researchers, gained global acclaim. The book, titled 'Issues and Solutions for Translating Divine Attributes in the Holy Qur'an,' written by Gholamreza Abbasian and Samaneh Nazerian, has now been published in Chinese, adding to its previous translations into 11 other languages, IRNA wrote. The book emphasizes the importance of incorporating feminine perspectives and characteristics alongside masculine ones, with equal weight and without superiority of one gender over the other, for a more beautiful world

and humanity's growth and advancement toward the Creator. First published in Germany in 2016, the book has been translated and published by Amazon in various languages, including Irish, German, French, Portuguese, English, Spanish, Scots, Welsh, Brazilian Portuguese, Dutch, and Russian. The Chinese translation now makes this important work accessible to a whole new audience. The scientific findings presented in the book offer a novel approach to translating religious texts, particularly the Holy Qur'an. It challenges the three historical phases of women's writing proposed by American scholar Elaine Showalter in 1977 and introduces a fourth



phase, the "Feminine-Masculine Phase," highlighting the need for a blend of gender perspectives to enrich our understanding of the divine. This global reach of the book

showcases the impact and relevance of Iranian scholarship in the field of translation studies and its ability to spark meaningful conversations across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

## Pezeshkian a symbol ...

In the past, we didn't have a great track record in this respect, and with each change of government, many of the country's executive managers also changed. Now, Pezeshkian is of the view that efficient personnel should be retained and that fresh, experienced experts should also be brought on board. So, Pezeshkian is matchless; there's no one quite like him, and we have faith in his ability to stay true to his course. This path appears to have the backing of various parts of the ruling system, particularly Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei. The Leader's recent comments about parliamentary cooperation with the government and support for Pezeshkian's cabinet were clear,

intelligent, and forthright. Of course, the Leader has always endorsed and backed sitting governments as this support smooths the path for their success. However, his support for Mr. Pezeshkian seems to carry extra weight because Pezeshkian represents the restoration of public trust in the government and the ruling system. In previous elections and over the past few years, mismanagement has led to a weakening of faith in the country's leadership. Pezeshkian's involvement in the election, his stance, and his success - which was remarkable in itself - have shown everyone that it's possible to rebuild the trust between the people and those in power. As such, the Leader's support for Pezeshkian translates to

support for national unity and the revival of public confidence in the Establishment. Now, the question is whether the political factions that are rivals to the future government will heed the Leader's recommendation to work with the upcoming administration or choose to create roadblocks and cause havoc. It looks likely that the moderate sections of the Conservative camp will fall in line with the Leader's suggestion, especially given the commendable stance taken by personalities like Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Pezeshkian's former electoral rival, in the weeks since the election. This is particularly relevant given that Mr. Qalibaf is also the speaker of the Parliament and will play a pivotal role in fostering cooper-

ation between the government and the legislature. This leaves only the hardline sections of the Conservative political forces, which have had - and continue to have - differences with their more moderate counterparts. We hope that even if these factions don't plan to cooperate with the new government, they will, at the very least, refrain from throwing wrenches. This doesn't mean that political parties shouldn't be able to critique the government. Constructive criticism certainly has its place, but deliberate sabotage and attempts to marginalize will undoubtedly go against the recommendations of the Leader. So, all things considered, I'm optimistic that Pezeshkian will deliver on his campaign promises.