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● Editorial Dept. Tel  
● Address  
● ICPI Publisher  
● Advertising Dept. Tel/Email  
● Website  
● Email  
● Printing House

+98 21 84711411  
208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran  
+98 21 88548892-5  
+98 21 88500601/irandaily@iranagahiha.com  
www.irandaily.ir/newspaper.irandaily.ir  
irandaily@icpi.ir  
Iran Cultural & Press Institute



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# 18th Tehran Int'l Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition draws crowds

## Arts & Culture Desk

People flocked to the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, marveling at the wonders of Iran's tourism industry. The exhibition drew an impressive 24,000 visitors within just the first day. The event runs from February 11 to 14, showcasing the vibrant potential of Iran's tourism sector, IRNA reported. According to Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey, Deputy of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, the exhibition features participation from 700 companies, both domestic and international. "Tourism professionals from countries including the UAE, Turkey, Madagascar, Tajikistan, Thailand, Brazil, Indonesia, Qatar, and Russia are showcasing their offerings," he said. He added that 395 square meters have been allocated for foreign exhibitors. In a bid to keep accommodation costs manageable, the government has exempted one to three-star hotel owners from paying certain taxes. Mohseni-Bandpey pointed out the need for improved advertising and marketing strategies to promote Iran's tourism industry. He added, "We must enhance public relations and marketing to develop our tourism sector."

He also pointed to the disparity in tourism advertising budgets, highlighting that while the average spending for tourism promotion abroad is around five dollars per tourist, Iran allocates nearly half a dollar. "We must leverage our beautiful coastlines, invaluable historical sites, and the potential of health tourism to attract more visitors," he added. An initiative to establish rest areas, or "Nowruzgah," has been announced to reduce traffic accidents during peak travel times, particularly around city entrances. This measure aims to provide drivers with safe stopping points during the busy Nowruz holiday season. In efforts to make travel more accessible, the ministry has partnered with pension organizations and hotel associations to offer reduced travel costs for various demographics. "There are 1,470 hotels in Iran, of which 143 are four to five-star establishments. We aim to ensure that budget hotels maintain affordable rates," Mohseni-Bandpay explained.

**Influencers at Tehran exhibition**  
A total of 20 prominent influencers from Pakistan, Kenya, and Zimbabwe visited the exhibition, invited by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization in collaboration with the Min-

istry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. The influencers, known for their substantial social media presence, toured five exhibition halls featuring private sector booths and provincial cultural heritage offices. During their visit, the influencers engaged in discussions about Iran's tourism potential with Moslem Shojaei, the Director General of Foreign Marketing and Tourism Development. Their week-long trip includes visits to various tourist attractions across the country, aiming to present a genuine image of Iran to the world through social media channels.

**UNESCO World Heritage plaque unveiled**  
The exhibition also saw the unveiling of a UNESCO World Heritage plaque for the historic site of Hegmataneh. The ceremony, attended by Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri, marked Iran's 28th registered World Heritage site. Salehi Amiri emphasized the importance of preserving and promoting the nation's historical landmarks while thanking local authorities for their efforts in securing this recognition. "The registration of Hegmataneh is a significant step in showcasing Iran's rich history and culture to the world,"



he stated, noting that the site was officially recognized during the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi. In a broader context, Salehi Amiri announced plans to increase the ministry's budget by up to 60% for the upcoming year, stressing the need for innovative approaches to highlight Iran's attractions. He advocated for the use of artificial intelligence and advanced technologies to

enhance the tourism experience. "Our aim is to prepare resources that allow people to explore Iran through their smartphones," he said. Despite the challenges posed by harsh weather conditions and unsafe roadways, Salehi Amiri expressed optimism about the successful execution of the exhibition, stating, "We are focused on creating a lively atmosphere that fosters social engagement and community spirit."

## Iran, India unite to perform at Fajr music festival



## Arts & Culture Desk

The third night of the 40th Fajr International Music Festival witnessed an extraordinary concert titled 'Molaghat' (Fusion) at Tehran's Vahdat Hall. The event showcased an enchanting blend of mystical music from Iran and India, filling the venue with a Sufi spirit, IRNA reported. The concert featured performances from the Iranian group "Hello Baba", led by Master Vahid Ayrian, and the Indian ensemble. Together, they offered a rich tapestry of sounds infused with themes of love and spirituality. The diverse instrumentation included seven players on tambour, electric guitar, and daf from Iran, along with harmonium, tabla, and Amano Manish (slide guitar) from India.

Ayrian not only played and sang but also directed the ensemble, driving the performance with a passionate presence. The stage design was meticulously crafted, adorned with glowing candles and flowers at the center, creating an inviting and warm atmosphere. The audience's response was overwhelmingly positive, with Vahdat Hall completely filled, reflecting the high anticipation for this unique musical encounter. The pieces performed resonated with themes of spirituality and love, characterized by repetitive motifs and rhythmic patterns that evoked a trance-like state. This stylistic focus invited the audience into a musical meditation, effectively drawing them into the experience. Beyond the auditory experience, the concert engaged the senses on multiple levels. The

harmonious lighting and the synchrony among the musicians contributed to a cohesive and impactful environment. The tambour players, with their synchronized movements and intricate rhythms, added a visual element that enriched the overall performance. A particularly intriguing aspect of the performance was the collaboration between the electric guitar and harmonium, introducing a fresh layer to the mystical soundscape. This combination brought in harmonic and chordal elements that are often absent in traditional Sufi music, enriching the sonic texture of the pieces performed. The electric guitar contributed ethereal, pad-like sounds, enhancing the overall atmosphere of the concert. During energetic moments, the guitarist employed power chord techniques, elevating the pieces' intensity and crafting an unexpected blend of traditional and modern styles. This innovative fusion offered the audience a distinct experience of Sufi music. Another exhilarating highlight came from the solo performances of the daf player from Iran and the tabla player from India. This part, filled with dynamic and varied rhythms, injected an electrifying energy into the concert, provoking enthusiastic cheers from the audience. The 40th edition of the festival runs from February 11 to 17.

## Iran, Turkey eye cultural diplomacy opportunities

## Arts & Culture Desk

Turkish Ambassador to Iran, Hicabi Kirlangıç, met with Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi to discuss the potentials for enhancing cultural ties between the two nations. Minister Salehi remarked that, "The language of culture has always served as a stable bridge for relations between nations." He emphasized the historical depth and breadth of Iran-Turkey relations, noting, "Throughout history, there has been a thread connecting our two peoples." He expressed optimism that the cultural and literary background of the ambassador could foster a special opportunity for advancing cultural relations. Looking ahead, Salehi pointed out that 2025 has been designated as the cultural year for both Iran and Turkey. He stated, "This presents an opportunity to initiate positive developments in our cultural ties." The minister assured that the ministry, along with other cultural institutions, is prepared to take necessary actions to realize this goal. He further highlighted the unique bond between the two nations, which have enjoyed centuries of neighborly relations without strife. "There are significant political, economic, and cultural commonalities that can assure both peoples of the continuity of our relationships," he noted. Salehi argued that literary diplomacy could open new avenues for collaboration, particularly in developing literary ties into literary tourism. Salehi added, "Both nations boast respected literary figures. While Konya holds allure for Iranians, there are places in Iran that are equally valued by the Turkish people." He mentioned that Iran hosts various literary events and book fairs, stating, "We must explore how to provide new opportunities for literary diplomacy." The minister also discussed the ongoing Fajr festivals, which could pave the way for further cultural cooperation.

He said that substantial opportunities exist in the realm of artistic diplomacy and media relations, suggesting that closer media ties could strengthen the bond between the two nations. Salehi stressed the importance of religious diplomacy as well, noting the shared religious interests between Iran and Turkey. "They are recognized by all Muslim nations, and their cooperation can help promote rational and compassionate interpretations of Islam, countering extremist narratives," he explained. He also mentioned shared challenges such as family and environmental issues, which could serve as topics for mutual understanding. He concluded by stating that the various facets of cultural diplomacy—including literary, media, artistic, and religious dimensions—can generate numerous opportunities. "Both Turkey and Iran possess vibrant cultural organizations, which can enhance cultural interactions," he said, urging for new avenues to be explored in all these areas. Ambassador Kirlangıç echoed the minister's sentiments, stating, "The two nations are very close, yet unfortunately, this closeness is not well known." He highlighted the similarities in customs, traditions, and history, despite the differences in language. "While Persian and Turkish belong to different language families, their structures share significant similarities," he noted, attributing this to the longstanding relations between the two cultures. The ambassador emphasized that Persian has profoundly influenced Turkish, particularly in religious terminology. He said, "We have learned many religious terms from Persian, and our prominent religious figures, like Imam Ghazali, hailed from the greater Khorasan region." He acknowledged the impact of Persian literature, citing figures like Saadi, Hafez, Rumi, and Ferdowsi as formative influences on Turkish culture. Kirlangıç called for enhanced collaboration, especially in archaeology, and highlighted the importance of religious and mystical tourism for Turkish citizens.