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Israel to pay dearly if cease-fire collapses



By Ahmad Rastineh
Iranian lawmaker

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

An examination of the Israeli regime's conduct since its inception makes one thing crystal clear: Israeli authorities have repeatedly failed to live up to their commitments. Time and again, reneging on agreements has been a tried-and-true playbook for Israel on the international stage.

This pattern was once again on full display in its cease-fire agreement with Hamas. Despite Hamas sticking to its end of the bargain, Israel backtracked on its commitments at every turn. From the outset, Israel had little choice but to go along with the cease-fire due to the circumstances it faced. However, it soon found ways to wriggle out of its obligations, violating the agreement time and again.

That being said, Israeli leaders must realize that breaking the cease-fire will not just put the Resistance Front in a tough spot—it will land Israel itself in extremely dangerous waters. The region is on the brink of major upheaval, and even Israeli officials are well aware that they can no longer toy with public sentiment in the region or brush off the global outcry against their actions.

Israel now finds itself out in the cold on the international stage, bogged down by mounting political and security crises. International courts and public opinion alike have already called out the Israeli regime—and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself—as war criminals. If Israel tries to pull another stunt by violating the cease-fire or stirring up trouble in the agreement's implementation, it should know that the Resistance Front is more determined than ever to fight back. The resistance will make a full-fledged return to the battlefield with unwavering resolve.

While the recent war may have taken a toll on Hamas and Hezbollah forces, the entire world saw how, during the captive-release operations, Hamas had managed to get back on its feet—rebuilding its ranks and bringing in fresh recruits. At the same time, Hezbollah has been gearing up and fortifying its forces, and Iran has left no room for doubt about its ironclad support for the Resistance Front. Meanwhile, the developments in Syria are yet another red flag for Israel. If the regime continues to repeat past mistakes, it could end up paying a heavy price. Syria is a ticking time bomb, and one of the emerging possibilities is the rise of Hezbollah-like groups within Syrian territory—groups that could soon step into the fray against Israel and US plans in the region.

Simply put, Israel is teetering on the edge of severe security instability. It is in no position to walk away from the cease-fire without suffering serious consequences. If the cease-fire falls apart, Israel will have no one to blame but itself—and it will be hit the hardest.



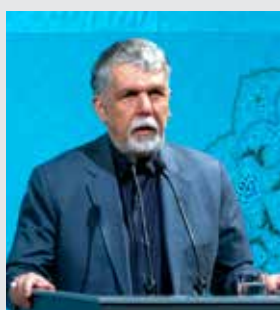
Iran marks National Arbor Day

Leader calls on Iranians to join tree planting movement

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Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei plants a sapling in a garden in Tehran on March 5, on National Arbor Day that marks the beginning of Natural Resources Week.

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Nowruz; A cultural force for unity

SPECIAL ISSUE EXCLUSIVE

As global powers keep pulling the strings, Nowruz offers a breath of fresh air in regional politics. This age-old festival, deeply rooted in shared history, brings nations together instead of driving a wedge between them. Unlike great-power tactics that stir up rivalries, the Nowruz moment paves the way for unity, helping nations patch up differences and build bridges. From Central Asia to Anatolia, it is a chance for people to take matters into their own hands, shake off external influence, and come together under a common cultural bond. Could this timeless tradition turn the tide toward a brighter, more peaceful future? Explore how this ancient tradition could shape modern political landscapes.

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Kremlin: Iran's nuclear program to be subject of future Russia-US talks

International Desk

The Kremlin said on Wednesday that future talks between Russia and the United States would include discussions on Iran's nuclear program; a subject it said had been "touched upon" in an initial round of US-Russia talks last month. "So far, there is only an understanding that the Russian position really is that the issue of Iran's nuclear dossier should be solved exclusively by peaceful political and diplomatic means," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "We believe that there is potential for this, because Iran is our ally, our partner, and a country with which we are developing comprehensive, mutually beneficial and mutually respectful relations, and Russia is ready to do everything possible for this. The United States is aware of this."

Also on Tuesday, the Kremlin spokesman expressed Russia's readiness to help Iran and the US resolve their disputes through negotiations.

On Tuesday, Bloomberg reported that Russia has agreed to assist US President Donald Trump's ad-

ministration in communicating with Iran on various issues, including on Tehran's nuclear program and alleged support for regional anti-US groups.

The Kremlin has not confirmed that, but has made clear that Iran is now one of the subjects that will be discussed in more details by Washington and Moscow.

Peskov said on Wednesday that the subject of Iran was touched upon during Russia-US talks in Saudi Arabia on February 18.

Asked specifically about the Bloomberg report, Peskov said: "Look, the topic of Iran was on the agenda, it was touched upon, but at the same time, not in detail."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made a one-day visit to Tehran last week and held talks with Iranian officials over a range of issues, including Iran's nuclear program.

In 2015, Iran reached a nuclear deal with Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Russia and China, which is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The US quit the agreement in 2018, during Donald Trump's first term as US president, and Iran

began moving away from its nuclear-related commitments under the deal.

The US unilateral withdrawal from the agreement and re-imposition of sanctions removed under the deal left the future of the JCPOA in limbo.

However, Iran has been trying to revive the JCPOA during the past years and has held several rounds of talks with the European parties to the deal, which their non-compliance to the agreement had a great impact on the implementation of the agreement.

There have been speculations on new negotiations between Tehran and Washington on Iran's peaceful nuclear program in recent months, especially after Trump's return to power in the United States in January.

However, Trump's language of threats and imposition of sanctions against Iran have made Iranian officials skeptical of negotiations with the US.

Trump last month restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran which includes efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero. Iranian officials say that negotiations under pressure are not meaningful.

Iran marks National Arbor Day Leader calls on Iranians to join tree planting movement

National Desk

Iranian officials including Leader of the Islamic Revolution, president and the parliament's speaker planted saplings on Wednesday to mark the National Tree Planting Day.

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called on all people to actively participate in a tree planting movement that started during the previous government as he planted saplings on Wednesday.

Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the environmental and economic benefits of the move, describing it as a "profitable investment, forward-thinking action, and a means of wealth generation."

The initiative to plant one billion trees over four years, which began last year, is practical and government institutions must help materialization of the goal, the Leader said.

Describing his move as symbolic, the Leader stressed that, "Planting trees is not just for young people but all people of different ages should show enthusiasm for this important, great, necessary and beautiful work"

President Masoud Pezeshkian also marked the day by planting saplings at the presidential compound. Pezeshkian said that clean air and a healthy atmosphere is possible if "we try to protect our living envi-



President Masoud Pezeshkian plants three saplings at the presidential compound to mark the National Arbor Day on March 5, 2025.
● President.ir

ronment, prevent its destruction, and develop green environment." The president further expressed hope that the people's participation in the move will help improve environment for themselves and their progeny.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Tehran's mayor Alireza Zakani also participated in the symbolic move elsewhere in Tehran.

National Tree Planting Day is annually celebrated on the fifteenth day of Esfand, the last month on the Iranian calendar. The day also marks the beginning of the National Week of Natural Resources.

Iranians have always paid special attention to nature. They believe planting saplings will make the world a better place to live in for us, our children and the generations to come.

Araghchi: Foreign dependence will only lead to loss of national sovereignty



Abbas Araghchi
● IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said dependence on other countries for security will only lead to instability and loss of national sovereignty, stressing that Iran has made a "conscious choice" to preserve its independence, for which it is paying the price.

Araghchi made the comments in an op-ed published by the Persian-language Ettela'at daily on Wednesday.

In the article, Iran's top diplomat touched on the "chaotic atmosphere" marked by US President Donald Trump's disastrous Oval Office meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last week. Trump's first meeting with Ukraine's president in the White House turned into a showdown over issues related to the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia. Trump claims that the US under former president Joe Biden has sent \$350 billion to help Ukraine in the war.

Since taking office in January, Trump, whose country has been the main supporter of Ukraine in its war against Russia, has been trying to force Kiev to sign a minerals deal with Washington in exchange for the US military support in the future.

"One of the key messages of this controversy is the shift in Ukraine's

position in the power equation. In the early days of the war, Zelensky relied more than ever on Western aid. But today, in the heart of the White House, he stands before the US president and delivers a sharp response," he wrote.

"This is a sign that even countries that have enjoyed Washington's support for years are no longer willing to be looked down upon. Ukraine, whether as an independent actor or as a pawn on the chessboard of global powers, has now shown that even small allies pay a price for their dignity and standing."

Iran, Araghchi wrote, is "carefully and prudently scrutinizing the turmoil in international politics which is always detrimental to global stability and security."

"Unlike many actors who are engaged in verbal tensions and

quick-tempered policies, Iran has always emphasized principles centered on independence, mutual respect, and avoiding engaging in unconstructive discourses.

"But Iran's independence is not an accident or the result of imposed circumstances; rather, it has been a conscious choice, a strategic decision, and an unchangeable principle in the country's foreign policy," the minister added.

Unlike some countries that have sought their security and stability in dependence on foreign powers, Araghchi wrote, Iran has long understood that dependence will only lead to instability and loss of national sovereignty.

"Real security does not come from the support of extra-regional powers, but from domestic capability, reliance on national capacities, and

reliance on the people," he said.

"Hence, Iran has chosen a different path; a path in which the fate of the country does not depend on the decisions of others, and policies are shaped based on national interests, not in the shadow of foreign advice." Preserving independence, however, comes at a price that Iran has always paid for, Araghchi said.

"From the early days of the Islamic Revolution, economic pressures, sanctions, military threats, and proxy wars were all designed to turn Iran into a subordinate actor in the international system," he said.

Contrary to the predictions of ill-wishers, Iran stood firm and showed that it not only does not give in to pressure, but also continues its path of development and progress by relying on its domestic capacities, Araghchi said.

Pezeshkian stresses consolidation of global ties as Iranian envoys' main duties

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called introducing the country's capabilities and strengthening relations with the world as the main duties of Iran's representatives and ambassadors in other countries.

Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with Iran's new envoy to the United Nations Office and International Organizations in Vienna Raza Najafi, new Ambassador in Nicaragua Ramin Zare as well as new Ambassador in Slovenia Marzieh Afkham.

He said efforts to introduce the country's capacities, strengthen our country's economic, political, cultural, scientific and academic ties with the world, remove obstacles and pave the way for foreign trade are among the most important duties of Iran's representatives and ambassadors in international forums and other countries.

He underlined that his government seeks maximum inter-



● president.ir

action with all countries based on mutual respect, avoiding differences, and developing global peace and security. Pezeshkian called on the envoys to do their utmost to clarify the consequences of the oppressive US sanctions against the Iranian nation, and to show the truth about Iran.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Parliament okays outlines of ISA membership to develop clean energy



IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Parliament on Wednesday approved the general terms of a bill for the country's membership in the International Solar Alliance (ISA). The vote saw 158 lawmakers in favor, 83 against, and one abstention out of 249 representatives present. During the session, the Parliament reviewed a report from the Energy Committee regarding Iran's potential membership in the ISA. The bill's approval marks a step toward Iran's formal entry into the global alliance, which aims to promote solar energy use and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, IRNA reported. Before the vote, Alireza Salimi, a representative from Tehran, voiced opposition to the bill, arguing that it could implicitly bind Iran to the Paris Agreement. He warned that such a move could limit the country's development and prioritize greenhouse gas reduction over economic growth. "Joining this alliance would harm Iran's interests and impose restric-

tions on the country," Salimi said. In contrast, Malek Shariati-Niasar, another Tehran representative, supported the bill, stating that it had been thoroughly debated and amended in the Energy Committee. He emphasized that the ISA focuses on renewable energy and does not impose restrictions on member countries. "This treaty is about solar energy development, and there is no mention of limitations in any part of it," Shariati-Niasar said. Hossein-Ali Hajideligani, a representative from Shahin Shahr, also opposed the bill, expressing concerns about potential scientific and technological imbalances. "What guarantees do we have that the knowledge they claim to share will actually be provided? Meanwhile, we would be obligated to share our scientific findings with them, which could be more detrimental to our national interests," he said. Ruhollah Abbaspour, a representative from Qazvin, supported the bill, arguing that it aligns with Iran's strategic energy policies and national inter-

ests. "Enemies seek to isolate Iran globally, but this treaty will help secure our national interests and promote solar energy development, which is crucial," he said. Kazem Delkhosh, the deputy for legislative affairs at the Presidential Office, representing the government, clarified that the ISA is not linked to the Paris Agreement. He noted that while Iran's fifth Development Plan aimed to achieve 5,000 megawatts of solar energy, the target was not met. "This treaty is about financial and technical support for member countries, and it is essential for Iran to join international agreements to advance its national interests," he said. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) has provided training to over 4,500 people from its member countries. As a founding member and president of the ISA Assembly, India has supported the alliance through financial contributions and technical knowledge sharing when requested by the ISA Secretariat.

Construction of new power plants

Meanwhile, Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi stated on Tuesday evening that Iran has the capability to build cost-effective and high-quality power plants, noting that the capacity of power plants set to be operational before next summer's peak demand will be less than 10,000 megawatts. Aliabadi added that the current power plant capacity stands at 93,000 megawatts. He further explained that the country's power generation capacity will reach approximately 100,000 megawatts by next summer. Aliabadi emphasized Iran's ability to construct affordable and high-quality power plants. According to the IRNA, some forecasts predict a potential electricity shortfall of around 24,000 megawatts for next summer. In response, the Energy Ministry has launched extensive efforts to address the issue, with 14 mega-projects designed to ensure sufficient power supply during the summer. On Tuesday, government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani highlighted the sig-

nificant challenges in the energy and water sectors, stating that the government is facing severe imbalances in these areas. She outlined the government's plan to fully address these shortages, noting that 14 major projects, or mega-projects, are underway. These projects focus on both production and demand management. On the production side, efforts are being made to enhance the capacity of power plants and increase electricity generation through renewable energy sources, with a target of producing 30,000 megawatts over four years. Mohajerani added that while the Seventh Development Plan initially aimed for 12,000 megawatts of production, the government intends to raise this target to 30,000 megawatts over the next four years. She emphasized that programs have been developed for production, transmission, and consumption to help reduce the imbalances. "We must recognize that these imbalances are a painful reality, and accepting this will make it easier to address them. We are facing significant deficits in both energy and water sectors," she said.

Turkey starts taking delivery of Turkmen gas via Iran

Economy Desk

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad announced the start of natural gas flow from Turkmenistan to Turkey through Iran, stating that the agreement has been finalized and gas is now being transported. Paknejad said on Wednesday that the project was successfully completed in recent days thanks to the efforts of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and other involved sectors, according to Shana. He emphasized the significance of the project, noting its impact on gas trade and oil-related products, as well as Iran's regional interactions with Turkmenistan and Turkey. Paknejad confirmed the finalization of the agreement, stating that gas flow has begun and the deal is now active. He added that further details would be shared in the future when they are ready



MEHR

for public disclosure. The minister highlighted the project as a key step in strengthening Iran's position as a regional energy hub and underscored the current administration's commitment to advancing energy diplomacy. It was previously reported that BOTAS and Turkmen gas to Turkey on February 10, 2025. The plan involves beginning deliveries in

March via Iran under a barter scheme, with an annual volume of 1.3 billion cubic meters. The current year was chosen as a pilot period for such deliveries, with the expectation that a long-term agreement on exporting Turkmen gas to Turkey will be concluded during this period.

Expansion of energy ties with Iraq

Also, Paknejad and Iraq's electricity minister on Wednesday emphasized the need

to expand cooperation in oil, gas, petrochemicals, and electricity between the two neighboring countries during a meeting in Tehran. Paknejad met with Iraq's Electricity Minister Ziad Ali Fadel at the Iranian Oil Ministry as the two ministers discussed strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in the energy sector, given the deep historical, cultural, religious, and political ties between the two nations.

Tehran, Moscow discuss greater cooperation in aviation engineering

Economy Desk

Hossein Pourfarzaneh, the deputy minister of roads and urban development and head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, met with Dmitry Yarov, the deputy minister of transport and head of the Federal Air Transport Agency of Russia, during a visit to Moscow.

The trip aimed to enhance aviation cooperation between the two countries, following the signing of a bilateral agreement on flight standards and qualifications, as well as the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty between Iran and Russia. Under the agreement, both parties will recognize each other's aviation standards, paving the way for Iranian companies to expand exports of technical and engineering services to Moscow. Kazem Jalali, the ambassador of Iran to Russia, hosted the delegation on Tuesday evening. The two sides discussed enhancing cooperation in the aviation transport industry. Earlier, Yarov noted that several Russian passenger



IRNA

aircraft had been repaired and maintained in Iran, praising the quality of work by Iranian companies. In an exclusive interview with IRNA in Moscow, Yarov stated that Russian airline Aeroflot had sent one of its aircraft to Iran for maintenance, which was successfully completed. He emphasized that Aeroflot's evaluation of the Iranian companies' work in maintaining flightworthiness was excellent and satisfactory. Yarov expressed confidence that Russian companies would continue collaborating with Iranian firms due to the high demand for such services in Russia. He also highlighted recent cooperation agreements signed with Iran's Civil Avi-

ation Organization, under which Iranian maintenance and design companies are expected to submit requests for activity permits in Russia. Since 2021, three Iranian aviation companies have obtained necessary approvals and licenses to provide services related to maintaining the flightworthiness of Russian aircraft. Yarov praised Iran's capabilities in the aviation industry, noting that the products displayed at the exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Moscow were impressive. He expressed optimism about the future of collaboration, foreseeing significant opportunities for Iranian companies in Russia's aviation and airport industries.



Nowruz; A cultural force for unity

EXCLUSIVE Nowruz, the ancient celebration of renewal and hope, transcends borders, uniting over 300 million people across diverse cultures, languages, and religions. Rooted in the shared heritage of the Aryan civilization, this festival has endured millennia, surviving political upheavals, wars, and cultural shifts. Today, Nowruz serves as a powerful symbol of peace, humanism, and respect for nature, fostering kinship and solidarity among communities from the Balkans to South Asia. Beyond its cultural significance, Nowruz has emerged as a vital tool for diplomacy, promoting mutual understanding and regional cooperation in a fragmented world. By celebrating shared values and traditions, Nowruz bridges gaps, encouraging dialogue and collaboration among nations. Nowruz reminds us of the enduring power of culture to inspire unity and build a more harmonious world. Below, we present a collection of exclusive op-eds by scholars and experts exploring the cultural, historical, and diplomatic significance of Nowruz, offering unique insights into this timeless celebration.



Haft sin, an arrangement of seven symbolic Nowruz items, whose names start with the letter "s" in Persian, is displayed on a table in front of the flags of countries that celebrate Nowruz.

IRNA

Nation of Nowruz



By Mahmoud Shouri
Faculty member at UT

OPINION

From the perspective of many cultural and historical sociologists, nations are primarily formed through cultural, linguistic, religious, and historical ties that set them apart from other groups. In this sense, the real boundaries of nations lie more in the collective consciousness and psyche of their people than in what can be seen on maps. If we accept that a nation's identity is shaped by shared cultural, linguistic, religious, and historical characteristics, then we also have to accept that these traits can create cultural boundaries that may extend beyond geographical and political borders. In other words, just as a nation can be recognized and distinguished based on its cultural features and unifying tools such as language, history, and shared customs, these shared customs and cultural traits can also represent a nation. Although, throughout history, cultures have undergone significant changes due to political and non-political events such as migrations, natural phenomena, wars, and expansions, and although nations have, in the same vein, found new reasons and criteria for political formations, the more resilient elements of culture have often found ways to endure amidst these transformations. Regardless of emerging boundaries, they have consistently represented signs of a shared historical identity. And that's why if we temporarily set aside [separative] political considerations and obligations and fully embrace [uni-

fying] cultural sources and elements, we can speak of a "Great Nation of Nowruz," whose boundaries span from the western regions of China to Eastern Europe and from India to Turkey. According to historical sources, Nowruz, as the oldest celebration of the New Year in the world, is linked to the pre-literate era of Aryan civilization. Contemporary researchers believe that the important centers of Aryan civilization were located in what is now southern Russia and Ukraine. However, between the fourth and second centuries B.C., the Aryans migrated to more southern regions. Before this period, various customs and traditions emerged and spread among the Aryan tribes. The rituals and traditions of Nowruz also took shape during this ancient Aryan era and became widespread in other major Aryan regions. Although the narratives about Nowruz and its origins are intertwined with numerous religious and national myths and rituals, its endurance and geographical scope indicate the existence of deep-rooted elements and connections. Even significant events such as the spread of Islam, the Mongol invasion, and the formation of the Soviet Union within this geographical expanse have not led to the forgetting or erasure of this tradition. Indeed, the popular nature of Nowruz — which has not been officially overseen by authorities or clergy unlike many other festivals — and its connection to the natural life of humans and respect for nature have been the key to its endurance and continuity throughout history. Currently, a large part of the geographical domain of Nowruz lies in

a region where, for nearly seven decades under the official policies of the Soviet Union, there was no desire to preserve or practice the rituals of this ancient celebration. Although no official document banning the celebration of Nowruz in the Soviet Union has been found, archival records suggest that the Muslim people of the Soviet Union held their celebrations and ceremonies at home or occasionally in public spaces but under strict surveillance by Soviet security agents. These gatherings were informal, simple, and devoid of any enthusiasm. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nowruz is once again celebrated simultaneously with Iran and some other countries across all Central Asian and Caucasus nations, as well as parts of Russia and even Ukraine. The Crimean and Volga Tatars in Ukraine, with more or less similar ceremonies, share the same reasons for spring cleaning, wearing new clothes, visiting friends and relatives, and rejoicing as the Tajiks in Tajikistan, Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmens in Central Asia, Kurds in Turkey, and even Albanians in Albania, as well as many others in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and elsewhere. Due to the change of the year and the arrival of spring, the Nation of Nowruz, even if only for a few days, sets aside boundaries and potential new political differences to celebrate with a shared purpose. For this reason, it can be confidently reiterated that the Nation of Nowruz is a nation of peace, humanism, and respect for nature, and this noble human tradition must be preserved with special care and attention.

Nowruz in today's world



By Mandana Tishehyar
Faculty member at ATU

OPINION

How can Nowruz be relevant in the world today? The twelve countries that share the Nowruz tradition have inscribed this ancient festival on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Furthermore, numerous nations — from the Balkans and the Caucasus to West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia — celebrate Nowruz each year at the arrival of spring. But how can Nowruz, a festival uniting diverse peoples and founded on the principles of affection and friendship, contribute to the world today? Nowadays, modern regions have reshaped the world in new ways, and we are living in a "regionalized world". This emerging model of regionalism is not based on traditional structures or established institutions but is instead shaped by the accumulation of knowledge, education, and the construction of new shared identities. New regionalism is not driven by rigid structures but by ideas. Today, even the actions of political and economic actors derive meaning from a broader socio-cultural context. Historical structures and global orders are giving way to dynamic social ecosystems, and the moral man is gradually replacing the economic man. In this landscape, political matters serve to uphold fundamental values such as cultural and social development, security, peace, and environmental sustainability. Moreover, governments are no longer the sole architects of regions; civil society, along with scientific, cultural, and social institutions, play an increasingly crucial role in shaping these spaces. Formerly, official regions were state-centered, but today, communities and associations forge real regions. Imagine the possibilities if official and organic regions were to converge; how much deeper and more meaningful regionality could become. Regionalization is an effort by imagined communities to create a new world based on the cultural affinities and connections among people. And Nowruz em-

bodies all the qualities needed to inspire different nations to come together and construct a new region.

● **Nowruz holds historical significance:** It serves as a reminder of the historical bonds among the inhabitants of many lands.

● **Nowruz has social significance:** The festival reinforces values such as kinship, communal solidarity, and the strengthening of friendship and goodwill.

● **Nowruz has economic significance:** It encourages families to refresh their belongings while revitalizing markets across cities and countries.

● **Nowruz has cultural significance:** Over centuries, this celebration has nurtured a rich literary heritage in multiple languages and has inspired artistic expressions in photography, film, theatre, music, and painting.

● **Nowruz has security significance:** How can we imagine the peoples of the Nowruz region knowing one another, sitting together at the Nowruz table, and then turning to conflict and hostility?!

● **Nowruz has political significance:** This ancient tradition upholds the ideals of equality among all social groups and classes, while traditions like the Mir-e-Nowruzi ceremony reflect early democratic principles.

● **Nowruz has religious significance:** It is the only festival within our civilizational sphere that brings together followers of different religions and sects in a shared celebration of nature's renewal.

● **Nowruz has environmental significance:** From the sprouting of sabzeh in homes from Baku to Bandar Abbas, to the flowers adorning young girls' hair from Kurdistan to Kashmir, Nowruz instills an appreciation of nature in children.

Accordingly, this ancient heritage of our ancestors presents a valuable opportunity to shape a new region and increase convergence among the peoples of the Nowruz civilization. In this regard, our task is to move beyond material definitions of power and recognize ideas and meanings as new elements shaping power. In this way, we can modernize Nowruz and construct a new peaceful world.



Representatives of different nationalities and ethnic groups that celebrate Nowruz gather on stage at a Nowruz festival in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, western Russia, on March 21, 2019.

RUSSIA BEYOND



‘Nowruz moment’
in regional politics



By Mehdi
Mirmohammadi
Foreign affairs expert

O P I N I O N

Donald Trump’s meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House was a glaring sign that the world had once again drifted back into an era dominated by great-power politics. To put it more bluntly, Trump and his vice president’s condescending exchange with Zelensky laid bare what can only be described as a “great-power moment in global affairs.” This ominous shift had already been set in motion long before: with the Iran nuclear deal being thrown under the bus following Trump’s withdrawal and Europe’s backtracking; with Ukraine becoming collateral damage in the geopolitical tug-of-war between the US and Russia; with Palestinian human rights trampled underfoot in the Gaza conflict; and with Syria and its people paying the price in the post-Assad era. It is bitter to admit, but the world is once again witnessing the fate of nations being determined by the powerful. We have rolled back to a time when great powers divided up weaker nations as they saw fit, cutting deals in their own interest and that of their allies. The “great-power moment” has always been a perilous one for our region and beyond. It was in such moments that the Ottoman Empire was torn apart, the illegitimate state of Israel was brought into being, Germany was split in two, Poland was nearly wiped off the map, and Eastern Europe was swallowed whole. Time and again, these powers have chipped away at the cultural unity and peace of our region — stoking divisions between neighbors, stirring up rivalries among key players, launching military interventions, and resorting to all manner of soft-power tactics to keep nations in check. Contrary to the dominant narrative in political discourse, which paints our region as one rife with division, this is one of the most cohesive regions in the world. On the one hand, Islam has provided a shared cultural and intellectual foundation that stretches from the Indian subcontinent to Eurasia, Anatolia, the Levant, the Arab world, and the Persian Gulf. On the other, Iranian culture has acted as a unifying force — a belt binding together Anatolia, the Caucasus, the Iranian plateau, Central Asia, and the subcontinent. This Islamic foundation and Iranian cultural bond have historically fostered peace and cooperation among nations. But here is the harsh truth: the “great-power moment” has repeatedly stood in the way of this natural course. If we are to break free from the vicious cycle of great-power politics, we must carve out alternative regional moments — ones that belong to us, not to external forces. Islam offers the framework for what we can call a “unity moment” — a moment rooted in shared history, despite ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. However, diversity alone is not enough. If it is not reinforced by a unifying structure, it can be easily exploited by great powers and turned into a tool for their own interests. This is where Nowruz comes into play. Nowruz, with its deep roots across the region, provides that very Islamic unifying structure. By fostering and sustaining a “Nowruz moment” in regional affairs, we can push back against the return of the “great-power moment” and the instability it brings. The Nowruz moment calls for new thoughts and actions, offering fresh perspectives for understanding, tolerance, renewal, and unity while preventing the re-emergence of the “ominous moment of great powers.” From the Indian subcontinent to Central Asia, from Eurasia to the Caucasus, the Iranian plateau, and Anatolia — these are the lands where the Nowruz moment can rise. Unlike the great-power moment, the Nowruz moment is a people’s moment. It signals a time when the nations of the region, within the blessed framework of Islam, can forge stronger bonds, accept differences, build bridges across divides, and achieve unity in diversity. In the Nowruz moment, nations take center stage and political affairs do not unfold in their absence. No one is belittled; rather, each nation’s presence is recognized and honored as a vital part of the political landscape. The Nowruz moment does not belong to any single nation — it arises from the harmonious movement of these nations in their quest for truth, goodness, and renewal.

Nowruz heralds peace, human rights



By Anahita Seifi
Faculty member at ATU

O P I N I O N

The world today is in dire need of a peace that fosters respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The international community, in its pursuit of global peace and security, has come to the conclusion that the most effective way to uphold peace is through human rights mechanisms. The recognition of values such as peace and human rights is nothing new in history. However, it should not be overlooked that reaching this point — where peace and human rights are acknowledged as interdependent values — was no easy feat. One cannot fully realize peace without ensuring human rights, and vice versa. The establishment of peace is only possible through a “culture of peace,” which aims to instill the defense of peace in the minds of individuals through education and communication. Cultural diplomacy plays a key role in fostering and expanding this culture. It paves the way for cooperation, cultural understanding, and the exchange of cultural values, thereby strengthening amicable relations among nations. By focusing on cultural interaction, cultural diplomacy lays the groundwork for a society built on security, human rights, democracy, and peacebuilding. At its core, cultural diplomacy revolves around the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture to enhance mutual understanding. It is about engaging with and influencing other societies through culture. Iranian culture and civilization have long embodied principles of altruism, human dignity, and peace among different nations, with Nowruz standing out as its most prominent symbol. Nowruz promotes dialogue, reconciliation, and a culture of peace, reinforcing unity, human rights, and human dignity. For centuries, vast regions of Asia have celebrated Nowruz in grand fashion. The festival serves

as a reminder of monotheism, gratitude, mutual respect, and an opportunity to cleanse societies of impurities. Thus, Nowruz holds the potential to bring different ethnicities and nations together, fostering peace and friendship. UNESCO officially registered Nowruz as an intangible cultural heritage on September 30, 2009. Among the most influential cultural assets, Nowruz stands as a deeply symbolic tradition filled with cultural emblems and spiritual messages. Understanding how to leverage Nowruz as a diplomatic tool is key to achieving both regional and transregional peace. Beyond its historical roots in Iranian civilization, Nowruz serves as an avenue for cross-cultural dialogue and the promotion of peace and stability. At its core, Nowruz and its associated traditions carry profound messages of solidarity, hope, and the pursuit of a better future. The Middle East, for instance, has long been a cradle of diverse civilizations, resulting in an unparalleled ethnic, religious, and cultural mosaic. However, in the absence of coexistence policies, this diversity has, at times, created a fertile ground for security challenges. Therefore, within the strategic framework of national security, aimed at preserving and promoting peace and stability and preventing threats, festivals and rituals can be established that are attractive and respected by all societies and cultures. Such celebrations and rituals emphasize the shared values among all societies and cultures, ensuring that no culture or society has confronted or rejected them over the years but has embraced them instead. Among the most significant examples of such traditions is Nowruz, a festival shared across ethnic groups shaped by Iranian civilization. It has the power to reinforce both regional identity and solidarity while fostering a peaceful environment through cultural values such as human dignity, forgiveness, and mutual respect. Revitalizing and expanding this

ancient tradition through modern forms like cultural and public diplomacy can serve as a preventive measure against conflicts across culturally connected nations. More precisely, Nowruz, as a common heritage among various nations, provides a fertile ground for cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Shared customs, culinary traditions, music, and other cultural elements tied to Nowruz can bridge gaps between societies, deepening cross-cultural appreciation. This intrinsic connection between Nowruz and diplomacy underscores its significance. For centuries, Nowruz has remained a focal point for cultural and human interactions across Eurasia, retaining its role as a fundamental element of national identity for many nations in the region. Recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, Nowruz is widely regarded by regional states as an integral part of their civilizational identity.

aspects of foreign policy. As a shared cultural tradition in Eurasia, Nowruz offers a diplomatic and cultural mechanism to strengthen regional relations. From an anthropological perspective, traditions like Nowruz — rooted in unity, harmony, and respect for human rights and the environment — underscore one key insight: the deep connection between Nowruz and the pursuit of lasting peace. A peace that is thoughtful and stems from the pure thoughts embedded within the human spirit. Thus, the commemoration of Nowruz is a direct manifestation of a higher goal: strengthening global peace through the respect and preservation of national cultures, world heritage, and cultural diversity. By celebrating Nowruz, societies honor their roots, history, and the values that have shaped civilizations for centuries. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution



People of Tajikistan hold a large carnival celebrating Nowruz in the capital city of Dushanbe on March 20, 2019.
● FLICKR

Nowruz and its importance to national identities in the region, coupled with its image as a ceremony promoting a culture of peace, make it an ideal candidate for successful cultural diplomacy. Successfully leveraging this shared tradition with other Nowruz-celebrating nations can extend its influence beyond cultural diplomacy, creating new avenues in broader foreign policy strategies and offering new horizons for cooperation in various

“International Day of Nowruz” on February 13, 2010 as a symbol of a culture of peace. For the first time in the UN’s history, “Iranian Nowruz” was granted official international recognition. Nowruz represents a shared identity that fosters convergence among nations. It embodies a discourse that naturally gives rise to peace — a peace that the region and the world desperately need now more than ever.

Nowruz diplomacy; A cultural bridge



By Elham Abedini
International relations expert

O P I N I O N

Nowruz, the Persian New Year, is celebrated by more than 300 million people globally, mainly in neighboring countries. This festival brings together millions of individuals from various backgrounds and traditions, all united by a shared belief in joy, renewal, and hope that is embodied in the celebration of Nowruz. Beyond its cultural significance, Nowruz acts as a potent diplomatic instrument. It presents a distinctive opportunity to foster peace, unity, and mutual understanding among nations in a world frequently characterized by political tensions and conflicts. As an ancient festival recognized by UNESCO as part of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Nowruz carries a message of renewal that resonates across cultures and borders, presenting an opportunity for cooperation. Understanding how to fully leverage Nowruz diplomacy is crucial, and the key to this lies in the media’s role. The media

serves as a bridge, connecting people and promoting appreciation for cultural diversity. By raising awareness about Nowruz and its significance, the media can present this beautiful festival to a regional audience and encourage governments to acknowledge its potential as a diplomatic tool. Covering Nowruz celebrations is crucial for highlighting the festival’s historical and cultural importance through documentaries, news reports, and feature articles. The traditions, rituals, and values associated with Nowruz resonate with everyone who celebrates it, regardless of their background or nationality. By showcasing the festival’s role in promoting peace and unity, the media can inspire individuals to value the importance of cultural diplomacy. At the Second Tehran Dialogue Forum, held on March 16, 2021, Iran’s then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, emphasized the significance of Nowruz in fostering a sense of shared destiny. Zarif stated, “Nowruz is a celebration of renewal and hope, a time when we come together to reflect on our shared values and common destiny. It serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of

cultural diplomacy in promoting peace and unity.” These remarks highlight the potential of Nowruz diplomacy to unite people and address regional challenges. Nowruz diplomacy is not merely about celebrating a festival; it is about using the cultural significance of Nowruz to encourage regional cooperation, foster cultural understanding, and promote peace and stability in the region. By covering diplomatic initiatives related to Nowruz, the media can highlight the festival’s potential to address regional challenges. This media attention can encourage other countries to participate in similar efforts, fostering a sense of global unity. Furthermore, media coverage of Nowruz diplomacy can encourage governments to acknowledge the festival’s value as a diplomatic tool. By highlighting successful diplomatic initiatives and the positive effects of cultural exchanges, the media can motivate policymakers to support and invest in Nowruz-related diplomatic efforts. Governments can draw lessons from Nowruz diplomacy to strengthen regional cooperation and address pressing global challenges. By recognizing the cultural and diplomatic impor-

tance of the festival, they can strive to promote peace and unity on a larger scale. Additionally, Nowruz has a significant economic impact. The Nowruz holiday season generates substantial economic activity, contributing billions of dollars to the economies of the countries where it is celebrated through increased tourism, retail sales, and cultural events. This economic aspect further underscores the importance of Nowruz as a valuable cultural and diplomatic asset. Overall, Nowruz diplomacy offers a distinctive opportunity to foster peace, unity, and mutual understanding among nations by leveraging the cultural and historical significance of the Persian New Year. As UNESCO stated, “Nowruz promotes the values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families, as well as reconciliation and neighborliness, thus contributing to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples.” By covering diplomatic initiatives related to Nowruz, the media can emphasize the festival’s potential to tackle regional challenges. This media focus can inspire other countries to engage in similar efforts, nurturing a sense of global unity.

AFC Champions League Two:

Tractor boss Skocic rues lack of cutting edge, confident of progress

Sports Desk

Tractor head coach Dragan Skocic was frustrated by his side's poor finishing in the goalless draw against Saudi side Al Taawoun at home in the first leg of their AFC Champions League quarterfinal on Tuesday.

Tractor dominated the best part of the contest at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium in Tabriz, but visitors' goalkeeper Abdulquddus Atiay pulled off a string of saves, as both sides will have it all to play for in next week's return leg in Buraidah's Wolves Park.

Prolific striker Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh had a glorious opportunity to take his tally to nine goals in the competition, when he evaded his marker and with the keeper stranded, saw his shot rattle off the crossbar in the opening stages of the second half.

Speaking at the post-match press conference, Skocic said he was "not satisfied" with the final outcome but remained optimistic about his team's chances of progressing to the semifinals.

"I said yesterday that this match is not going to end today. We created many chances, but we missed them. We had a strong rhythm, but unfortunately, we did not score. We showed how



Tractor's Mahdi Hashemnejad (red) and Saad Al Nasser of Al Taawoun go up in an aerial challenge during the AFC Champions League Two quarterfinal first leg at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium, Tabriz, Iran, on March 4, 2025.

● MOJTABA SALEH/MIZAN

chances in the next game and I hope we write fate differently." Meanwhile, Skocic's opposite number Mohammed Al Abdali was pleased with the result, though he blamed the quality of the pitch for his side's performance.

"I am very happy with the result. The ball is still in the field. This was the first half of the match and I hope we advance to the next stage. I would like to thank the players," said the Saudi coach.

"To be honest, one of the factors was the playing field. I don't know what the problem was, but the field affected our performance. We always play possession football, but the field didn't allow us to do that.

"The same problem occurred for Tractor. I don't know if it was because of the hardness of the field or the cold weather but in the second leg, you can be sure that we will have more possession of the ball on our own field."

good a team we are and we are going to win the second leg," said the Croatian.

Asked if he had a reason to wor-

ry after his team played to second goalless draw in as many games, following the stalemate against Sepahan last time out

in the Iranian top flight, Skocic said: "No, it's not a cause for concern that the opportunities were not scored today.

It doesn't worry me. Whenever the players give everything they can on the field, I'm happy. I know we'll have the same



● IAWF

Four Iranians among leaders in UWW Rankings

Sports Desk

Four Iranian wrestlers led their respective weight classes in the latest UWW Rankings, which was released following the conclusion of the Muhamet Malo tournament in Tirana, Albania.

Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) topped their freestyle categories after walking with ultimate prize in the second Ranking Series event of international season last week.

Reigning Olympic champions Saeid Esmaili and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi, meanwhile, stood atop the Gre-

co-Roman 67kg and 97kg rankings respectively, despite missing the competition in the Albanian capital. In other Greco-Roman weight classes, world superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg) – also a gold medalist in Tirana – stood second to Cuban great Mijain López, who announced his retirement after winning a fifth successive Olympic gold last year, while Mohammad-Ali Geraei is second in the 82kg category, following Hungarian Erik Szilvassy, who was beaten by the Iranian in the final showdown in last October's World Championships.

An Olympic silver medalist and gold winner in Tirana, Alireza Mohmadi as well as world silver winner Pouya Dadmarz were also the second best in the Greco-Roman 87kg and 55kg rankings respectively, while Hassan Yazdani followed Bulgarian Olympic champion Magomed Ramazanov in the freestyle 86kg class.

Kamran Qasempour, who won the gold on return to his favorite freestyle 92kg class in Tirana, is third in his category, following Russian sensation Abdurashid Sadulaev and Georgian Miriani Maisuradze.

FIBA West Asia Super League:

Buva on double-double as Tabiat edges Sagesse 88-87

FIBA – Croatian center Ivan Buva contributed with a game-high 26 points as well as 11 rebounds to help Iranian champion Tabiat edge out Lebanese club Sagesse 88-87 in their FIBA West Asia Super League opener at the Nouhad Nawfal Stadium on Tuesday night.

American Stedmon Lemon broke the 86-all deadlock to give themselves the lead for good with 33.7 seconds left to play and some stroke of luck afterward would enable the reigning Iran Basketball League champions to come away with the narrow win, joining Amman United Club as the first winners of the West Asia League contest. Buva also had four assists, delivering solidly in the endgame that saw him engage in a shootout with Zach Lofton

as both squads went back and forth. Lemon produced 21 points and six rebounds. Sina Vahedi delivered 11 points and seven assists, while Rasoul Mozafari chipped in 10 markers.

Mozafari himself was responsible for pushing Tabiat ahead, nailing a three-pointer first before following it up with a deuce to give themselves the 86-81 advantage with 2:12 remaining. But Sagesse, of course, refused to quit, with Jad Khalil and Omar Jamaledine joining hands to tie the game at 86-all with 1:18 to go – much to the delight of the Green Castle faithful that trooped to the venue.

Lemon, though, broke the tie with a layup to give the crew 88-86 lead, and it helped them a great deal that Shabazz Muhammad failed to tie it up again

as he only split his foul shots with 28 ticks left.

Sagesse appeared to have gotten a big break when they forced a five-second inbound violation on Lemon, but couldn't maximize the possession they got back as Omar Jamaledine missed his potential game-winning trey. Tabiat shot exactly 50-percent from the floor, including 10 triples – twice what the opposite made. That efficient shooting display was also thanks to the 25 assists they had as a unit.

"In a tournament like this, or in every tournament, the first game, I think, is the most important," Buva said after the victory, adding: "It's gonna be a pretty fast tournament, like four games in five days, so opening up with a win is important."



● FIBA

Investment opportunities in Mazandaran Province's diverse tourism landscape

Iranica Desk

Tourism is recognized as one of the most vital and dynamic economic sectors worldwide, serving as a key driver of economic development and job creation in numerous countries. The rapid expansion of this industry over recent decades has left a profound impact on gross domestic product (GDP), foreign income, employment opportunities, and the enhancement of local infrastructure.

In Iran, Mazandaran Province distinguishes itself as one of the nation's foremost tourist attractions, attributable to its unique geographical features, rich biodiversity, historical and cultural landmarks, and its advantageous proximity to the capital city. Yet, despite its vast potential for tourism development, the opportunities within Mazandaran Province have not been fully exploited. This gap highlights the urgent need for comprehensive and strategic investment planning. Gaining an understanding of the tourism economy, assessing its importance, and examining the benefits of investing in this sector can significantly contribute to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry in Mazandaran Province.

The tourism economy involves a multitude of economic and commercial activities linked to the tourism sector. This includes accommodation services, transportation, hospitality, entertainment, shopping, and a variety of supporting services. This concept underscores the direct correlation between tourism and economic development, illustrating how an influx of tourists increases the demand for goods and services, which in turn stimulates income generation, job creation, and the prosperity of local enterprises. The tourism economy influences not only the private sector but also provides substantial benefits to governments through tax revenues, entrance fees collected from tourists, the enhancement of infrastructure, and the creation of favorable investment conditions. In essence, tourism presents a unique opportunity for regional economies to reduce their reliance on traditional resources, steering them towards a diverse and sustainable economic framework.

One of the most significant impacts of the tourism economy pertains to income generation and contributions to gross domestic product (GDP). The arrival of both domestic and international tourists stimulates spending across various segments, including accommodation, transportation, hospitality, entertainment, and souvenir shopping, all of which directly contribute to the economic growth of the province.

Moreover, tourism stands as one of the largest employment-generating industries globally, creating myriad job opportunities at various societal levels. This encompasses roles within accommodation and hospitality services, entertainment and recreational sectors, land and water transportation, as well as positions for drivers, tour guides, local community leaders, artisans, lo-

cal producers, and other service providers, including fuel supply centers. In total, over 70 different occupations are engaged in supporting this industry, all benefiting from the economic prosperity brought about by tourism.

In the case of Mazandaran Province, which grapples with challenges of unemployment, tourism emerges as a practical solution for alleviating joblessness and enhancing the livelihoods of its residents. To cultivate the tourism sector effectively, a focus on infrastructure improvement is essential. Investment in infrastructure will yield tangible benefits for the tourism industry, the comfort of visitors, and the overall welfare of local communities.

Consequently, initiatives such as the development and modernization of Sari, Nowshahr, and Ramsar airports are crucial to bolster both domestic and international flight capacities. Furthermore, the construction, upgrading, and enhancement of highways with adequate facilities aim to improve traffic flow and road safety. Another key initiative is the establishment and development of scenic tourist trains, which will offer travelers unique experiences along the country's most picturesque rail routes, enriched with fascinating narratives. Lastly, investing in intelligent transportation systems will provide efficient guidance for tourists, thus representing vital developmental advances within the transportation and logistics sector in Mazandaran Province.

Infrastructure and quality of life improvements

The deputy head of the Mazandaran Province's Association of Sustainable Green Tourism conveyed to IRNA that with the growth of the tourism industry, both governmental and private sectors are compelled to enhance transportation infrastructure, including roads, airports, healthcare services, security, and more. The improvements made in these areas will undoubtedly benefit not only tourists but also local residents, leading to an elevated quality of life throughout the province and its surrounding regions.

Mehran Hassani elaborated, stating, "From a cultural standpoint, cultural tourism represents one of the pivotal sectors within the tourism economy that can significantly contribute to the preservation and revitalization of local culture, traditional handicrafts, and indigenous practices."

He highlighted that tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences are often eager to engage in activities such as local handicraft exhibitions and traditional food festivals. This engagement not only reinforces cultural identity but also enhances the income of local residents. In this context, Mazandaran Province, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse customs, possesses considerable potential for a variety of cultural tourism activities.

An ideal environment for tourism investment

He asserted that given the significance of the tourism economy,

Mazandaran Province, with its seas, forests, mountains, rivers, springs, and waterfalls, can offer a broad spectrum of tourism activities and create an ideal environment for investment in this sector. He explained that natural attractions serve as the primary focus of tourism in Mazandaran Province, with particular emphasis on coastal and marine tourism. This focus aligns with the overarching policies regarding the marine-based economy established by the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, as well as the executive strategies put forth by the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, and the Governor of Mazandaran Province.

Hassani outlined various investment opportunities within the tourism industry in Mazandaran Province, which include the construction of recreational piers for boating, jet skiing, fishing, and leisurely walks. These developments also encompass recreational piers designed to accommodate lodging facilities, cafes, shopping centers, and mixed-use piers; luxurious coastal resorts featuring nature-compatible architecture and marine hotels; marine recreational stations; professional water sports clubs; and the establishment of modern water parks and recreational centers along the coastline and beaches.

Ecotourism potential

According to this tourism expert, the forests and ecotourism represent another significant natural attraction, particularly the Hyrcanian forests, which are recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and rank among Mazandaran Province's most treasured natural assets. Investment opportunities in this area could involve the development of eco-lodges and forest attractions catering to nature enthusiasts, the creation of recreational centers, well-equipped forest camping sites, and the construction of walking paths deep within the forest, as well as cycling, horseback riding, and organized nature and wildlife tours that adhere to responsible environmental practices.

He also identified another area of natural attraction in Mazandaran Province related to mountains and adventure tourism, emphasizing the potential offered by the Alborz Mountains that encircle the province. He continued by stating that these existing landscapes present a significant opportunity for the development of sports and adventure tourism in the region. To create investment opportunities in this sector, standard ski resorts could be established in high-altitude areas such as Baladed, Kiasar, Savadkuh, and Hezar Jarib of Behshahr.

The tourism researcher noted that planning for the development of hiking, rock climbing, and caving routes in the mountains of Mazandaran Province could be effective. Currently, both professional and amateur groups engage in various activities throughout the province without any formal planning or facilities, highlighting the need for organization and the identi-

fication of promising locations for investment by interested parties.

Hassani added that among the other potentials in this field are individuals with a specific interest in thrill sports such as paragliding, bungee jumping, zip-lining, and other extreme sports. Investing in the establishment of training centers equipped for these activities would diversify tourism investment products and cater to specific interests. There is a significant number of enthusiasts, and suitable spaces are available for implementing these plans in the province, which requires collaboration, facilitation, and support from relevant authorities.

He also mentioned the natural waterfalls within the Hyrcanian forests and the hot mineral springs — particularly in the Larijan region of Amol — as additional natural assets for tourism in Mazandaran Province. He emphasized that organizing and constructing modern wellness complexes with medical services and spas, creating health-oriented accommodations, and developing massage therapy centers near mineral hot springs are among the initiatives that could be pursued.

Cultural and historical tourism

The tourism expert further explained that the cultural and historical assets of the province present opportunities for heritage tourism. Mazandaran Province is recognized as one of the richest provinces in Iran concerning culture and history, with significant potential in this area, including historic houses that could be transformed into museums, galleries, traditional accommodations, boutique hotels, and traditional tea houses. He stated that local markets and handicrafts are key to attracting shopping tourism investment. He added that cultural festivals have national and international branding potential, and local music and arts could thrive with dedicated performance venues and traditional shows.

He continued by noting that Mazandaran Province has villages that can serve as destinations for eco-tourists and both domestic and foreign travelers. Although only a few of these villages are currently active, there exists far greater potential than what is presently utilized in the province. The interest and efforts of village leaders to attract and support investment in this sector play a crucial role in this development.

Religious tourism

Hassani pointed out that the presence of more than 1,300 mausoleums of Imams' descendants in Mazandaran offers a solid foundation for promoting pilgrimage tourism. He stated that for investment in this sector, it is feasible to create pilgrim accommodation facilities equipped with appropriate amenities, develop cultural and Qur'anic centers, particularly around religious sites, and promote religious tourism tours that focus on introducing the rich religious culture and history of the province.



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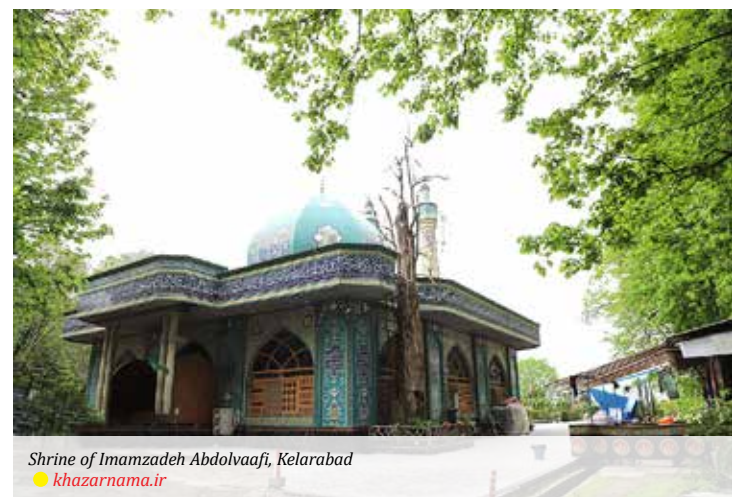
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32nd International Holy Qur'an exhibition opens in Tehran

Qur'an lasting miracle to guide humanity: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

The 32nd edition of the International Holy Qur'an Exhibition began on Wednesday at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla in Tehran, inaugurated by Tehran's interim Friday prayer leader, Hojatoleslam Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabi Fard, and Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi. During the opening ceremony, minister Salehi emphasized the Qur'an's unique and enduring nature, describing it as a divine miracle that continues to guide humanity, IRNA reported. "The exhibition should help us understand the miraculous aspects of the Holy Qur'an and bring us closer to its profound intellectual and spiritual dimensions," he added. He said that while other divine scriptures were revealed in a single instance, the Qur'an's gradual revelation nurtured both the Prophet and his fol-

lowers over time, shaping Islamic civilization step by step. Salehi further elaborated on the Qur'an's unparalleled nature, saying, "the miracles of past prophets were witnessed by specific communities, and their accounts were passed down through narration. However, the Qur'an remains a perpetual miracle—observable and accessible to all." He stressed that the Qur'an's wonder is not confined to any one aspect but encompasses sensory, intellectual, and spiritual realms, elevating human consciousness in multiple dimensions. Under the theme "The Qur'an, the Path of Life," the exhibition features participation from government officials, lawmakers, religious scholars, and cultural figures, IRNA reported. Hojatoleslam Hamidreza Arbab Soleimani, head of the exhibition, emphasized the importance of such events despite technological advancements,

describing the exhibition as a continuous effort for spiritual growth rather than a repetitive initiative. "Qur'anic activities strengthen our connection with the divine message and guide us towards a righteous life. Holding this exhibition during Ramadan provides an opportunity for self-improvement," he said. The event spans 20,000 square meters and includes 37 content-focused sections. Fifteen governmental institutions, 40 public organizations, and 120 religious publishers are participating, showcasing over 4,300 books. The international segment hosts delegations from 15 countries. Running until March 16, the exhibition will feature 58 specialized sessions, 26 Qur'anic gatherings, and a closing ceremony honoring Qur'anic figures, attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian. This year marks a unique scheduling overlap, as the



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi speaks at the opening ceremony of the 32nd edition of the International Holy Qur'an Exhibition in Tehran on March 5, 2025.

● ISNA

31st edition was held during Ramadan in March-April 2024, while the 32nd edition aligns with the early days of the holy month, concluding just before the Iranian New Year.

Iran bans 'Muawiya' series over historical narrative concerns

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Audiovisual Media Regulation Authority (SARTA), has officially banned the broadcast of the TV series 'Muawiya,' by Saudi broadcaster MBC. The series, which presents a new narrative of the life of Muawiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, is accused of attempting to whitewash the reputation of the Umayyad family, IRNA reported. SATRA has prohibited its air-

ing across all national audiovisual platforms and banned the dubbing or distribution of the series on both user- and publisher-based media outlets. The ban also extends to several Islamic countries, including Iraq and Egypt, where the series has been blocked due to concerns over its potential to cause social unrest and undermine national cohesion. On March 3, SATRA sent a formal notice to licensed platforms, warning that any further dub-



bing or distribution of the content would be considered illegal. In addition, user-generated media outlets had uploaded the original version of the first two episodes, but these were removed in collaboration with the Attorney General's office.

Tehran, Vienna cultural relations a bridge between two nations: *Deputy FM*

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-e-Ravanchi said that cultural ties with Austria are a bridge between the two nations, and the presence of educated Iranians in Austria can be a factor for bringing the two countries closer to one another. "On March 5, at the conference titled 'History of Cultural and Diplomatic Relations between Iran and Austria,' held at the University of Tehran, I spoke

and emphasized that one of the important dimensions of Iran-Austria relations is their cultural cooperation, which can serve as a bridge between the peoples of the two countries," wrote Takht-e-Ravanchi on Tuesday on his X account, formerly known as Twitter. The presence of educated Iranians in Austria can be a factor in bringing the two countries closer, the official said. He also emphasized that the cruel sanctions imposed by



● ISNA

the United States and the European Union, which target the cultured people of Iran, must be lifted to enable greater and more effective cooperation between the two countries.

Iranian tourism potentials on display at ITB Berlin 2025

Iran is making a strong push to position itself as a top global travel destination at ITB Berlin 2025, the world's leading travel trade show, with a culturally inspired pavilion highlighting the country's historical, artistic, and natural attractions. Mostafa Shafiei Shakib, chairman of the Iranian Tour Operators Association, emphasized that Iran's presence at the event is not just about tourism promotion but also about fostering cultural exchange and strengthening international ties, IRNA reported. "Our participation is a major step in revitalizing Iran's tourism sector and showcasing it as one of the world's top 10 travel destinations," Shakib said. The Iranian pavilion, designed to reflect the country's rich heritage, aims to captivate visitors with its distinctive architecture and im-

mersion displays. "It provides a glimpse into the diverse beauty of Iran, from its historical landmarks to its breathtaking natural landscapes," Shakib noted. Representatives from Iran's leading tour operators and tourism firms are attending the event, engaging with international stakeholders to expand partnerships and attract more visitors to the country. "Our goal is to stimulate Iran's tourism industry by establishing new commercial and international collaborations," Shakib added. "We see this as an opportunity to enhance Iran's image and economic prospects through tourism." Iran's tourism sector, which boasts UNESCO-listed heritage sites, diverse landscapes, and cultural attractions, is positioning itself for growth despite global



challenges. Shakib expressed optimism about the future, stating that Iran has the potential to rank among the world's top destinations. ITB Berlin 2025, running from March 4-6, is the premier global tourism industry event, drawing thousands of exhibitors and professionals from around the world. Participants showcase their countries' travel offerings, fostering economic development and international tourism exchange.

Tehran, Islamabad seek stronger academic ties, student exchange in medical sciences

Social Desk

Officials from Iran and Pakistan convened at the Iranian Cultural Center in Lahore to discuss strengthening educational cooperation, with a particular focus on medical student exchanges. The gathering was attended by Asghar Masoudi, head of the Iranian Cultural Center in Lahore, and Ahsan Waheed Rathore, president of Pakistan's University of Medical Sciences. Masoudi emphasized the deep cultural ties between Iran and Pakistan, stating that academic cooperation would further enhance these relations. "The Iranian Cultural Center in Lahore has always served as a bridge for scientific and cultural exchanges between the two nations and is ready to facilitate collaborations in this regard," he noted. On Iran's scientific advancements, Masoudi pointed out the country's progress in medical sciences, nanotechnology, surgical robotics, and nuclear medicine. He stressed that Iranian universities offer excellent facilities for international students and expressed hope that Pakistani students would take advantage of these opportunities. "The Leader of Iran and the President Masoud Pezeshkian have a positive outlook on strengthening ties with Pakistan, and student exchange programs

represent one of the most effective ways to enhance academic and cultural cooperation," he added. Rathore acknowledged Iran's remarkable achievements in medical sciences and expressed Pakistan's keen interest in learning from Iran's expertise. "Iran has attained a position in medical research, and its universities rank highly in various scientific fields. We are eager to benefit from Iran's experiences, particularly in organ transplantation programs," he added. He proposed that Pakistan's University of Medical Sciences be included in Iran's list of recognized institutions, allowing Iranian students to enroll. Rathore further announced that reserved seats for Iranian students would be allocated at his university to facilitate academic exchange. Another key point of discussion was the organization of entrance exams for medical and dental programs in Tehran, enabling Iranian students to apply to Pakistani universities without difficulty. The meeting concluded with a proposal for joint seminars and academic conferences to allow researchers and students from both nations to exchange knowledge. On the sidelines of the event, Iranian achievements in medical sciences post-Islamic Revolution were showcased through banners and video clips, which received significant attention from attendees.