



Iran proposes new cultural, tourism pact with Turkey to deepen bilateral ties



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri (C) meets with Turkey's Ambassador to Iran, Hicabi Kirlangic (2nd L), to discuss bilateral relations in Tehran, Iran on April 19, 2025.
● IRNA

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Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Saturday proposed a broad cultural and tourism agreement with Turkey, aiming to expand cooperation across heritage preservation, tourism development, and economic investment. The proposal was made during a meeting in Tehran with Turkey's ambassador to Iran, Hicabi

Kirlangic. Minister Reza Salehi Amiri called for a "comprehensive and forward-looking" memorandum of understanding that would set a new foundation for bilateral collaboration. He said the agreement would go beyond traditional diplomacy to reflect the "deep historical and cultural ties" between the two neighboring nations. "The relationship between Iran

and Turkey is not merely political or diplomatic," Salehi Amiri added. "It is rooted in shared cultural heritage that has continued since the Ottoman era." Highlighting the global stature of Rumi, Salehi Amiri described the poet as a "universal figure" who could serve as a cultural bridge. "Rumi belongs to the whole of humanity and can be a foundation for civilizational dialogue between our countries," he said. Tourism emerged as a central focus of the proposed agreement. Salehi Amiri noted the strong interest among Iranians in visiting Turkey, attributing it not only to tourism infrastructure but also to deep "cultural com-

monalities." He also pointed to growing interest from Turkey's Alevi community in visiting Iranian religious and cultural sites, including Mashhad and the shrine of Haji Bektash Veli in Neyshabur. The minister described Iran as a country "rich in tourism potential," citing 28 UNESCO World Heritage sites, over 43,000 nationally registered monuments, and thousands of cultural and historical attractions. "These assets make Iran a unique and distinguished destination for global travelers," he said. Addressing economic cooperation, Salehi Amiri extended an invitation to Turkish investors to participate in Iran's expanding tourism infrastructure, announcing plans to build 100 new hotels annually. "We welcome Turkish economic actors in our tourism sector and are ready to facilitate investment," he said. He also pointed to Iran's strong

position in handicrafts, with over \$500 million in annual exports. "A significant portion is informal or suitcase exports," he explained, adding that Turkey could become a "strategic partner" in developing international markets for Iranian handicrafts. Turkish Ambassador Kirlangic welcomed the initiative, saying the relationship between Iran and Turkey went beyond routine neighborly ties. "Our nations have lived as culturally intertwined communities," he said. "If we strengthen our cultural and social relations, this harmony will extend to other areas as well." He also called for more visibility of Iran's tourism potential in Turkey and emphasized the need for targeted promotional campaigns. Deputy Minister Ali Darabi highlighted Iran-Turkey cooperation in jointly registering the cultural tradition of Iftar and suggested organizing joint cultural weeks and museum exhibitions.

Deputy for Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey called for the establishment of technical committees to promote collaboration in specific areas, including halal food and pilgrimage tourism. Maryam Jalali, deputy minister for handicrafts, announced an agreement with Istanbul's mayor to establish a dedicated space for showcasing Iranian handicrafts, describing the move as a "key step in expanding international markets." Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, head of the Ministry's Investment Center, said Iran was developing specialized consulting and facilitation packages to attract Turkish private investment. "We are actively working to guide Turkish investors into Iran's tourism projects," he said. The proposal comes amid broader efforts by both countries to strengthen people-to-people engagement and leverage cultural diplomacy as a means to enhance regional cooperation.

Iran, Indonesia eye tourism growth

Tehran-Jakarta direct flight to be launched

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As Iran and Indonesia explore new avenues to deepen bilateral cooperation, tourism has emerged as a key focus, with religious and cultural tourism offering significant potential to strengthen people-to-people ties. Tourism officials say the shared Islamic heritage between the two nations — both boasting a rich tapestry of religious sites and traditions — creates a natural bridge for increased travel, IRNA reported. "Ninety percent of Indonesia's population is Muslim," noted Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. He emphasized the potential for "pilgrimage tourism" and highlighted that millions of Indonesians travel abroad

each year. "We can take meaningful steps to welcome these travelers." Recent high-level meetings between the two countries have paved the way for a direct flight between Tehran and Jakarta — a move aimed at "facilitating tourism exchanges," according to Mohseni-Bandpey. Plans for the launch of the route are underway, following what he described as "promising agreements" with Indonesian officials. The announcement comes on the heels of the 37th UNWTO East Asia and Pacific Commission and the 60th South Asia Commission meetings in Jakarta, during which Tehran was named host of the first World Forum on Urban Tourism, scheduled for June 24–25. Mohseni-Bandpey also announced that Isfahan has been selected to host

the 2026 Global Tourism Commission meeting — a milestone that he says "challenges the Iranophobia narrative" by spotlighting Iran's "vast tourism capacity" and cultural charm. Amid ongoing efforts to develop the sector, Iran continues to promote underexplored destinations across its provinces. Lesser-known regions such as Ilam, Lorestan, and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad saw a "sharp rise in tourist arrivals" during Nowruz, signaling a more balanced national tourism flow and what officials call "tourism justice." Tehran has also invested heavily in improving visitor experiences. Enhanced transportation, fuel supply, and safety



measures during the Persian New Year holidays were a result of "direct orders from the President," Mohseni-Bandpey said.

Emergency services and health infrastructure were also scaled up, contributing to what he described as "a safer and more enjoyable holiday season."

91 foreign publishers apply for first Tehran Publishing Fellowship

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A total of 91 foreign publishers from 34 countries have applied to participate in the first Tehran Publishing Fellowship, Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced on Saturday. The event, which aims to strengthen Iran's presence in the global publishing landscape, is scheduled to take place May 12–15 alongside the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, IRNA reported. According to a statement from the Cultural Affairs Department of the Ministry, 30 of the 91 foreign applicants will be selected

by a panel of judges. The participating publishers represent a diverse array of countries, including Argentina, Australia, China, Egypt, Hungary, India, Italy, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, and Vietnam, among others. In addition to international interest, 64 Iranian publishers have also registered for the fellowship. Of these, 40 will be selected to take part in the program, based on specific criteria evaluated by the selection committee. The Tehran Publishing Fellowship, a first-of-its-kind initiative for Iran, is designed to foster collaboration among publishers,



authors, and literary agencies. It focuses on the sale and exchange of intellectual property rights, and will highlight children's and young adult literature with an emphasis on illustrated works in its debut edition. The ministry has previously supported similar efforts through translation and publication grant programs such as "Grant" and

"TOP" (Translation of Persian Works), aimed at promoting Persian literature abroad. However, no official Persian equivalent for the term "fellowship" has yet been designated by relevant institutions. The 36th Tehran International Book Fair will run from May 7 to 17 under the theme "Let's Read for Iran."

Iranian film awarded at US Ivy Film Festival

The screenplay 'The Last Howl of the Sheep', co-written by Iranian screenwriters Mostafa Rostampour and Atefeh Rezaeian, has won second place in the Graduate Short Screenplay category at the 23rd annual Ivy Film Festival in the United States. Recognized as one of the most prestigious student film festivals in the world, the Ivy Film Festival once again drew submissions from emerging filmmakers and writers from around the globe. The festival is held annually at Brown University and serves as a major platform for young voices in cinema. In a statement addressed to the screenwriters, the festival's jury



praised the work, stating: "We received screenplays from a wide range of talented student writers from around the world, but yours stood out among the selected works for its overall quality and creativity."