

# Pezeshkian gov't heard voice of environment



By Shina Ansari  
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## OPINION

For years, a voice was not heard in Iran as well as it should have been, neither in policymaking nor governance, nor in behavior and lifestyle. This neglect has come back to bite the public as the consequences of environmental crises have crept into everyday life, affecting the economic, social, and biological sustainability of Iranians. Regarding the “water issue,” one of the most challenging fields, a 30% drop in rainfall over three decades and the extraction of 90% of renewable water resources have led to negative water balances in nearly all of the country’s aquifers. In other words, we have not just used renewable water sources; We have dipped into the water capital of future generations and eaten up the share meant for our children. Moreover, water wastage in agriculture, the uncontrolled construction of dams, and the drilling of illegal wells (over 700,000 such wells) have caused land subsidence to rear its ugly head as an emerging threat to critical infrastructure across



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian plants a sapling to mark the National Tree Planting Day at the presidential compound in Tehran, Iran, on March 5, 2025.  
● [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)



The incumbent Iranian government, getting a handle on these environmental mega-challenges, has made revising the governance of territorial resources its top priority. This shift has picked up steam over the past year by focusing on investing in renewable energies, especially solar, and must continue until the country’s energy mix is properly diversified.



Shina Ansari (C), head of the Iranian Department of Environment, meets with Ilham Aliyev (L), the president of Azerbaijan, and António Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, during the opening ceremony of COP29 World Leaders Climate Action Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 12, 2024.  
● [ECOIRAN](https://www.ecoiran.ir)



most provinces.

Other problems resulting in environmental consequences include the country’s 80% reliance on fossil fuels for energy production, the prevalence of outdated transportation fleets, the steady decline of forests, failure to allocate environmental water rights to wetlands, air pollution

and dust storms, destruction of biodiverse natural habitats, and the daily generation of 58,000 tons of waste with less than 10% being recycled. Alongside these issues, the undeniable impacts of climate change, leading to an average temperature rise of 8.1°C (well above the global average) and aggravating environmental

challenges in the country, cannot be swept under the rug. Continuing on the same path in managing Iran’s macro environmental domain would play into a pessimistic scenario marked by a serious drop in groundwater, turning 40% of agricultural lands into desert, worsening dust phenomena, and forcing millions to migrate from dry areas.

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Other pillars include limiting the establishment of water-intensive industries in the central plateau, formulating decentralization policies to ease the pressure on major cities, executing sea-centric development plans aligned with environmental require-

ments, pursuing wetland water rights, drafting a national strategic waste management plan, promoting a circular economy to boost recycling, utilizing unconventional water sources (still in early stages), and strengthening environmental diplomacy, especially with regional countries. These measures must be taken with strong resolve and collaboration from all stakeholders (other branches of government, the private sector, experts, and NGOs).

Today, it is time to step up environmental governance in pursuit of restoring and healing the damage to our land. The road ahead is tough and demands putting national interests above local and individual ones. The warning of nature has been “heard,” but that alone is not enough. Bold and tough decisions are an unavoidable necessity to guarantee the livability of our land and to turn around the looming pessimistic scenario.

The article first appeared in the Persian-language Iran Newspaper.

## Silent treasures on Iran’s path to cultural, tourism development



By Ehsan Farahani  
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## OPINION

In recent years, we have repeatedly seen countries leverage their natural and cultural symbols with savvy, enabling them to make significant strides both in public diplomacy and in the fields of tourism and cultural economy. Meanwhile, in Iran, many of our unique environmental assets have either been left overlooked or, at best, have been paid just lip service. Today, the Asiatic cheetah, as an endangered species, only makes sporadic appearances on the Iranian football team’s jerseys. A majestic bird like the “Homa,” which could have stood as a symbol of peace and resilience, remains unknown to many Iranians. The Iranian onager, the cypress tree of Abarkuh, the brown bear of Mazandaran Province, and the Caspian tiger (now living only in memories) are all parts of our biological heritage that have so far failed to make a mark in shaping the contemporary image of Iran.

On the other hand, many countries have not only pulled out all the stops to protect their native species but have also turned them into iconic assets. Just look at Australia, where kangaroos and koalas have become national brands, or China, which has spread its soft power through the giant panda all the way to the heart of Europe and America. Even the United Arab Emirates, which modernized at lightning speed, never lost sight of showcasing and preserving symbols like the falcon, the Arabian gazelle, or the Ghaf tree, framing them within their national heritage and identity. But the key question is: What game plan do we have to tap into these symbols for cultural development and ecotourism? Environmental symbols can bridge culture, education, tourism, and a sustainable economy. With proper planning, these symbols can take center stage as characters in children’s books, subjects in cinema and television, logos on product packaging, and attractions on nature trails. This means building an

emotional bond between the people and their ecosystem. In this regard, there are various tourist areas in Iran that have good potential for showcasing environmental symbols. For instance, Kish Island in the Persian Gulf could serve as a practical example. The presence of blue sea turtles along Iran’s southern shores, especially around Kish Island, is not only a rare biological opportunity but also a valuable cultural-environmental asset. If handled correctly, it could serve as a springboard for launching ecotourism routes, educational campaigns, and even international cooperation on protecting rare species. It is fitting that Iran’s Department of Environment, in cooperation with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, and by drawing on the strengths of the private sector, NGOs, and cultural activists, devises a national plan to revive and promote Iran’s environmental symbols. This initiative will not only contribute to preserving nature but also help lay down a new, rooted, and at-

tractive identity for Iran’s future generations and the world. Today, more than ever, we need to not only look after our cultural and natural resources but also

give them a fresh spin in today’s language and harness them for national development. If our environmental symbols are recognized and taken seriously, they

can turn into priceless assets in narrating the story of a new Iran.

The article first appeared in Persian on ISNA.



A school of fish follows a hawksbill sea turtle, a rare blue species of sea turtles that has been a frequent visitor to the safe and peaceful coasts of Kish Island, southern Iran.  
● [IRNA](https://www.irna.ir)