



# Diwali sparks fire, light traditions that connect India, Iran

## INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

India's Ambassador to Tehran, Rudra Gaurav Shresth, offered an exclusive insight into Diwali on Saturday, describing the festival of lights as a centuries-old celebration of light, knowledge, and prosperity. Speaking at his residence during the embassy's Diwali gathering, Shresth highlighted cultural connections between Diwali and ancient Iranian traditions, including Zoroastrian fire worship and the Chaharshanbe Suri festival. He noted that fireworks and fire play a central role in both celebrations. "Particularly for children, bursting firecrackers is the most exciting part," he said, emphasizing the joy and communal spirit of the occasion. Diwali, he explained, is also a major religious and commercial occasion. Devotees pray to the goddess of wealth and prosperity, and businesses view the day as a pivotal moment in the year. "On this day, it is believed that the goddess comes to Earth to see how houses are decorated,"

Shresth said. "If she is pleased, she blesses your home, and your business earns well for the rest of the year." This makes the festival particularly significant for merchants and businesspeople, he added. The ambassador also emphasized Diwali's growing commercial importance. "It has become quite commercialized. People buy new clothes, paint and decorate their houses, and businesses run big promotions and sales. It is a very important period for spending money," he said. A notable example, Shresth said, is the sale of nuts, which constitute roughly 85 percent of India's annual nut trade in the 15–20 days leading up to Diwali. He suggested that Iran, as a regional producer of dried fruits and nuts, could explore opportunities to supply India, reducing reliance on far-off markets such as California, Australia, Canada, and Spain. Shresth also stressed the deep historical and cultural connections between India and Iran. He cited the Persian scholar and traveler Al-Biruni, who wrote

India's Ambassador to Tehran, Rudra Gaurav Shresth, lights a lamp to inaugurate Diwali festivities at his residence, celebrating the festival of lights, on November 1, 2025.  
● IRAN DAILY

one of the earliest descriptions of Diwali, and observed that festivals like Diwali and Nowruz (Persian New Year) serve as bridges between the peoples of the two nations. "By celebrating each other's festival occasions, the connection between our peoples can become stronger," he said. The envoy highlighted similarities between Diwali rituals and Zoroastrian practices, noting the central role of fire in both traditions. "Many aspects of religious practice during Diwali have parallels with ancient Iranian religion," he said. "Fire worship and the symbolism of light are important in both, which can be fascinating for tourists and cultural observers from both countries." Shresth further drew attention to shared philosophical roots, citing connections between the Hindu Vedas and the Zoroastrian Avesta, which may underpin



common cultural motifs such as the worship of light and fire. The Diwali celebration at the Indian ambassador's residence marks the second consecutive year the embassy has hosted the festival in Tehran. It included traditional rituals, festive decorations, and the exchange

of gifts such as nuts, which are a customary part of Diwali greetings. Shresth said that observing the festival in Iran allows Indians abroad to maintain cultural traditions while fostering greater understanding of India's heritage among Iranians. "Diwali is the biggest festival

in the Indian calendar," Shresth said. "Its blend of spirituality, communal joy, and commercial activity makes it a celebration of life, prosperity, and shared culture. Hosting it here in Tehran is a way of connecting our peoples through light, fire, and centuries of shared history."

## Kashan named UNESCO Creative City of Architecture



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's ancient city of Kashan was admitted to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of architecture, marking a new milestone for Iranian-Islamic cultural and architectural heritage. The designation was announced on October 31 during the 43rd General Conference of UNESCO in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, IRNA reported. Hassan Fartousi, Secretary-General of Iran's National Commission for UNESCO, confirmed the membership in the

presence of Science Minister Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, calling the move "a step toward reinforcing Iran's cultural diplomacy and architectural identity on the world stage." The announcement coincided with World Cities Day 2025, when UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay named 58 new members of the Creative Cities Network, which now brings together more than 300 cities across fields including architecture, crafts, literature, music, and gastronomy. The program promotes the role of creativity as a driver of sus-

tainable urban development. Kashan joins the ranks of cities such as Rome, Paris, and Barcelona, recognized for "sustainable architecture and rich civilizational heritage." Officials described the city's inclusion as a "turning point" in advancing sustainable cultural growth rooted in Iranian-Islamic design traditions. With more than 1,700 historical sites, including around 330 nationally registered monuments and the UNESCO-listed Fin Garden, Kashan stands as a living museum of traditional architecture adapted to its

desert environment. Its vaulted houses, windcatchers, and underground spaces reflect a refined integration of art, science, and ecology that has inspired architects for generations. According to Fartousi, the successful nomination followed months of coordination with UNESCO experts. "Kashan's creative potential and its authentic architectural character made it a strong candidate," he said, emphasizing that the recognition "opens doors for international cooperation and cultural exchange."

## Iran's classical music gets kudos in St. Petersburg

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian musician Khashayar Parsa and his ensemble presented a compelling, contemporary interpretation of classical Persian music at the historic Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg during DairaFest on October 26, 2025. Their performance brought the ancient Maktab-e Montazemi-yeh school vividly to life, guiding listeners from the soundscapes of medieval Persia through the Qajar era to modern reinterpretations, IRNA reported. The ensemble's journey began earlier in the festival, on October 19, when they performed music of the Qajar period, featur-

ing works by Darvish Khan and songs by singer Taherzadeh, in one of St. Petersburg's historic venues. Instrumentalists included three-Tar (long-necked lute) player Hedayat Kalari, Kamancheh (an Iranian spiked fiddle) artist Alireza Rasouli and vocalist Mehdi Shahsavari. During the October 26 show, Parsa performed on Santur (hammered dulcimer) and conducted an ensemble featuring oud player Abuzar Hosseini (also composer), Tar player Mohammad Mehdi Sheikh, Kamancheh player Arman Heidarian and Tonbak (Iranian goblet drum) artist Hossein Gazer. Vocalists Ahmad Shakouri and Neda Shahsavari joined to offer a layered

aural experience of multi-voiced Persian classical music. Parsa described the project as an attempt to present Iranian classical music not merely as "historical heritage" but as a "living language of cross-cultural dialogue." He said the collaboration with DairaFest over the past two years has "built a bridge" between Iranian and Russian artists. The overwhelming sell-out two days in advance confirmed the strong interest among Russian audiences in Persian classical music. According to festival organizers, the ensemble's performance offered a fresh, contemporary voice rooted in ancient tradition.

## AI-generated short film 'The Stain' to debut in Los Angeles Festival

### Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'The Stain,' written and directed by Hoda Fallah, will be screened at the AI International Film Festival in Hollywood on November 16, 2025, at the historic Los Feliz Theatre. The three-minute-43-second piece, created entirely using AI tools such as LTX Studio, Runway and ElevenLabs, explores a teenage girl's journey through "shame" and silence in a traditional family, Mehr News Agency reported. 'The Stain,' has already gained recognition as a semi-finalist at the second edition of the AI Film Festival Japan earlier this year, marking its second international appearance. Its Los Angeles showing marks the film's entry onto the US festival circuit. By melding generative-AI techniques with a sharply personal narrative, Fallah's work spotlights the creative potential at the intersection



of technology and identity. The film's selection for the Los Feliz screening underscores the growing global interest in AI-driven storytelling. Festival organizers said the November event would present a curated selection of short films "pushing the boundaries of storytelling with artificial intelligence."