



President calls for overhaul of youth programs, says Iran's future hinges on 'creative minds'

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday urged officials to rethink Iran's youth development strategy, saying the country's shortcomings can be overcome "through the creative and dynamic minds" of young people. Speaking at the 44th meeting of the Supreme Council for Youth and Adolescents in Tehran, Pezeshkian called for a full review of operational plans presented to the council, including the "National Youth Advisory Assembly," the "Young Assistants to the Government of National Accord" initiative, and new frameworks for youth NGOs, president.ir reported. "All deficiencies can be resolved

with public participation, especially by relying on the creativity of our young generation," Pezeshkian said. "We must bridge the gap between theory and practice. What matters is real behavioral change and sustainable engagement among the youth." The president instructed ministers to submit revised frameworks within a month and said provincial governors would be required to present progress reports during his upcoming domestic trips. Pezeshkian emphasized that youth policy must move beyond bureaucracy to active inclusion. He proposed creating diverse working groups in cultural, educational, sports, religious, and technology

fields, including artificial intelligence, with direct involvement from adolescents and young adults. "Each taskforce must have clear mandates, specialized subgroups, and the ability to operate nationwide, from provincial to local levels," he said. The president also called for identifying and empowering "role models" within each field to instill honesty, national pride, and social responsibility in the next generation. He said the government's goal was to "institutionalize" these values across schools and communities. Sports and Youth Minister Kioumars Hashemi described youth affairs as "multi-dimensional," noting that the ministry aimed to open



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during the 44th meeting of the Supreme Council of Youth and Adolescents in Tehran on November 10, 2025.

● president.ir

more space for non-governmental youth organizations. Deputy Youth Minister Alireza Rahimi, who oversaw the drafting of the four proposals, said the process had taken about 14 months. But he warned that Iran's bureaucratic structure continues to "slow down creativity and innovation." Trusting young people, he added, "will undoubtedly improve the situation and give them a meaningful role in shaping policies."



Iran signs multilateral tourism accords with Asian partners to broaden regional connectivity



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri (R) and UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili (L) sign a joint cooperation memorandum aimed at enhancing Iran's engagement in global tourism governance and sustainable development, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on November 10, 2025.

● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri held a series of high-level talks with counterparts from Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Cambodia, Oman and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), concluding new accords on air routes, cultural cooperation and halal tourism development, according to IRNA. Iran expanded its diplomatic and tourism outreach during the 26th UNWTO General Assembly, where Salehi-Amiri said Tehran seeks to "turn shared history into a practical bridge for modern tourism." The meetings, held on the sidelines of the assembly, marked a concerted effort by Iran to align its cultural diplomacy with Asia's fast-growing travel networks.

Uzbekistan expands flights, heritage ties

In his meeting with Umid Shadiev, Chairman of Uzbekistan's Tourism Committee, Salehi-Amiri described Iran and Uzbekistan as "two civilizational partners tied by a thousand years of cultural exchange." The two sides agreed to establish a joint technical committee to enhance tourism cooperation, develop new flight routes between the two countries, and collaborate on historical restoration projects. According to IRNA, Iran offered to provide technical expertise for preserving ancient monuments in Samarkand and Bukhara, while Uzbekistan proposed expanding its e-visa platform into a reciprocal visa-free regime. Both sides also discussed training programs for tour operators and organizing cultural heritage festivals to attract visitors from neighboring Central Asian markets.

Iran, Indonesia advance halal tourism

In another meeting, Salehi-Amiri held talks with Indonesia's Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Widiyanti Putri Wardhana, to outline a roadmap for strengthening tourism ties. The Iranian minister emphasized the "solid political and cultural relations" between the two nations and said both countries were now ready to extend that partnership into the tourism sector. The talks focused on establishing direct flights between Tehran and Jakarta, organizing tourism fairs in both capitals, and launching a joint project to promote halal and Islamic-friendly tourism. Salehi-Amiri described Indonesia as a "leader in the halal tourism market," adding that collaboration would help both countries attract travelers from Muslim-majority nations. Wardhana welcomed Iran's proposal and said Indonesia supported Iran's plan for a multilateral Islamic tourism corridor across Asia.

Cambodia joins regional travel initiatives

Salehi-Amiri also met Cambodia's Minister of Tourism, Huot Hak, where the two officials explored the idea of forming a regional tourism "basket" that could include joint travel packages with other Asian destinations. The Iranian minister invited Cambodian officials and travel companies to take part in Tehran's International Tourism Exhibition in February 2026 and offered Iran's participation in Cambodian tourism expos. Hak praised the Iranian proposal as "constructive and forward-looking," expressing Cambodia's interest in deepening cooperation with Iran in cultural tourism, training

programs, and exchange of promotional content. Salehi-Amiri also said Iran could share its experience in managing heritage tourism and religious travel, which has grown rapidly in the post-pandemic era.

Oman, Iran boost maritime tourism

In a separate meeting with Oman's Minister of Heritage and Tourism Salem bin Mohammed Al Mahrrouqi, the two sides discussed expanding bilateral tourism and cultural cooperation. Salehi-Amiri proposed increasing the number of weekly direct flights between the two countries from 12 to 60, and called for joint initiatives in marine, health and cultural tourism. He also proposed holding a cross-country auto rally and a joint cultural festival to showcase shared Persian Gulf heritage. Al-Mahrrouqi described Iran as a "strategic partner and a source of regional stability," and said Oman would support Iran's proposal for a cruise-tourism agreement to boost Persian Gulf maritime connectivity.

Partnership with UNWTO

Salehi-Amiri met UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili and Secretary-General-elect Sheikha Nasser Al Nowais to discuss Iran's role in advancing sustainable tourism and capacity-building initiatives. He praised Pololikashvili's "coherent and dynamic leadership" and expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate on global programs for women's empowerment in tourism management and youth education. Al Nowais, who will become the first woman to lead UNWTO in its 50-year history starting in 2026, also highlighted her priorities for responsible tourism, capacity building, technology for good, innovative financing, and smart governance. With more than one million registered historical and cultural assets, and 29 UNESCO World Heritage sites, Iran reaffirmed its commitment to work closely with the UNWTO in promoting sustainable tourism and balanced regional development.

Why East must know Western art, while West knows little of East

By Alireza Sepahvand
Journalist

OPINION

In every art faculty in Iran, students, from the very first semester, are immersed in the names and movements of Europe, Renaissance, Baroque, Impressionism, Surrealism, Modernism, Postmodernism. Professors speak of Da Vinci, Cézanne, Picasso, and Warhol, guiding students to see the arc of world art history as stretching from Florence to New York. Yet, amid this European panorama, a pressing question takes shape: why must Iranian artists absorb the knowledge of Western art to be considered competent, while Western artists can claim to be "global" without ever understanding Persian miniature, Islamic calligraphy, or the rich visual traditions of East Asia? This is no mere matter of curriculum; it is a reflection of a deeper, persistent inequality that stretches from the age of cultural colonialism to the present day.

Legacy of Western cultural dominance

Since the 19th century, Europe, and later the United States, has dominated not only economics and politics but also culture, presenting itself as the universal measure. Art history was rewritten so that beauty appeared to evolve from ancient Greece to European modernism. In this narrative, Asia, Africa, and other regions became "the other": Cultures to inspire from, but not to study deeply. As a result, the world was divided into "center" and "periphery." The center sets artistic standards, the periphery must learn them. This division remains evident in many non-Western art education systems, including Iran.

Formation of Western-oriented art education in Iran

From the founding of Dar ul-Funun (the first modern school) to the Faculty of Fine Arts in the 1940s, Iran modeled art education on French and Italian academies. European-trained professors brought a scientific, perspectival, Renaissance-rooted vision. Over

time, this approach became the standard of "professionalism." Little space remained for Iranian or Eastern arts. "Art history" effectively meant European art history. Calligraphy, miniature painting, and illumination were marginalized. Even composition and design were taught according to Western visual logic, not the Eastern worldview, which sees space and time as fluid and inward.

Western gaze on Eastern art: Learning vs. consuming

When Western artists engage with Eastern art, their goal has often been to consume its beauty, not understand its philosophy. The East becomes a source of color, form, and mystery. From Impressionists inspired by Japanese prints to modern artists using Arabic calligraphy or Persian motifs, a subtle hierarchy persists: One side draws inspiration without feeling obliged to learn. A Western artist can gain international success with superficial knowledge of Eastern elements, while an Eastern artist must master Western visual and theoretical language to be understood. This reflects cultural imbalance, not innate superiority.

Globalization's single hub

Many hoped globalization would reduce Western cultural centrality. In practice, the same structures remain. Major museums, galleries, and art markets are still in New York, London, and Paris. Their standards define what is "global." Iranian artists seeking recognition must understand Western visual language, while Western artists continue to occupy privileged positions without studying the East.

Identity crisis of Eastern artist

Iranian artists face two opposing demands: Conform to Western aesthetic and educational standards to participate globally, yet remain faithful to cultural roots. This tension often produces works suspended between modern and traditional, local and global. Paintings use Western techniques but Eastern themes, or conceptual works employ Iranian symbols as mere decoration. This state is not the artist's weakness; it shows the historical

condition in which the East must learn while the West can afford to ignore.

Redefining East, West in art

Escaping this cycle does not mean rejecting Western art. Understanding and dialogue with other cultures are essential for any civilization. But this dialogue must be mutual. Just as Iranian artists must learn Western art, Western artists should study Eastern art, Islamic aesthetics, and Asian visual traditions, not as decoration, but as a genuine intellectual pursuit within global art.

Revising educational systems

Art history in Iranian universities should be taught as multicentric and truly global. Arts from China, India, Iran, and the Islamic world should stand on equal footing with European art.

Developing indigenous aesthetics

For Iranian art to play an active role globally, its own aesthetic theories must be revived. Concepts such as proportion, spirit, light, and silence in Persian art can form the foundation of new theoretical frameworks.

Expanding cultural exchange

Joint exhibitions, translation of Eastern art scholarship into Western languages (and vice versa), and creation of research centers can help restore balance between East and West.

Globalization through dialogue, not imitation

Studying Western art is undeniably valuable; no culture can thrive in isolation. Yet when learning flows in only one direction, it perpetuates cultural injustice. True global art will emerge only when mutual understanding replaces mere imitation. Only when a Western artist approaches Persian miniature or the philosophy of Islamic art with the same devotion an Iranian student brings to Western modernism can the age of cultural dominance be ended. Until that day, the East continues to learn, the West continues to judge, and though the shift may be slow, the scales of artistic dialogue must one day be rewritten.