



International Day of Persons with Disabilities

President calls for citizen support, inclusivity for the disabled

Social Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian called on citizens not to divide "people into insiders and outsiders" and pledged that the government would stand "hand in hand" with persons with disabilities and the wider public to improve the country. He made the remarks at a ceremony in Tehran marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 2, president.ir reported. Pezeshkian highlighted the determination and creativity of people with disabilities, saying what he witnessed was "a lesson" and reflected the message of a book presented to him, "Bad events are a gold mine." He noted that the early days of his administration had been marked by challenges, but adversity revealed opportunities that might otherwise have been overlooked. He outlined his government's plan to mobilize citizen capacities through neighbor-

hood-based initiatives, stressing that public participation is key to solving national problems.

"If anyone thinks challenges can be overcome without the support and engagement of the people, they are mistaken," Pezeshkian said. "By relying on all citizens, regardless of gender, language or ethnicity, no problem is insurmountable." The president acknowledged the impact of uneven development and pledged that his administration would focus on balancing opportunities and resources.

He emphasized that improving conditions for people with disabilities is a priority, though the government alone cannot solve all challenges. "With citizens' participation, we can overcome any difficulty," he said. Pezeshkian also praised the involvement of citizens in advancing educational justice. He recounted moving examples, such as a mother who, despite losing her child in an accident and lacking a home, donated



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at a ceremony in Tehran marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 2, 2025.
● president.ir

compensation to build a school. "If we rely on the people, no challenge is insurmountable," he added.

Officials from the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare and the State Welfare Organization outlined ongoing programs to enhance accessibility, rehabilitation, and the social participation of persons with disabilities. Pezeshkian described these efforts as evidence of trust in the capacities of disabled citizens and their potential to drive social progress.

During the ceremony, eight individuals with disabilities and several rehabilitation professionals were honored for their contributions. Two awardees shared their experiences of overcoming personal chal-



lenges with state support. One presented Pezeshkian with the book that had inspired his earlier remarks. Pezeshkian said, "We bow be-

fore your abilities, and above all, your will and perseverance." He added that external pressures or attacks could not break a determined nation.

"With your support, we stand ready to build our country better and ensure we are never a source of shame to the people," he said.

Iran to create 3,000 new rural green stays in two years: *Minister*



Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian government plans to establish 3,000 new eco-tourism lodges across rural villages over the next two years, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, announced on Tuesday. That vision signals a broader push to channel tourism development firmly toward "national interest," he told representatives of the country's tourism industry at a meeting of professional trade

associations in Tehran, IRNA reported.

The project aims to stem rural depopulation, preserve cultural identity and generate new income streams.

Salehi-Amiri outlined what he called three possible scenarios for the coming period, from "status-quo" to "stability" to "renewed crisis", depending on regional dynamics.

He urged tourism associations to act as the ministry's "link to society" and its "advisory arm" in enforcing regulation, especially for lodging and hospitality services. Under the eco-tourism drive, one rural village could host at least one officially sanctioned lodge.

He called the increasing demand for five-star hotels a "vote of confidence" in tourism's revival.

He also signaled efforts to streamline exit-taxes for overseas travel and museum-ticket levies,

and to ensure that health-tourism, cultural tours and handicrafts work in tandem.

On unauthorized lodging, the ministry prefers dialogue first. But if informal "guest houses" fail to register for licenses, authorities will resort to legal enforcement.

Salehi-Amiri added that government policy going forward will prioritize upholding human dignity, highlighting commitments to improve access for staff with disabilities, including special accommodations in travel, workplace facilities and discounted rates at qualified hotels.

He described the eco-tourism plan as a bridge linking village livelihoods with cultural preservation, "Keeping villagers at home is equivalent to safeguarding the culture and art of Iran." Authorities expect the first wave of new lodges by late 2026.

Spanish one-shot festival awards 'The Scapegoat'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian actress Fate-meh Sadeghi received a diploma of merit for best actress for her performance in the short film 'The Scapegoat' at the 11th edition of One Shot Terrassa City of Film in Terrassa, near Barcelona, Spain.

The film, written and directed by Ali Fard, was also chosen as a nominee for Best Screenplay at this year's Milton Keynes Film Festival in the UK, ILNA reported.

'The Scapegoat' has already charted an impressive international festival run. It previously collected Best Director at Moon Arts Film Festival in Italy, won Best Foreign Film at Arts & Short Film Festival,



earned Best Screenplay at the US-based KIFF and a diploma of merit for directing at Italy's I Corti Dei Fabbri Festival.

The film has been submitted to a total of 29 international festivals. Among them are the Bahia Independent Film Festival in Brazil, Ocean City Film

Festival in the United States, Touchstone Independent Film Festival and the US-based BOOM! Film Festival.

Its cast includes, besides Sadeghi, actors such as Amir Shams, Nima Qasemi, Mahnaz Ansari, Mehdi Omid, Sobhan Rouhnejad and Hossein Doosti.

25 countries submit record entries to Iran's heritage festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The fourth International Multimedia Festival of Cultural Heritage in Iran has drawn submissions from 25 countries, organizers said on Tuesday, with more than 6,000 unique works now entered by domestic and international artists. Speaking at a coordination meeting at the Fajr Hall of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage,

Tourism and Handicrafts, festival secretary Mehdi Faraji said 5,900 pieces from Iranian creators have already been received, alongside 130 works from abroad.

"The trend clearly indicates a strong 'appetite' among artists for this year's festival," he added, IRNA reported.

The event has grown steadily since its debut in Yazd with 2,900 entries, followed by

3,700 in Qazvin and 4,500 in Shiraz. This year Khuzestan hosts the festival, signaling the organizers' focus on decentralizing cultural activities across the country.

Workshops led by heritage experts will run alongside the competitions, while a touring photography exhibition will reach 10 cities in Khuzestan province. A newly added section, "Future Guardians of

Heritage," targets children and adolescents and has already attracted significant interest. Faraji also said the festival will recognize prominent artists and leading media outlets covering the event.

A week-long Khuzestan cultural celebration, showcasing performances and traditions from various ethnic groups, will precede the closing ceremony.

