

Iran rolls out incentives to lure tourism investment at Tehran construction expo

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts minister on Tuesday set out a package of fiscal and regulatory incentives aimed at making hotel and tourism complex development commercially attractive, as the government seeks to leverage the country's vast cultural and natural assets to expand international tourism infrastructure. Speaking at the opening of the second Iran's Construction Industry Outlook conference and exhibition at Tehran's Milad Tower conference center on January 6, 2026, Reza Salehi-Amiri said tighter alignment between the construction sector and tourism policy was essential to delivering modern facilities and boosting inbound travel. The event will run through Jan-

uary 8, IRNA reported. Salehi-Amiri stressed Iran's deep civilizational appeal, describing its cultural heritage as a strategic national advantage with few global parallels. He cited archaeological discoveries in Khuzestan Province that point to organized sporting traditions dating back some 3,000 years, well before the advent of the modern Olympic Games, as emblematic of Iran's historical depth. Turning to tourism fundamentals, the minister said Iran encompassed virtually every major global tourism segment, ranging from deserts and forests to coastlines, alongside documented culinary, dress and cultural tourism. Despite regional tensions, the government had initially projected eight million foreign vis-



Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri speaks at the second Iran's Construction Industry Outlook conference and exhibition at Tehran's Milad Tower on January 6, 2026. ● CHTN

itors this year, a target he said had been supported by stepped-up tourism diplomacy and the easing of visa and air travel constraints, particularly with neighboring states and Central Asia. He stressed that security remained the cornerstone of tourism growth, adding that improv-

ing both actual safety and Iran's international image was critical to facilitating travel. Active tourism corridors, he said, were now in place with countries including Tajikistan, Armenia, Iraq, China, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Egypt. The minister said Iran faced

an acute shortage of tourism infrastructure and highlighted plans under the government's seventh development program (2023-2027) to build at least 100 hotels annually. Achieving that goal, he added, depended on the active participation of the construction industry. To draw in investors, Salehi-Amiri announced a series of incentives, including permission to rezone agricultural land for tourism use, the elimination of 80 percent of construction-related levies, and zero import

duties on 200 categories of hotel equipment. Banks and a dedicated investment fund, he said, stood ready to finance the completion of stalled projects. He called on builders to enter tourism infrastructure projects, partner with the private sector to form professional associations and participate in investment funds focused on hotel development, arguing that such ventures were both economically viable and strategically important for positioning Iran as a safe and appealing destination. The ceremony concluded with the opening of an exhibition showcasing Iran's building industry capabilities, where the tourism ministry's investment arm is presenting hundreds of ready-to-offer tourism projects and incentive packages to prospective investors.

Fajr Film Festival pares back costs ahead of 44th edition

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Iran's 44th Fajr Film Festival will go ahead with a leaner, cost-cutting format next month, with organizers scrapping several long-standing practices as they streamline the country's flagship cinema event in Tehran. One of the most significant shifts concerns film selection. Instead of a separate selection committee, festival secretary Manouchehr Shahsavari, working with a small trusted team, is overseeing the choice of entries, IRNA reported. While the move has drawn criticism from some filmmakers, others note that secretary-led selection is standard practice at many major international festivals. The change also

concentrates accountability, making the secretary directly responsible for inclusion or exclusion decisions. Organizers have also denied reports that press accreditation would be abolished. The festival secretariat confirmed that journalists will continue to receive physical media passes, dismissing claims that access would be managed exclusively through QR codes. However, QR technology will be used internally to regulate access for staff and accredited participants, replacing the labor-intensive production of multiple entry cards. Cost control has extended to hospitality. The festival has dropped the long-standing practice of providing meals to attendees, a decision that follows years of controversy and ris-

ing expenses. Another likely casualty is the printed daily bulletin, traditionally produced and distributed throughout the festival. Organizers are expected to rely instead on existing print and digital media coverage, trimming both production costs and staffing needs. The administrative footprint has also been reduced. A permanent, scaled-down secretariat has replaced the bustling temporary offices of previous years, with a small core team handling preparations. Speculation continues over the size of the main competition, with indications that more than the previously suggested 22 films could be admitted due to strong submission numbers. The changes amount to a calculated intervention in a 44-year-old national institution. While the reforms carry reputational risk, organizers argue that resizing the festival is unavoidable if it is to remain sustainable under tighter economic constraints.

Trump seizes on ...

Broad, unilateral sanctions have played a major role in exacerbating Iran's economic crisis, inflation, and livelihood pressures. Trump agreed to Israel's aggression on Iran that resulted in the killing of more than a thousand innocent Iranians, including women and children. In this context, his threat does not reflect a genuine commitment to supporting the Iranian people, but rather the continuation of a hostile political approach aimed at ramping up a war-like situation and imposing heavy costs on Iranian civilians. It is inevitably innocent Iranians who would become the victims of any war. References to concepts such as "humanitarian intervention" or "responsibility to protect" (R2P) cannot legally justify such threats. The United States' behavioral pattern, particularly since 2001, has consistently shown that it treats international law not as a binding norm, but as a selective instrument of power.

Based on the experience of the 12-day war, Iran has now prepared itself for a range of diverse scenarios. The continuation of hostile US-Zionist actions appears to have convinced Tehran that, should a war scenario be repeated, a more regret-inducing response would be delivered. Politically, Iran remains committed to the security of regional countries, but it must be noted that states hosting US military bases would, in effect, be accomplices in any war. At the same time, the 12-day war demonstrated Iran's strong capacity to mobilize domestic and regional public opinion and to prove the issue as an anti-imperialist struggle. While this may yield limited short-term gains, diplomatically Iran would also activate international legal mechanisms, line up support from independent powers, and increase political pressure on the United States in international bodies, including the UN Security Council and regional forums. Collectively, these responses are designed to raise Washington's strategic costs and erode US legitimacy.

What tools and strategies does Iran possess to deter such threats?

Iran's strategy is built on a multilayered, intelligent, and dynamic deterrence architecture. On the military level, Iran possesses a range of conventional capabilities that are defensive and deterrent in nature rather than offensive. Indigenous precision missile capabilities, a multi-tiered air defense network, asymmetric naval capacities in southern waters, the Strait of Hormuz, and the open seas, alongside regional strategic depth, have significantly diversified and enhanced Iran's ability to deliver a hard and unpredictable response to the United States. Political and societal deterrence also plays a decisive role. Iran's discourse of resistance against US unilateralism carries significant symbolic weight both regionally and globally. Public opinion in large parts of the world views Iran not as the instigator of crises, but as a country defending its independence against US hegemonic bullying and Israeli expansionism. As a result, public support for Iran is increasing, while the standing of the United States in global public opinion has sharply declined and aversion to Israel has intensified.

In the event of direct US intervention, what capacities does Iran have to respond militarily, politically, and diplomatically?

What consequences would such a confrontation have for the Middle East, and which countries would be most affected?

The launch of a US-led war against Iran would have wide-ranging regional and extra-regional consequences. The Middle East — and indeed the world — would not return to the status quo. More countries in the region have come to realize that the United States is not committed to their security and are increasingly concerned about Washington's next hostile moves. In such a war, countries hosting US forces or located in Iran's immediate neighborhood would be the most vulnerable. Heightened regional instability, disruptions to energy routes, threats to maritime security, and intensified geopolitical rivalries would be among the immediate consequences of a serious, US-imposed war against Iran. It must be emphasized, however, that Israel would suffer the greatest damage in any new conflict and would pay a heavy price. Overall, such a confrontation would benefit no regional actor and could plunge the Middle East into a new cycle of structural insecurity, the containment of which would be extremely costly for all involved.

ADVERTORIAL

Mobarakeh Steel on the Path to "Green Steel" Mobarakeh Steel's Drive for a Green Energy Revolution



Abdolrasoul Ahmadi, Managing Director of "Mobarakeh Steel Clean Energy & Power Industries Company (SANAP)", stated: "Mobarakeh Steel Group, through the implementation of large-scale solar projects and planning for a wind power plant, aims to simultaneously produce steel and take decisive steps toward reducing emissions and advancing toward green steel." Speaking on the sidelines of the First Green Technologies and Clean Energy Exhibition, Ahmadi added: "Mobarakeh Steel, recognized as a leading player in sustainable energy and production, has participated in this exhibition to showcase its capabilities and initiatives in clean energy and green steel." He went on to say: "Mobarakeh Steel has defined green steel as a strategic priority and made extensive investments in renewable energy. Currently, Iran's largest solar power plant, with a total capacity of 600 megawatts, is under construction

by the Mobarakeh Steel Group. So far, 120 megawatts of this capacity have been commissioned and are already supplying a significant portion of the electricity required by Mobarakeh Steel's manufacturing facility." Ahmadi emphasized: "Constraints on fossil fuel resources, particularly natural gas, have compelled Iranian industries to turn to renewable energy. For Iran, solar and wind represent the best available options. We plan to complete the second phase of our 120-megawatt solar plant by the end of this year and bring the entire 600-megawatt capacity online by the end of next year." He also announced plans to construct a 200-megawatt wind farm in Khaf, Razavi Khorasan Province, which will supply the required energy for Sangan Steel Company, a subsidiary of Mobarakeh Steel Group. Explaining the company's objectives for participating in the Green Technologies and Clean Energy Exhibition, Ahmadi noted: "This is the first time this exhibition is being held in Isfahan, and we are here to present our capabilities, environmental initiatives, and ongoing projects to visitors." He concluded: "Contrary to the widespread perception of steelmaking as a polluting industry, Mobarakeh Steel has successfully mitigated much of its environmental impact through solar power generation and is actively aligning its operations with the goals of sustainable development."