

# Lorestan seeks tourism lift-off through targeted projects, public engagement

## Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Thursday that Lorestan's substantial tourism assets require structured planning and tighter project prioritization, while urging closer engagement with local communities to improve public services that underpin visitor growth, according to remarks delivered during meetings with provincial officials and social activists in Khorramabad.

Addressing the provincial Planning and Development Council on February 19, Pezeshkian described Lorestan as a province with "valuable" tourism capacity, citing its waterfalls, mountainous landscapes and historic landmarks, and said provincial managers must draw up an actionable plan to harness those assets.

The government, he added, would provide support within its legal and budgetary framework, president.ir reported.

Lorestan, located in the central Zagros belt, has long been regarded as one of Iran's most underdeveloped tourism markets despite its dense concentration of natural attractions and cultural heritage sites. Industry officials say the

province's temperate summers, oak forests and river valleys give it a competitive advantage in the growing domestic eco-tourism segment, particularly as households seek lower-cost, short-haul destinations.

Yet fragmented investment and a backlog of unfinished infrastructure projects have curbed its take-off. Pezeshkian said the simultaneous rollout of thousands of half-completed schemes has drained public resources, arguing that Lorestan should narrow its focus to a defined list of priority tourism and infrastructure projects to ensure timely delivery and operational readiness.

He also pointed to managerial inefficiencies, including avoidable energy waste in public buildings, as a drain on provincial budgets. Tighter cost control and higher productivity, he said, would release funds for core sectors such as water management, healthcare, education and transport links, all essential pillars for a functioning tourism economy.

Water stewardship featured prominently in the president's remarks. Despite Lorestan's comparatively strong water endowment, over-extraction from wells and pressure on aquifers risk long-term environmental damage, including land



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a visit to the western province of Lorestan, Iran, on February 19, 2026.

● president.ir

subsidence. Sustainable resource management, he said, must run parallel to any expansion of tourism capacity to avoid ecological strain.

Later the same day, in a meeting with social and civic activists in Khorramabad, Pezeshkian shifted the focus to social infrastructure, saying complex provincial challenges cannot be resolved by government alone and require structured cooperation with community actors.

He said the administration is working to connect the executive apparatus more closely with grassroots institutions to improve service delivery, particularly in health and social welfare. While annual spending in the health sector has risen sharply over the past decades, he argued that management reform, not merely additional funding, is needed to ensure resources reach frontline personnel and citizens effectively.

For a tourism-driven province, service quality and social cohesion are critical



variables. Local workforce satisfaction, administrative responsiveness and public trust directly influence visitor experience, investor sentiment and the province's reputation as a safe and welcoming destination.

Pezeshkian said transparent communication with residents over project timelines and budget constraints would help sustain public support, especially where immediate solutions are not fea-

sible. He added that narrowing the gap between officials and citizens would strengthen social capital, a prerequisite for sustainable regional development. With disciplined project selection, environmental safeguards and stronger community engagement, Lorestan could reposition itself as a competitive four-season destination within Iran's domestic travel market in the coming fiscal cycle.

## Tehran opens 33rd Int'l Holy Qur'an Fair with 20 foreign delegations

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened the 33rd International Holy Qur'an Fair on February 02 at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla, with representatives from 20 countries attending the two-week event, the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization said.

The exhibition, held under the motto "Iran in the Shelter of the Qur'an", runs through March 6, IRNA reported.

Hojatolislam Seyyed Mostafa Hosseini-Neyshabouri, director of the fair's international section, said foreign participants are active across artistic, academic and cultural product segments. 10 coun-



tries, including Turkey, Oman, Egypt and Bahrain, are present in the artistic division, while seven are taking part in scholarly programs and three are showcasing Qur'anic cultural products.

Delegations have arrived from North Africa, the wider Arab-Islamic region, neighboring states, Indone-

sia, ASEAN members and the Indian subcontinent, reflecting a deliberate push for geographical diversity. Organizers have scheduled around 20 book unveilings and 20 specialized sessions within the international program. Two prominent non-Iranian Qur'anic figures will be honored alongside domestic contributors

in coordination with national Qur'anic institutions. The fourth Tehran Qur'anic Meeting will convene scholars to address "The Qur'an and the Prophet" in commemoration of the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Among the invited guests is Algerian scholar Sheikh Abu Jarrah Soltani, author of a 25-volume Qur'anic exegesis.

Alongside Qur'anic works, the fair also presents research and publications related to Nahj al-Balagha (a collection of the sermons, letters and short sayings of Imam Ali (PBUH)) and Sahifa Sajjadiya (hymns of Imam Sajjad (PBUH)) within the broader framework of Qur'an and Ahl al-Bayt scholarship.

## Ex-traffic police chief says motorcycle licenses for women fully lawful

### Social Desk

There is no gender restriction in Iranian law on issuing motorcycle licenses and that authorities can grant them to women under existing regulations, Mohammadreza Mohmandar, former head of Tehran's Traffic Police, said.

"There is no reference to gender in the legal provisions governing driving licenses, whether for cars or motorcycles," Mehmandar said, describing driving as a public right subject to age and competency requirements rather than sex, ISNA reported.

His comments follow the cabinet's January 28 approval of a nationwide framework to organize formal motorcycle training for women and clear the way for licensing. Under that decision, the Law Enforcement Forces are tasked with arranging practical training for female applicants, with instruction and examinations to be conducted primarily by women. The regulation prioritizes electric motorcycles and sets mandatory safety standards, including certified helmets and technical roadworthiness requirements. Mehmandar said the statutory criteria for obtaining a motorcycle



license mirror those already applied to male applicants, including a minimum age of 18, medical fitness, and successful completion of theoretical and practical tests. "The restrictions relate to capability and maturity, not gender," he said.

He added that over the past 20 to 25 years police had refrained from issuing motorcycle licenses to women for reasons that were "not technical in nature", despite the absence of an explicit legal bar. In his view, subsequent provisions assigning responsibility for issuing licenses to men created ambiguity without addressing women's status, a flaw he said stemmed from drafting rather than substance. On safety, Mehmandar rejected claims that licensing women would

create distinct risks. Traffic offences such as speeding or dangerous overtaking are not gender-specific, he said, and are already addressed through fines, penalty points and enforcement measures set out in traffic regulations.

He proposed that dedicated training centers for women, staffed by female instructors, could ease implementation and provide a more comfortable learning environment, though he stressed that existing driving schools are legally sufficient to deliver the required courses.

With training rules, testing procedures and oversight mechanisms already codified, Mehmandar said implementation hinges on administrative resolve. "From a legal standpoint, nothing further is required," he said.

## Iran reports 29m gamers, flags funding gap in digital games sector

### Social Desk

Iran has 29 million active video-game players, roughly one-third of the population, a senior official at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance said on Friday, urging state bodies and investors to step up financial backing for domestic game developers. Mohsen Qaemi-Nasab, director-general of the Presidential Office at the ministry's Financial Intelligence Center, gave the figure in an interview with IRNA on the sidelines of the "Game Week; Haft-Khan" (a reference to the Seven Labors in Persian epic literature) event at Tehran's Milad Tower, which opened on February 12 and run until the February 18. He said the scale of participation made gaming a serious cultural and economic sector that policymakers could not afford

to ignore. After touring exhibition stands and meeting developers and publishers, Qaemi-Nasab said many studios were seeking structured investment and institutional support to commercialize products and retain creative young talent. Iranian developers, he added, have made tangible technical progress, but require targeted capital and clearer funding channels to scale up production and compete regionally. Vahid Yazdanian, deputy minister for communications and head of National Information Network development, said gaming forms a core component of the network's content layer under its four-tier architecture of infrastructure, network services, applications and content.

Yazdanian said estimates put the number of Iranian gamers between 20 million and

40 million, a user base that in scale and engagement time exceeds many domestic and foreign messaging platforms operating in the country. He linked user satisfaction in online gaming directly to network performance indicators such as latency, bandwidth and stability. Lower ping rates and faster data transmission, he said, translate into higher user satisfaction and serve as measurable benchmarks for the National Information Network's effectiveness. Organized by the National Foundation for Computer Games in cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting and Milad Tower, the week-long event consolidates several specialized festivals and industry programs under one platform to showcase capabilities and attract investment into Iran's digital games market.