

Tourism needs radical overhaul to steady growth: Minister

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, said on Thursday in Tehran that the country's tourism sector requires structural re-engineering and a more predictable operating environment to ensure sustainable growth, citing fresh investment and employment data.

Speaking at a meeting of the ministry's Strategic Council for International Affairs and Public Diplomacy, Salehi-Amiri said tourism, which is highly sensitive to external variables, cannot maintain stable expansion without a flexible, program-based governance framework extending from central policy to provincial and local execution, IRNA reported.

He said a five-year transformation plan, running through March

2029, has been designed at national level and broken down into operational schemes for provinces and counties to align decision-making with implementation.

The minister said 734 tourism projects are currently under way nationwide, backed by investment totaling 830 trillion rials, describing the figure as evidence of private-sector confidence in the industry's medium-term prospects. Financial support through the banking network, coordination with the central bank and the use of specialized funds are aimed at maintaining capital flows and bringing projects to completion, he added.

Tourism accounts for roughly 6% of gross domestic product and nearly 10% of the country's daily economic turnover, according to the minister. About 1.6 million

people are employed across the tourism value chain. Safeguarding those jobs requires stronger demand, expanded target markets and a broader product mix, he said.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted foreign currency earnings as a core advantage. Average spending by inbound visitors stands at significant levels, reaching several thousand dollars in certain markets. He pointed to health tourism as a growth segment, saying medical infrastructure has improved in recent years and can support higher-value arrivals alongside cultural, pilgrimage and eco-tourism.

He set a medium-term objective of attracting 15 million visitors, arguing that institutional reform, targeted investment support and more effective cultural engagement abroad would be decisive in reaching that threshold.



● IRNA

Italy's Sapienza Film Festival to host Iran's 'Sami'

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Iranian film 'Sami,' directed by Habib Bavi Sajed, was selected for the main competition of the second edition of the Oriental Kaleidoscope - Sapienza Film Festival, with the event set to run in Rome from March 4 to 7. Held in the Italian capital under the banner "Everyday Life", the festival focuses on independent productions from the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East and across East and South-East Asia. The Rome-based showcase positions itself as a platform for films that rarely secure conventional distribution, giving space to character-driven narratives and low-budget cinema operating outside the mainstream circuit, IRNA reported.



● soughcinema.ir

'Sami' will compete against entries from Japan, Azerbaijan, Malaysia and China. It is the sole Iranian title in the running for the festival's top prize. The film has already built mo-

mentum on the international circuit. It won Best Screenplay at the 16th Kazan International Film Festival in Russia and was previously selected at the 16th Rome International Film Festival, as well as at the first Stockholm's Hope International Film Festival and Morocco's Nador International Film and Shared Memory Festival.

The drama follows a man who, two decades after his wife's killing, refuses to accept her death, tracing the psychological toll of unresolved grief over time.

The cast includes Saeed Nagravi, Mohammad Al Mehdi, Reza Nouri, Shaker Mousavi Nejad, Amineh Abiat, Mina Daghighaleh, Taqi Alboukhanfar, Ali Mahmoud Fallahieh and Shahrokh Sakhrivari.

VP warns UN of ecological fallout from US military activity in Persian Gulf

Social Desk

Iran's Vice President and head of the Department of Environment (DoE) Shina Ansari, wrote to Antonio Guterres warning that escalating US military activity in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman risks causing severe and lasting environmental damage.

In the letter, Ansari cited the growing militarization of the strategically sensitive Persian Gulf basin and cautioned that any military action in a region dense with oil, gas, petrochemical and maritime infrastructure could trigger widespread marine pollution, destroy coastal habitats and damage biodiversity, IRNA reported.

She said the environmental consequences of armed activity in such a fragile ecosystem would not be

confined to a single territory or timeframe, recalling previous regional conflicts in which strikes on oil and industrial facilities led to extensive oil spills, toxic emissions, coral reef degradation and long-term health risks for coastal communities.

Ansari grounded her warning in international environmental law, referring to Principle 21 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and Principle 2 of the 1992 Rio Declaration, which hold states responsible for ensuring activities under their jurisdiction do not cause transboundary environmental harm.

She also cited Article 55 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, which mandates protection of the natural environment against widespread, long-term and se-

vere damage during armed conflict, and the 1976 ENMOD Convention prohibiting hostile environmental modification with severe or lasting effects.

Calling the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman a "sensitive and fragile ecosystem", she urged the UN Secretary-General to use his authority under Articles 99 and 34 of the UN Charter to prioritize environmental risks arising from heightened military activity in the region.

Ansari also requested that relevant UN specialized agencies conduct an assessment of potential environmental threats and advance preventive mechanisms, stressing the need for full compliance with international environmental obligations to avert irreversible ecological harm affecting future generations.

Iran launches 10-year reform of school educational system

Social Desk

Education Minister Alireza Kazemi said on Friday that Iran will overhaul its student pastoral and character education framework to align it with the needs of a new generation, unveiling a 10-year reform plan with annual operational targets.

Speaking at a ceremony in Tehran, Kazemi said existing structures were no longer fit for purpose as pupils grow up in a vastly different social and technological environment from previous generations, IRNA reported.

He said the ministry would redesign methods, content and organizational structures within schools' pastoral departments to address students' intellectual, cultural and social needs in what he described

as a rapidly evolving digital era. Schools must move beyond purely academic instruction and place structured character development alongside formal teaching, he added.

Kazemi confirmed that new approaches would incorporate digital tools and online platforms into pastoral activities under defined educational frameworks, signaling a shift towards regulated use of technology in student development rather than blanket restriction.

The most concrete measure outlined at the event was a decade-long program for what officials termed a "modernized pastoral system". Deputy Minister for Cultural and Pastoral Affairs Sadeh Hosseinzadeh Maleki said the plan sets a 10-year horizon with

annual implementation phases, designed to raise the quality of non-academic education and increase structured student participation in school and community life.

The program will be rolled out through teachers, counsellors and school administrators nationwide. Officials did not provide budget figures but described the reform as a systemic redesign rather than a pilot initiative.

Iran's pastoral education units, embedded in schools after the 1979 revolution, operate alongside the formal curriculum and focus on social skills, identity formation and civic engagement. The new blueprint seeks to recalibrate that model for a generation shaped by social media, digital communication and shifting cultural norms.

PHOTO OF THE DAY

The funeral of Abdolmajid Arfaei, the distinguished linguist of ancient Iranian languages who is known as the Persian translator of the Cyrus Cylinder, is held on February 27, 2026, at the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia in Tehran, before his body was sent to Iran's southwestern city of Shiraz for burial at Hafezieh. ● IRNA

