



Tourism minister says global narrative key to reshaping Iran's image



The photo shows a view of a meeting, attend by Iran's Tourism Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri, where international tourism content producers come together in Tehran, Iran on October 5, 2026.
● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran must turn its vast cultural and historical heritage into a global tourism story rather than simply promoting it at home, Tourism Minister Reza Sale-

hi-Amiri said on Monday, arguing that the country's problem was not a lack of attractions but an inability to present them to the world. "Our first priority is the narrative of a beautiful Iran," Salehi-Amiri

said at the first specialist gathering of international tourism content producers, titled "Majestic Iran: Reimagining the Narrative in the Digital Age." "Iran has about one million identified historical sites, including

43,000 nationally registered sites and 58 on UNESCO's tentative list," he said, according to IRNA. "The issue is not a lack of capacity," Salehi-Amiri said. "Let us allow others to speak about Iran." He said Iran needed to move from domestic image-making to global storytelling, noting that unofficial voices often shaped perceptions of the country more strongly than its own cultural and tourism institutions. Building trust should come first, he said. Travelers need to feel secure before setting out and physically safe once they arrive. The experience of travelling in Iran can then reshape perceptions formed before a trip, Salehi-Amiri said, because what visitors encounter on the ground may differ from the image they were initially given. "The behavior of Iranians is also part of the country's tourism brand," the minister said, making the way visitors are treated an important part of how Iran is

perceived abroad. Salehi-Amiri called for a new tourism narrative for southern Iran, highlighting Hormuz, Bandar Abbas, Bushehr, Khuzestan, Chabahar and Makran. "Where is Hormuz, where is Bandar Abbas, where is Bushehr, where is Khuzestan, and where are Chabahar and Makran?" he said. Iran's heritage should not remain confined to protected sites, the minister said. It should relate to society and everyday life, turning historical assets into a source of social dynamism and economic activity. He also proposed a mystical tourism route linking Kharagani, Bayazid Bastami and Shams Tabrizi with Konya in Turkey, connecting sites and figures associated with Iranian and wider Persianate spiritual traditions. Salehi-Amiri said the focus on war and conflict in international coverage could overshadow Iran's cultural story.

"Today's war goes beyond the battlefield; it is a war of minds," he said, underscoring the need for content that can reach international audiences. Content producers, travel agencies, tour guides, restaurants and local tourism operators can connect Iran's attractions with the global public, he said. The ministry plans to establish a comprehensive Iran tourism content bank in five languages, Salehi-Amiri said, to make material about the country's heritage and attractions more accessible internationally. He also proposed creating a formal professional or trade association for tourism content producers, or a strategic council to coordinate their activities. The proposals aim to turn Iran's extensive cultural and historical resources into a coherent international tourism narrative, rather than leaving individual sites and destinations to speak for themselves.

Iran sweeps five golds to retain world astronomy title

Social Desk

Iran won five gold medals at the 19th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA) in Vietnam, retaining the world title for a third consecutive year, the Education Ministry said. The competition ran from Sept. 25 to Oct. 5 in Hanoi, drawing more than 320 students from more than 66

countries, IRNA reported. The five Iranian gold medalists were Sarina Alampour, Mohammad-Hossein Hosseini, Hirbod Foudazi, Hossein Masoumi and Arshia Mirshamsi Kakhaki, the ministry said. The team's performance again demonstrated the scientific capabilities of Iranian students, it said. President Masoud Pezeshkian congratulated the team, calling the vic-

tory a source of "pride and satisfaction." "Our responsibility towards these valuable assets is to provide greater support for talented people and equal opportunities for their growth and development," Pezeshkian said. He said such support should allow young scientists to build on their international success while putting their knowledge and abilities to-

wards scientific development, national progress and improving people's lives. The president said the achievement was a clear sign of the scientific potential and talent of Iran's younger generation, who compete on the world stage through knowledge and perseverance and demonstrate their scientific abilities and those of their country.



Military power holds ...

At least in theory and on paper, the possibility of a major Saudi offensive has been raised. However, it remains to be seen how the realities on the ground will play out.

Could Houthis' recent advances in western Yemen and their approach toward routes leading to Taiz and Aden strengthen the group's position in any future political negotiations and alter the country's internal equation? Or will divisions among the various anti-Houthi forces prevent the formation of a cohesive military front? There is no doubt that Ansarullah's advances could give the group a strong bargaining chip in any future negotiations. An important point that should be highlighted is Ansarullah's smart and diplomatic approach. After capturing "Mocha" and areas overlooking Bab al-Mandab and the Red Sea, the group entered negotiations with the United States in Oman and assured Washington that international shipping would remain free to pass, while making clear that its firm stance

was directed only at Saudi Arabia and aimed at breaking the blockade. This shows that, alongside its military capabilities, Ansarullah also possesses diplomatic acumen, which could serve as a model for other actors as well. As for the second part of the question, there is already no unified front. To explain this more clearly, there are currently three factions in Yemen, apart from areas under Ansarullah's control. A) Saudi-backed groups, including the "Islah Party," the "National Resistance Forces" led by Tareq Saleh, the nephew of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the "Yemeni National Army," made up of remnants of the former army. B) The UAE-backed group known as the "Southern Transitional Council" (STC). C) Other militant groups, including "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula" (AQAP) and possibly Daesh affiliates. Each of these groups also contains its own factions and internal groupings. Saudi Arabia is therefore seeking to organize these disparate groups and bring them together for a ma-

ior battle against Ansarullah. In this regard, the Saudi kingdom is pursuing "de-escalation" with the UAE so that it can also mobilize UAE-backed forces against Ansarullah. **Given the importance of Taiz and Bab al-Mandab, what military and political advantages would control of these areas give the Houthis, and what impact would losing them have on the Yemeni government?** Naturally, Bab al-Mandab and the Red Sea are a vital "chokepoint" or "lifeline" for the Saudis. If Ansarullah manages to consolidate its control over these areas and beat back a potential Saudi offensive, it would have the upper hand in the geopolitical chess game with Saudi Arabia. This would allow Ansarullah to enter into a bargaining process with its larger neighbor: lifting the blockade in exchange for easing pressure on Saudi Arabia. If this becomes consolidated, Ansarullah would be recognized as a player and a negotiating party. **Given the escalation in fight-**

ing and the worsening humanitarian situation, could the current circumstances once again push Yemen toward a war of attrition? Or is there still a possibility of returning to a ceasefire and a political process? The reality is that since 2014, when the Saudi-led coalition began its offensive against Yemen, the country has entered a new phase of humanitarian crisis and, of course, a war of attrition. Therefore, Yemen has not just entered a war of attrition now. This process began in 2014 and has now reached its peak. This war of attrition has had several consequences. First, it has left 18 million people facing acute food insecurity, meaning they do not have reliable access to sufficient food. Families are unable to afford even one kilogram of flour, sugar or rice. Second, it has dealt a heavy blow to Yemen's economy and disrupted businesses. A recent example of this is the 10-percent increase in fuel prices, which has led to "intensified hunger." The rise in fuel prices has undoubtedly affected food prices as well and worsened hunger among families.

As for whether there is still an opportunity to return to a ceasefire, that depends on several other factors. First, there is a perception among Saudi leaders and other regional actors that the Houthis are an Iranian proxy force. On that basis, negotiations should first be held with Iran and then with the Houthis. Given the interconnectedness of regional crises — the linkage between the fronts in Yemen, Iran, Lebanon and elsewhere — and in light of US pressure on Iran, regional actors believe that Iran is under pressure and may be unable to come to the Houthis' aid. Saudi Arabia has therefore seized the opportunity to put Ansarullah on the back foot in Yemen. With this perception prevailing, despite the Houthis' advances and in light of recent Saudi attacks and those carried out by its proxies, it appears that the window for a ceasefire has been missed. Military power is now the only factor capable of determining the balance of power between the two sides. **Given that Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other regional ac-**

tors have had different experiences with developments in Yemen, could an escalation of the war further widen differences among them over Yemen's future? These two countries became embroiled in a dispute after the Houthis began advancing. According to some analysts, one of the reasons for the UAE's withdrawal from OPEC and its increased activity in Africa is the intensification of competition between the UAE and Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Saudi forces pinned down UAE-backed forces in a major air campaign, which in turn heightened tensions between the two countries. However, it appears that relations between the two countries have now moved onto a path of de-escalation, following a visit by Mansour bin Zayed, Vice President of the UAE, to Saudi Arabia and his meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as fears over the Houthis' advance have prompted both countries to step up their efforts. Therefore, the prospect of convergence between the two countries is considerable.