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Pezeshkian says Ferdowsi's legacy can strengthen national unity

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday that Ferdowsi's epic poetry and Iran's wider literary heritage could help strengthen national unity, promote justice and prevent social divisions.

Shahnameh, the celebrated epic by Persian poet Ferdowsi (c. 935–c. 1020–1026) recounts the history of Persia's kings, from mythical times to the 7th century, drawing on accounts preserved in Pahlavi (Middle Persian).

Speaking to writers, poets and literary figures in Tus, near Mashhad in northeastern Iran, Pezeshkian said the moral and human values in the works of Ferdowsi and other Iranian literary figures could guide society through difficult times.

He pointed to themes of resisting injustice, defending the oppressed, preserving human dignity and standing up for truth in Ferdowsi's poetry, saying they were consistent with the teachings of Imam Ali, a central figure in Shiite Islam.

People attached to power, wealth or official positions might hesitate to speak the truth for fear of losing their status, Pezeshkian said.

Breaking free from such attachments was essential to defending justice without fear or hesitation.

He warned that one of the main hopes of Iran's adversaries was to widen divisions among the population. Minor disagreements, he said, should not be allowed to turn into deeper social rifts. Forgiveness, compassion, mutual respect and respect for knowledge and expertise were essential to social cohesion.

At a separate meeting with faculty members and students at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Pezeshkian urged universities to take a more active role in tackling the country's problems.

Universities should move beyond theoretical teaching and engage in practical efforts to address challenges such as land subsidence, job creation and the development of local economic resources, he said.

Pezeshkian added that the government was ready to grant universities and experts greater authority to identify and implement solutions to regional and national problems.

His remarks at the two meetings highlighted the role of cultural heritage, academic expertise and public solidarity in helping Iran address its challenges.



President Pezeshkian addresses literary figures in Tus, Khorasan Razavi Province, Iran on November 25, 2026.
president.ir

Iran puts tourism recovery on global agenda

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has proposed expanding international cooperation on tourism recovery, seeking to strengthen its tourism sector and promote its attractions abroad following the damages in tourism section caused during 40-day war waged by the United States and Israel against Iran in late February 2026.

Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpay, Iran's deputy minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, made the proposal on Tuesday at the 127th session of the UN Tourism Executive Council in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates on November 25, 2026.

He thanked the UAE for hosting the meeting and praised the UN Tourism secretary-general and secretariat for organizing it.

He also highlighted Iran's potential for tourism development and stronger international cooperation.

"The war had damaged Iran's tourism sector and affected the operations of a considerable number of businesses. many people we, including children, were also killed during the war", he said.

Despite these difficulties, Iran was continuing efforts to revive domestic travel, support tourism businesses and promote its attractions to international visitors, Mohseni Bandpay added.

He said Iran was ready to expand cooperation with UN Tourism and its member states in training and empowering tourism professionals, developing rural tourism and restoring destinations affected by crises.

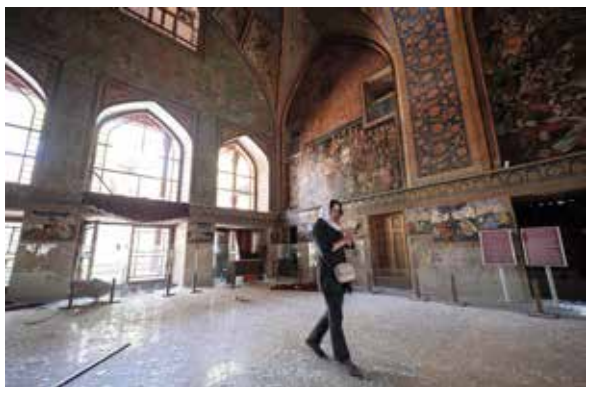
Mohseni Bandpay cited Iran's diverse attractions, including historic cities and cultural heritage sites listed by UNESCO, as well as deserts, forests and villages where local traditions remain alive.

He also identified health tourism and ecotourism as areas with significant growth potential, saying they could diversify the country's tourism offerings and strengthen its position in international markets.

He described the expansion of eco-lodges and greater participation by local communities as important achievements in community-based tourism.

"Families in many villages have restored traditional houses and converted them into accommodation for visitors," he said.

The initiative has created income opportunities for local guides, handicraft producers and small businesses while helping preserve traditional architecture, local customs and rural economies, he added.



The historical Chetel Sotoun palace in Isfahan, central Iran, was badly damaged during US Israeli-led bombing on March 11, 2026.
MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL/ NURPHOTO

Mohseni Bandpay expressed hope that discussions at the council meeting would produce joint projects and initiatives whose benefits would directly reach local communities.

Tehran and Isfahan accounting for nearly two-thirds of the affected sites damaged during the war that began in late February 2026.

The damage has affected some of Iran's best-known heritage landmarks.

Damage to Tehran's Golestan Palace and historic sites in Isfahan, including Chehel Sotoun Palace and the Jameh Mosque.

Reports have also documented damage to historic architectural features and decorative elements.

Tehran, Jakarta finalize tourism pact, eye direct flights

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Indonesia have finalized a tourism cooperation agreement and are exploring direct flights, joint marketing and halal tourism initiatives to boost travel between the two countries, Iran's tourism deputy minister said on Wednesday.

Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpei said both sides had completed the text of the agreement during a meeting with Indonesian Deputy Tourism Minister Ni Luh Enik Ermawati on the sidelines of the 127th session of the UN Tourism Executive Council in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

The talks focused on improving air links, easing travel and attracting more Indonesian tourists to Iran.

Establishing direct flights was a key issue, alongside joint marketing campaigns to promote tourism attractions and facilities in both countries.

Halal tourism was another major focus. The two sides discussed developing joint tourism products based on their cultural and religious ties and tapping into the growing potential of travel for Muslim visitors.

They also reviewed plans to organize the mausoleum of Imam Mohammad al-Ghazali in Tus, near Mashhad in northeastern Iran.

Ermawati welcomed Iran's efforts to improve the historic site and stressed its role in strengthening the two countries' cultural and historical ties.

The officials also discussed expanding Iran's tourism offerings to Indonesian pilgrims through a program known as "Umrah Plus," which combines religious travel with visits to cultural and historical attractions.

Mohseni-Bandpei proposed inviting Indonesian tour operators, media professionals and travel influencers to Iran for familiarization tours, or FAM trips, to showcase the country's attractions, infrastructure and tourism products.

Ermawati welcomed the proposal, and both sides stressed the need for closer contacts between tourism professionals.

Mohseni-Bandpei said Iran had finalized the agreement and submitted its text to Indonesia for approval. Iranian Tourism Minister Seyed Reza Salehi-Amiri has invited his Indonesian counterpart to visit Tehranand attend the Tehran International Tourism Exhibition, where the agreement could be formally signed.

The discussions also covered improving transport links, facilitating travel, strengthening cultural and religious cooperation and setting a framework for expanded tourism ties.

Over 2,000 applicants join Iran-Pakistan vaccine training course

Social Desk

More than 2,000 people from 70 countries have registered for an international vaccine training course launched jointly by Iran and Pakistan, aimed at strengthening research, production capacity and scientific cooperation among members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The six-week program, titled "Vaccinology: From Research and Development to Vaccine Production", opened on November 23, 2026, at the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) at the University of Karachi in southern Pakistan.

It is jointly organized by the OIC's Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), Iran's Pasteur Institute and the ICCBS.

Around 100 researchers, students and health professionals are attending in person, while the remaining participants are joining online.

Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, COMSTECH's coordinator general and a recipient of the 2021 Mustafa Prize, inaugurated the course. He said the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the need for scientific research, innovation and domestic vaccine production.

OIC member states must train researchers, strengthen research institutions and gain access to modern vaccine technologies to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers, he said.

Choudhary also voiced hope that the program would promote the exchange of expertise, expand cooperation among participating institutions and create more training opportunities for young researchers.

Ehsan Mostafavi, head of Iran's Pasteur Institute, stressed the importance of cooperation among research centers in vaccine development.

"Vaccine research and production required expertise across multiple scientific disciplines and adequate infrastructure," he said.

The curriculum covers immunology, vaccine design and production technologies. The course will end on Dec. 28, 2026, with a final examination.

Choudhary, a Pakistani chemist, received the 2021 Mustafa Prize for his research in bioorganic chemistry and the discovery of natural compounds with potential therapeutic applications.

His research team has identified compounds in medicinal plants that could serve as starting points for developing new medicines.

The initiative reflects efforts to strengthen vaccine research and production capabilities across OIC member states following the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the importance of domestic manufacturing and international scientific cooperation.