

IRAN

*Happy
Nowruz
Holiday*



AT A GLANCE

MIRROR

PUBLICATION OF THE CULTURAL COUNCIL OF THE EMBASSY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, NAIROBI-KENYA

MARCH 2019 | ISSUE NO. 7





'Samanoo', symbolises rebirth

Profile

The Cultural Council of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nairobi promotes mutual understanding and cultural co-operation among people of Kenya and Iran in line with the principles of the cultural agreement between Iran and Kenya.

The Cultural Council aims to create enduring partnership between Iran and other cultures and we do this by creating opportunities to connect with the latest skills, ideas and experience from Iran.

Activities

Library:

The Cultural Council has a very rich library consisting of myriad of books in the field of Persian language and literature. Besides, books on human sciences, history of Iran, Islamic studies, world history, religion, Islamic philosophy, a large number of books on social sciences, political science, culture and art are also available for readers and scholars.

Film and Art Division:

The film and art division consists of video and audio tapes of classical Persian music, art books, calligraphy models, attractive sceneries, handicrafts and various prominent Iranian films. In addition, film festivals and cultural exhibitions in various parts of Kenya are also organised by this Office.

Public Relations Department:

The department arranges meetings with prominent personalities from the domain of Kenya art and culture. Organises seminars, round table discussions and cultural programmes.

Information Centre:

The centre provides necessary information about Iranian art, culture and all other facets of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Distribution Unit:

This unit is responsible for providing Persian books, periodicals, magazines to the Persian loving people.

Persian Language Teaching Centre:

This unit is responsible for organising Beginners, Intermediate and advance level Persian courses for interested students. Besides, the unit has introduced Persian language teaching programme in Kenyan Universities.

Scholarship for Kenyan Students

We offer scholarships to study in the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue either Bachelors, Masters or PhD. Please visit www.irankenya.org for more information.

Translation Unit:

The Cultural Council also does translation of books from Persian to English.

Contents

Editorial.....	4
Boosting production is the pivotal issue of the new President in the New year message to the Iranian Nation	5
Imam Khomeini sought material and spiritual progress on Nowruz	7
Everything you need to know about Persian New Year ‘Nowruz’	9
A Fire Festivity: Cheharshanbeh-Suri	10
Nowruz celebration in East Africa	14
Why Iran creates some of the world’s best films	17
Iranian female Professor wins UK award in Science and Technology	19
Space technology, future market for Iranian entrepreneur	21
Zilu-An original Artform from Iran	23
Poet’s Musoleum, a Prime cultural destination	26
Leader urges preservation of natural resources and vegetation	29
Sizdah Bedar, Iran’s nature Day	32
Solid growth: A review of Iran’s tourism in 2018	36
	39



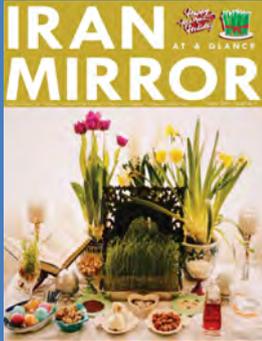
CULTURAL COUNCIL

EMBASSY OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

NAIROBI-KENYA



Mr. Mahmoud Majlesain



EDITORIAL TEAM

Executive Director
Mahmoud Majlesain

Editor/Research
Khamis Mohamed

Graphic Editor/Production
Athman Farsi

Distribution
Mwinyi Ramadhani
Osman Rajab



Cultural Council
Embassy of I.R.I
P.o. Box 59595-00200
Nairobi-Kenya
Tel: +254 713 836 041
Email: iranlib@yahoo.com
www.nairobi.icro.ir
www.irankenya.org

In honor of Nowruz and the turning of the seasons, Iran Mirror Magazine March edition features a special edition on Nowruz , Iranian New Year 1398.

Millions of Iranians, regardless of their religion, race, faith and ethnicity, celebrates the ancient and traditional Iranian festival of Nowruz, which means “new day” in Persian. Nowruz, which has been celebrated for nearly 4,000 years, also marks the first day of spring in Iran.

This year Nowruz marks the beginning of the year 1398 in the Persian calendar, symbolically leaving the hardships of winter behind and honoring the rebirth of nature.

In Iran and several other countries, the vernal equinox marks the beginning of Nowruz, a two-week long festival that is the bedrock of ancient Persian culture.

The origins of Nowruz are so ancient, it predates Islam and Christianity. This holiday can be traced back to Zoroastrian, one of the world’s first monotheistic religions that were once the official religion of Persia.

In 2009, UNESCO inscribed Nowruz on its list of unique Intangible Cultural Heritage, recognizing the importance of preserving the social practices, rituals, and festive events.

People start preparing for the festivities weeks in advance with khaneh tekani, which literally means “shaking down the house” in Persian. Rugs are washed, walls get a fresh coat of paint, and closets are sorted, but this is much more than a deep spring cleaning. Cleanliness keeps evil away, so people can bring fresh, new energy into their new year.

The “Haft-Seen” (Seven S’s) is at the heart of Nowruz traditions. This tabletop arrangement displays seven symbolic objects, all beginning with the letter S in Persian. A typical spread could include sabzeh, a type of wheat, barley or lentil sprouts, to symbolize rebirth; samanu, a sweet type of pudding, representing affluence; senjed, a Persian olive, for love; seer, or garlic, for good health; seeb, or apples, which represents beauty; sumac fruit for beautiful sunrises; and serkeh, or vinegar, to promise patience.

Wishing you a Happy New Year 1398 in Iran and everywhere that Nowruz is celebrated.

Boosting Production is the pivotal issue of the New Year: Imam Khamenei's Nowruz Message 1398/2019



His Eminence Ayatollah Ali Khamenei addressing the Nation on the New Year

The following is the full text of the message issued on March 21, 2019, by Ayatollah Khamenei—the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution—on the occasion of Nowruz, the Persian New Year.

*In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
O' the Conqueror of hearts and sights
O' the Planner of night and day
O' the Transformer of power and conditions*

Transform our condition to the best of conditions!

I thank God for ordaining that I may congratulate the dear Iranian nation on this year's Nowruz, which coincides with the auspicious birth anniversary of the Commander of the Faithful and Imam of the Pious (a.s.).

Dear compatriots, may this eid be an auspicious one

for you. I hope that all of you will pass this year with happiness, with physical health, with joyful hearts and with increasing worldly and spiritual achievements, God willing.

I especially wish to congratulate the esteemed families of the martyrs, the dear disabled war veterans and their families. And I would like to send abundant greetings to the immaculate soul of our magnanimous Imam [Khomeini] and to the pure souls of the martyrs.

We experienced an eventful year. In the year that passed, the Iranian nation shone brightly in the true sense of the word. The enemies devised many plans. They had many plots for the Iranian nation. However, the solidity and insight of the nation and the determination of the youth foiled their plans. In the face of the harsh and – according to their own words – 'unprecedented'

sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe, the Iranian nation gave a solid and powerful response both in the arena of politics and in the arena of the economy.

In the arena of politics, the manifestation of that response was the great 22nd of Bahman rally [February 11] and the people's positions throughout the year. As for the people's position in the economic confrontation, it was manifested through an increase in scientific and technical innovations, a substantial increase in the number of knowledge-based companies and an increase in infrastructural and fundamental products of the country, an example of which is the inauguration of different phases of the South Pars gas field just a few days ago and before that, the inauguration of the large Bandar Abbas Refinery and other such tasks.

Therefore, the people managed to show their power, their grandeur and their greatness in the face of the enmity and malevolence of the enemies and thereby - thank God - increase the reputation of our nation, our Revolution and our Islamic Republic.

The main problem of the country continues to be economic problems. Especially in recent months, people's livelihood problems have increased. Part of these problems is related to inefficient management in the area of economic matters, which should definitely be compensated for. Certain plans and measures have been devised. By Allah's favor, these measures should be implemented throughout this year – the year that begins from this moment: the year 1398 – and the people should feel the impact.

What I would like to mention in this regard is that the country's urgent and serious matter and its priority in the present time is the issue of the economy. Regarding the economy, the issues that we have are many: the issue of the decrease in the value of the national currency is an important matter. The same is true of people's

purchasing power. The same condition exists regarding factories, their lowered capacity and the closing down of some of them. These are the problems. Based on research and having benefitted from the viewpoints of experts, one concludes that the key to all these problems is the expansion of national production.

I named the year 1397, "The Year of Support for Iranian Products". I cannot say that this slogan was fully implemented, but what I can say is that it was well received to a great extent, and in many cases, the people welcomed and acted on it. This will certainly exert its influence. This year, the issue of production is of great importance. I would like to make the issue of production the pivot of our activities. By Allah's favor, in my new year's speech, I will explain what I mean by 'production'. If production is boosted, it can solve livelihood problems, it can ensure the country's independence from foreigners and from the enemies, it can eliminate unemployment and it can solve the problems related to the decrease in the value of the national currency to a great extent.

That is why I believe that the issue of production is a pivotal issue this year. Therefore, the slogan I have chosen for this year is: "The Year of Boosting Production". Everyone should try to do what they can to boost production in the country. By Allah's favor, from the beginning to the end of the year, this notion should be completely tangible in the country. If this happens, we hope that the solution to economic problems will be achieved, God willing.

I wish to send my heartfelt peace and greetings to the Imam of the Time (may our souls be sacrificed for his sake). I plead for the prayers of that noble personality for you dear people and I ask Allah the Exalted to bestow happiness and bliss on the Iranian nation and all those nations who celebrate Nowruz.

Greetings be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings!





President in a New Year message to Iranian nation



President Rouhani addressing the nation during the ushering in of the New Year.

New Year the year of production, efforts, employment for the young. We must all feel responsible towards problems. Issues began with enemies, newcomers in Washington, but ends by us. This New Year is the year of harnessing inflation, more friendship with all neighbours

In a televised New Year address to the Iranian nation in the first minutes of year 1398, President Rouhani listed the achievements and problems that people faced last year, and named the New Year as the year of new decisions, national integrity and more effort.

In the message that was broadcasted on TV, Dr Hassan Rouhani stressed, “Do not doubt that we will overcome all issues and achieve victory through more efforts”.

“The basis of disorder and our problems is enemies, entering our country from outside the borders,” he continued.

The President also went on to say, “Today, we are in a battlefield, in which all people should participate in, absence of even one person can incur losses”.

He also described New Year as the year of harnessing inflation, making exchange rates balanced, and more friendship with all neighbours and said, “The government will announce its new programmes in the first days of the New Year”.

“Nowruz means greenness, freshness and leaving the hard days of winter behind, and entering the atmosphere of spring and moderation,” he said.

The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran also went on to say, “Last year was the year of victory against terrorism, the year of victory of the Iranian nation at international organisations and the international court, the year of resistance of the people of Iran and glorious points in history such as February 11”.

“Anti-Iranians thought that they could reach all their goals on November 4, celebrating their victory in Iran on February 11. But all of these days were the days of our victory and the enemies’ failure,” said the President.

Dr Rouhani also emphasised, “Paying attention to less important instead of more important issues is the

gravest strategic mistake in life”.

Stating that knowing where the enemy is, is very important in the battlefield, he said, “When the enemy is before us, if we attack right or left, we have indeed inflicted losses on our own forces”.

We all must feel responsible, said Rouhani, adding, “The government, other branches, the armed forces, universities, academia, farmers, workers, producers, and people from all walks of life must feel responsible in these conditions”.

“Someone might ask until when these problems and sanctions will be there? I would like to tell the great Iranian nation that problems have started by the enemies and those who have recently come to power in Washington, but the end is at our hands,” added the President.

He added, “The enemy thought that the entire world and its allies would stand by it in these sanctions, but we saw that all countries, except for a few countries, stood by the Iranian nation”.

“Great people of Iran! We have not started

this; we are a great nation who have been loyal to our promises and adhered to our vows. Those who broke their promise, showed their true identity”.

Stating that “New Year is the year of new decisions, more integrity and effort,” he said, “Last year, I visited 10 provinces and I saw people’s passion, vigilance and awareness in all visits”.

He also said, “I am happy that among 12 foreign visits that I had last year, my first visits started with neighbours: from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, and my last visits ended with neighbours as well: Russia and Iraq”.

“Wherever I went as the representative of the great Iranian nation, we saw respect from the side of their people and authorities. This means that those who imposed sanctions on us failed”.

At the end of his message, Dr Rouhani said, “Oh the Almighty, keep our minds and tongues away from violence, division and fault-finding”.



People enjoying in a park

Imam Khomeini sought material and spiritual progress on Nowruz



Imam Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Republic on Nowruz always used to seek promotion of spirituality, brotherhood and rule of law. In his historic messages issued on the occasion of New Persian year used to recommend faithful people to morally and spiritually transform themselves.

Nowruz commences the beginning of spring and the start of New Persian Year. In the beginning of each year, Imam also encouraged people from all walks of life to play a key role in reconstruction and progress of the country.

The Islamic Revolution under the wise leadership of Imam revived divine values and genuine Islamic teachings at a sensitive juncture of the history also changed balance of power in the region and boosted morale of oppressed nations across the globe.

Imam Khomeini's role in honoring Nowruz and changing the way Iranians viewed this day has been influen-

tial.

Some phrases from a historic message delivered by Imam on the occasion of Nowruz come as following:

"I am hopeful that God Almighty will make this year the year of mercy, blessings, purity, brotherhood, and equality and that the entire nation and the government and all the officials shall unite together and collectively lead this country toward prosperity and welfare and succeed in fulfilling all the needs of this nation; and confront any kind of transgression, which are part and parcel of all revolutions; and I hope that in this current year, our country proves to firmly establish the rule of the law. Everyone should abide by the law and no one should transgress it. No one should act against the law and everyone should act within their own limits."

Occasion: Onset of the Iranian New Year (Nourouz)
1360 AHS



Everything you need to know about Persian New Year 'Nowruz'



Families at a park enjoying the new year festive season

A bunch of green sprouts is placed on a car as part a tradition to mark Sizdah Bedar, when families set off for green and open spaces.

For Iranians, the advent of spring heralds the New Year, aptly named Nowruz (literally, 'New Day'), which has been the most important national holiday in the Persian calendar for centuries.

The first day of Nowruz, which follows 12 more days of joyous festivity, falls on March 21, the first day of Farvardin in the Iranian calendar. According to statistics, over 187 million people in 11 countries across the world observe this holiday. Countries that have inscribed Nowruz in their national calendar include: Iran, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Albania, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kosovo, Iraqi Kurdistan and Georgia.

This ancient rite, dating as far back as 3,000 years, was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009.

Nowruz as a national holiday.

Countries where Nowruz is celebrated by the people but not considered as a national holiday include India, Turkey, Egypt, France, the Republic of Tatarstan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands,

Germany, Lebanon, Syria, China, UAE and Sweden.

As you can see, Nowruz is an important cultural heritage that is observed by so many people around the globe. This ancient rite, dating as far back as 3,000 years, was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009. The case was once again updated and inscribed in UNESCO's list in 2016 upon the request from Afghanistan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to join Iran on the multinational case of



Nowruz. The UN's General Assembly recognized the International Day of Nowruz in 2010, describing it as a spring festival of Iranian origin. On 15 March 2010, the House of Representatives of the United States passed the Nowruz Resolution by a 384–2 vote, "Recognizing the cultural and historical significance of Nowruz...". You may have heard the Nowruz felicitation messages by former US President Obama during all his eight years in office, or seen the pictures of the Obama family gathered around 'Haftseen' set meticulously and artistically on a table in the White House. Even the current US President, Trump, who threw his weight behind an anti-Muslim rhetoric, banned Iranians from immigrating to the US, and keeps hurling threats at Iran to dismantle the landmark nuclear deal, could not wiggle out of sending greetings to Iranians celebrating Nowruz.

Because you can say all you want about ancient rituals that do not make sense anymore, so why are we still doing them?, but you cannot dispute the vital importance of observing Nowruz, much as you don't when it comes to Christmas, even if you are not a Christian, or an optimist, or Halloween, even if you are too old to don

a creepy costume and go trick-or-tricking. Some practices, no matter how ancient, are indispensable to people who have grown up with them, and the Nowruz ceremony is one of them.

But what is Nowruz? The rite shares many customs and practices across countries along the Silk Road, but here we will focus on how Iranians celebrate their New Year.

Nowruz in Iran

Nowruz might as well be the most important annual holiday in the Iranian calendar. As such, people begin to prepare for it one month in advance, through 'housecleaning', redecorating, and buying new clothes or house appliance. The days leading up to Farvardin are infused with the scent of blossoms, morning drizzles, shops lined up with pots of hyacinths, violets, and matthiola, and streets buzzing with activity late in the morning, and the joyous sound of singing and music coming from a tambourine, played by people dressed in bright red clothes and a felt hat, faces covered in soot. They are called 'Haji Firuz', the Persian equivalent of Santa Claus, perhaps, who sing about Nowruz in the



Families enjoying traditional kebabs



most cheerful tones possible as you are waiting for the traffic light to turn light.

On the eve of the last Wednesday of the year, Iranians observe another popular tradition called 'Chaharshanbe Suri', which includes jumping over bonfires while singing 'My sickly yellow paleness is yours; your fiery red color is mine.' In the metropolis Tehran, there will be lots of fireworks instead.

Some families will go to the cemetery to pay their respects to their loved ones on the last days before Nowruz.

Haftseen (The Seven S's)

It is very important for all members of the family to gather around a traditional table setting called 'Haftseen' (literally, the seven S's) right before the exact moment of the March equinox to celebrate the New Year. There is an interesting superstition involved in this tradition: whatever you are doing right before the March equinox – which marks the beginning of spring and the end of winter in the Northern Hemisphere – you will be doing the exact same thing throughout the year. For instance, if you are sleeping when the first day of the first month begins, you will be sleepy throughout the

year. So as children, we took great care to be freshly showered, dressed in our best clothes, and fully awake, no matter if the March equinox was going to happen at three in the morning. Even as an adult now, I still care about this moment, as if at 7:45 PM on March 20 this year, my fate for the entire year will be decided based on my current state of mind.

Now, what makes a Haftseen?

1. Seeb (apple); symbol of beauty and love
2. Seer (garlic); symbol of health
3. Serkeh (vinegar) symbol of progress and change
4. Somaq (sumac); symbol of patience
5. Samanu (sweet pudding); symbol of abundance
6. Sabzeh (sprouts); symbol of rebirth
7. Senjed (Sea-buckthorn) symbol of stability and strength

These are the seven S's that must go into any Haftseen setting. But over the years, Haftseen has begun to include some other varieties such as coin (symbolizing wealth), candles (symbolizing light and dawn), mirror (symbolizing purity and sincerity), decorated eggs (like the ones you see on Easter Day) for each member of the family to symbolize fertility, gold fish in a bowl, as



well as the book of Shahnameh or the Divan of Hafiz. Some families would compete over whose Haftseen looks better.

Customs and Cuisine

After the spring equinox which heralds the start of the New Year, Iranian people embark on an intensive period of relative visiting, called ‘Eid Didani’ in Persian. During the thirteen days of Nowruz holidays, households are busy hosting relatives close and distant, with a wide variety of sweets and ajil (trail mix), baklava, nan berenji (cookies made from rice flour), exciting-looking confections, and generally everything your dietitian would be horrified to find out you have eaten.

Many people would also choose to go on vacation; sometimes back to their hometown where their families are, or some tourist destination inside or outside the country. Because of that, the streets of Tehran become decidedly less crowded during Nowruz. If you are planning to visit Tehran, Nowruz is the best time of the year to do so.

There are also some special dishes served during Nowruz, including Ash-e reshteh (a noodle soup), Kuku sabzi (herbs and vegetable soufflé) served for dinner on New Year’s, Reshteh polow (rice cooked with noodles), Sabzi polow with fish, and dolma (cooked vegetables,

meat and rice rolled in grape leaves).

Sizdah bedar

The last day of Nowruz holidays is special, too. And it has a special name: Sizdah bedar. As mentioned before, Nowruz holidays last thirteen days, and number thirteen is also considered to bring bad luck in Persian folklore. The idea of Sizdah bedar (literally, Thirteen Outdoor) is to spend time picnicking outdoors, and throwing away your Sabzeh because it is considered a bad omen to still have it when Nowruz holidays are over.

If you are in Tehran on Sizdah bedar, you are in for some interesting spectacle: colorful tents erected all over the city, in the parks, on the squares, next to rivers, children flying kites and playing football and running around, families barbequing next to their tents, everyone having a good time before having to say goodbye to thirteen days of joy, relaxation and fun and getting ready to go back to their jobs and schools, hoping for a year better than the previous one.



Families playing in a park during the ‘Sizdah Bedar’

A fire festivity: “Chaharshanbeh-Suri”



People jumping the fire during Nowruz

People jumping the fire during the Fire festival during Nowruz

Amongst final preparations to salute the Iranian New Year, people observe Chaharshanbeh-Suri, a deeply-rooted-in-time ceremony that, according to tradition, is a bid to ward off all the misfortunes and bad omens, hoping that wishes will come true.

It is celebrated on the last Tuesday night of the Iranian calendar year, marked by unique customs, most notably people jumping over fire shouting “Sorkhi-ye to az man; Zardi-ye man az to” (Give me your beautiful red color; And take back my sickly pallor).

Over the past couple of years, the occasion has been accompanied by fireworks from locally-made or imported firecrackers diverted from the original basics.

In big cities, Chaharshanbeh-Suri can be a frightening spectacle. Each year dozens of people are burned and injured. Many prefer to stay at home before nightfall, because the city feels like being under siege; fireworks

go off every second, shaking windows.

However, it is an ancient custom and by celebrating it in the right manner, many believe that they are passing on a valuable piece of the country’s past to the next generation.

The event plays host to a number of other rituals that are still practiced more or less across the country.

Shrouded people, young and old, run through the streets banging on pots and pans with spoons (Qashoq-Zani or spoon banging) to beat out the last unlucky Wednesday of the year. This act re-enacts the visits of the departed spirits, as practiced by ancient Zoroastrians hundreds of years ago.

The night ends with fireworks, feasts, songs and gestures merriment.

A fire festivity, Chaharshanbeh-Suri is held on the night before the last Wednesday of the year when families and friends gather by bunches of open fires



and keep them lit till dawn.

Narratives say that ancient Iranians originally observed Chaharshanbeh-Suri in a bid to ward off all the misfortunes and bad omens with hopes that their wishes would come true.

People chant “Give me your fiery red color and take back my wintry sallowness,” while they are jumping over open fires. In short, the festivity may symbolize a euphoria of nature on the eve of spring.

The eve of the last Wednesday (so technically, Tuesday evening) before the turn of the year, called in Persian ‘Chaharshanbe Suri’, which literally means ‘Wednesday Festivity’. Some argue that ‘suri’ also means ‘red’, hence the variant translation ‘Red Wednesday’, with red possibly referring to ‘fire’.

Either way, ‘Chaharshanbe Suri’ is a (barely) surviving tradition from old times. The popular opinion is that the ritual has its roots in ancient Zoroastrian traditions, where fire is sacred and considered to be the visible presence of Ahura Mazda.

‘Fire’, therefore, is the defining element of Chaharshanbe Suri, and the practice mainly involves

setting up bonfires in the streets and jumping over them. There is a nice song that goes along with it: ‘My sickly yellow paleness is yours; your fiery red color is mine.’ It is like a mantra you say as you make each jump, in a symbolic move to exchange all the dust and soot you have collected over the year with the liveliness and splendor of the burning fire.

The ‘festival of fire’ heralds the coming of spring, the Persian New Year, the new beginnings, and has for centuries served as an occasion to join family members, friends and everyone you care about in a time of festivity and fun.

I could tell you about all the many different traditions that are part of this special festivity, such as Ghashogh-Zani (Spoon-banging), the Persian equivalent of trick-or-treating if you will, where young people go door-to-door while banging a spoon against a bowl to receive aqil (trail mix), or Kuze-Shekani (Urn-Breaking), in which people throw an urn filled with coals and worthless coins down the roof to drive away misfortunes, or Falgush-Neshini (Eavesdropping), where girls hide



A PERSIAN boy leaps over a bonfire at the 24th Annual Chaharshanbe Suri held at Ambleside Park, West Vancouver, March 18 2014



behind a wall and listen to the conversations of passersby to see if their wishes would come true; but the truth is, there is barely any of those interesting traditions left now, especially in bigger cities that have transitioned into modern life. Sadly, many people are not even aware of these customs, and the only place to learn about them is in books or online sources

Perhaps, the most persisting of the Charshanbe Suri traditions is the jumping over bonfires (which may remind you of Guy Fawkes Night, perhaps), where people from a neighborhood gather around a bonfire on the street to talk, connect, sing and have a good time. But in the bustle of the metropolis, the festivity has been over the years transforming, or some would say, deforming from jumping over bonfires into a night of setting off firecrackers. Loud, and scary and sometimes dangerous, too. As if jumping over the fire is no longer enough to purify your psyche of all the misfortunes and bad memories typical of modern life, now you need firecrackers to ward off evil spirits (or

an unsuspecting passerby) by making loud explosion noises.

Traditions, especially those going as far back as to the ancient times, are having a hard time surviving among all the glitter and sparkle, as well as the dust and pollution, of modern life. You have a better chance of catching local people on the streets, singing traditional songs and observing centuries-old customs in smaller cities, rural areas, where the air is cleaner, the sky is clear, and time seems to move even slower, sometimes even standing still.

Losing traditions to time and progress is sad but inevitable. First, you lose the meaning behind the practice, and then you begin to lose the practice altogether. At least, one can store them in words and pictures for the next generations. If the next generations would still be curious about the long-lost traditions, that is.



Nowruz Celebration in East Africa



Women celebrating Nowruz in Zanzibar

After the immigration of Shirazi family to Africa, they gradually seized power in Zangebar, Mombasi, Kilva and Shangvaya. For many centuries after that, Kilva was governed by a succession of Shirazi governors. The long-term presence of Shirazi family in the east coast of Africa resulted in close relations between African and Iranian different cultures. A prominent cultural festival of Iranians was the celebration of the New Year or Nowruz.

Historically, the Shirazis were the first set of non-Africans to settle in Zanzibar and over time aspects of their culture have been absorbed and given localized names by the native Swahilis. One of such is the Nowruz or Nayruzi or popularly known as Mwaka Kongwa.

Of all the countries where Nowruz is celebrated, probably the least widely known is in Tanzania. About 1,000 years ago, a group of Iranians from Shiraz move to the island of Zanzibar off the coast of Tanzania and settled there. They were part of a larger wave of migration from Iran and the Persian Gulf region over the centuries to come that brought Zanzibar and Africa's

eastern coast generally into an intimate relationship with the Persian Gulf regions.

The Shirazis who settled in Zanzibar brought Nowruz with them, and over time Zanzibaris adopted the holiday under the name Mwaka Kogwa. The holiday is celebrated as a new year festival with its own set of traditions.

The most well-known Makwa Kogwa takes place in the village of Makunduchi. There, men use banana stems to engage in mock fights with each other in order to air out the grievances from the past year and start the new year fresh. Women, meanwhile, sing songs in the fields around the village. The celebration includes large meals offered to any guest who passes by, as it is considered unlucky to be without a guest on the holiday. Like most Nowruz celebrations, Makwa Kogwa even includes a big bonfire.

The Shirazis gather around the table, pray silently for the wellbeing and happiness of their beloved ones in the forthcoming year, and that precisely calculated moment, which is marked by fireworks and explosives

introduces the new year. Exchanging gifts, paying visit to the elderly, paying tribute to the dead, donating to charities and sightseeing are common activities as well. Haft-seen is normally unloaded on the 13th day of the new year.

With the day activities done, the folks go home to prepare a feast and a banquet is held in the open with everyone participating, strangers included. At evening time, Koba ground becomes the gathering spot as everyone arrives all beautifully dressed. Dancing goes on late into the night with music ranging from traditional songs to disco, while others carry the fun down to the nearby beach

The Baluchis—in Swahili called Wabulushi (singular: Mbulushi)—who settled in Kenya and Tanzania in the 1820s are heterogeneous Baluchi-cum-Swahili-speaking Sunni Muslim communities originating in Iran.

They too are actively involved in the Nairuzi or Nowruz Celebrations every year.

They came to Zanzibar as mercenaries with the Omani forces, and after 1890, they joined the German and British colonial forces in East Africa. Since the 1960s, when the East African countries became independent, the Baluchis have been engaged in trade, mechanized agriculture, transportation, and skilled professions.

Though many of the Baluchis of East Africa emigrated to Europe, North America, and various Gulf countries in the 1960s, new waves of Baluchis have arrived in East Africa at irregular intervals. The latest immigration was in 1979 after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. In Rujewa District alone, in the Iringa region of Tanzania, a settlement was established of about seventy Baluchi families who were soon engaged in modern farming.

Nowruz is often called the Persian New Year and is closely associated with Iran. But Nowruz is marked across many different countries, including in Afghanistan and Central and Southern Asia, among Kurds across the Middle East, and even in parts of the Balkans and on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar (more on that soon!).

Even though Nowruz has ancient roots, the holiday has changed significantly over the thousands of years that it has been celebrated. Different regions have preserved or developed different traditions, and new ones have been added to the old ones. The beautiful thing about Nowruz is that it has taken different shapes everywhere it has reached, but it always marks the original message of rebirth and renewal.



The descendantsof the Iranian Shirazi's celerating Nowruz on the 13th day of the new year

Why Iran creates some of the world's best Films



Asghar Farhadi at the 84th Academy Awards

By Hamid Dabashi

Four Iranian films made it into the top 100 in BBC Culture's recent poll to find the greatest foreign-language films. Hamid Dabashi celebrates the country's outstanding cinematic moments.

Three films by Abbas Kiarostami – *Close-Up* (39), *Where is the Friend's Home?* (94), and *Taste of Cherry* (97) were on BBC Culture's list of the 100 greatest foreign-language films. One, by Asghar Farhadi, *A Separation* (21) made it into the top 25.

Neither the fact that a number of key moments in Iranian cinema made it onto this illustrious list, nor the particular films that were selected, is surprising. One might suggest any number of other great works that could have appeared, but no one can question the importance of these four, nor the towering presence of Kiarostami among world-class film-makers.

The wider landscape of Iranian cinema over the last 100 years or more has been a varied topography of extraordinary cinematic events through which these major film-makers have risen to global attention.

By and large, the critics who were consulted to

create BBC Culture's list likely know of Iranian or any other world cinema through the major international film festivals, chiefly Cannes, Venice, Berlin, and Locarno, which overshadow other festivals in the US, Japan, Korea, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

The path of Iranian films into these major festivals has been long and winding, from its origins in the social and cultural history of Iran. And the historical formation of Iranian cinema took place on a transnational public sphere – both in its origins and its destinations – from the East India Company film studios in India where the very first Iranian films were made, to these European film festivals.

There has never been a moment in the long history of Iranian cinema when it was confined to its current frontiers. The very first Iranian sound film, *Dokhtar-e Lor/Lor Girl*, 1932, also known as *The Iran of Yesterday* and *The Iran of Today*, was produced by Ardeshir Irani and Abdolhossein Sepanta in the Imperial Film Company in Bombay.

There is a larger frame of reference that extends from Europe to the Ottoman and Russian empires all the

way to Egypt and India, which was the site of the rise of Persian prose and poetry as well as Iranian visual and performing arts.

The figure of Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967), a leading poet of her time, shines over the history of Iranian cinema.

With a single short documentary, *The House is Black* (1962), Farrokhzad set Iranian film on a creative path from which it has not diverged since. Shot on location in a leper colony, *The House is Black* defined the fusion of fact and fiction in a unique and ground-breaking way.

Before that fateful decade had ended, Dariush Mehrjui's *The Cow* (1969) was smuggled out of Iran and screened at the 1971 Venice Film Festival, where it won the critics' prize (Fipresci); a screening in Berlin further consolidated its global recognition as a defining moment in the emerging Iranian cinema. Based on a short story by Gholam-hossein Saedi, *The Cow* told the story of a villager and his unique anthropomorphic relationship with his animal with astonishing visual and narrative panache.

Revolution and recognition

Although there were many crucial developments in Iranian cinema in the 1970s, the world's attention was captured by the Iranian Revolution of 1977-1979. What brought the focus back to Iranian cinema was Amir Naderi's masterwork, *The Runner* (1984), which was something of a revelation when it premiered at the Festival of the Three Continents in Nantes. Shot in multiple locations in the south of the country during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), *The Runner* crafted a cinematic landscape of its own, following the solitary life of a young boy mesmerised by running, to which Naderi gave a deeply moving, allegorical significance.

It was immediately after the global success of *The Runner* that the world took notice of Abbas Kiarostami, when his now classic film *Where is the Friend's Home?* (1985) premiered at the Locarno Film Festival. By this time Kiarostami was a known and fairly successful film-maker in Iran, but his reception in Europe suddenly placed him next to Vittorio De Sica of *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), Yasujiro Ozu of *Tokyo Story* (1953) and Satyajit Ray of *The Apu Trilogy* (1955-1959) and gave his work global power and significance.

While Kiarostami was established as the leading Iranian film-maker on the world stage, the Makhmalbaf family put a particularly poignant spin on the perception of Iranian cinema, particularly when Samira Makhmalbaf premiered her debut film

The Apple (1998) at the Cannes Film Festival when she was just 18.

It was a transformative moment in the global reception of Iranian cinema and, with it, Iran itself.

The spectacular rise of Asghar Farhadi altered the perception of what Iranian cinema had to offer. Farhadi's family drama *A Separation* (2011) won the Academy Award for best foreign-language film in 2012 – and, five years later, his 2016 film *The Salesman* went on to win the same award. Farhadi had come to cinema from a theatre background, and his films remain deeply dramatic in a theatrical sense. The ingenious cinematography of Farhadi's director of photography, Mahmoud Kalari, has been instrumental in defining this sense of cinematic drama.

Iranian drama 'The Salesman' by Academy Award winner Asghar Farhadi scooped the top prize at the 34th Munich Film Festival in Germany.

'The Salesman' was awarded the €50,000 (\$56,300) prize for best international film at the closing ceremony of the 10-day festival, Mehr News Agency reported.

"We decided to give this award to a film that, while being contemporary, has an international vision and most importantly, a lookout to the future. A story full of excitement and wonders. A film about what we are or could be as a human being," said a member of the panel of jury said in a statement on granting 'The Salesman' the best international film award.

The global staging of Iranian film offered some of its best works international attention, a crucial component that fed back, aesthetically and thematically, into the country's cinematic repertoire and inspired successive generations of Iranian film-makers.

In the process, no doubt, some of the best Iranian films never received the attention they richly deserved. Among its older masters, the cinema of Farrokh Ghaffari, Ebrahim Golestan, and Bahman Farmanara are chief among such oversights. Iran has also benefitted from some gifted women film-makers like Rakhshon Banietemad, Marziyeh Meshkini, and Manijeh Hekmat, who too have not received their dues.

Source ; BBC Culture

SUFFRAGE SCIENCE

Celebrating and inspiring women in science



Marzieh Moosavi-Nasab, from Shiraz University

Iranian female professor wins UK award in science and technology

Iranian female professor, Marzieh Moosavi-Nasab, from Shiraz University, has gained 2019's Suffrage Award in Science and Technology in the UK, IRNA reported.

The Suffrage science award is granted in order to promote the leading roles held by women in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The award, introducing women's scientific success, makes attempts to remove gender inequality in scientific fields.

Moosavi-Nasab has presented more than 250 scientific papers and she has provided guidance to more than 60 graduate students.

Dr. Zohreh Azimifar, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Shiraz

University, was the previous winner of Suffrage science award, 2017.

For Iranian women, the family is the foundation of life and society and Iranian women make special efforts to encourage their offspring to study hard in different fields of basic sciences, arts and literature, said the female scientist speaking at the award grating ceremony in UK.

MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences tweeted that Azimifar, associate professor of Shiraz University and adjunct professor of University of Waterloo has passed her heirloom to Marzieh Moosavi-Nasab, also of Shiraz University, for having numerous impacts in motivating and encouraging young students, in particular female students, to continue in higher education.

The Suffrage Science scheme celebrates women

in science for their scientific achievement and for their ability to inspire others. It encourages women to enter scientific subjects, and to stay.

This public engagement scheme was initiated in 2011, by the MRC Clinical Sciences Centre (CSC), a biomedical research institute of the UK's Medical Research Council.

The Suffrage Science scheme was founded in 2011 on the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. It began with a group of 11 women from the life sciences. These women passed their suffrage jewellery onto the next cohort in 2012, and the relay continued in 2013, 2014 and 2016, creating a network of over 50 connected women.

The award was granted on the occasion of the International Women's Day, March 8th.

Leading female scientists and engineers awarded scientific heirlooms by their peers at the fourth Engineering & Physical Sciences Suffrage Science Awards on 8 March 2019.

With the core STEM employment sector increasing by 6.3% from 2017 to 2018 at more than 6 times that of overall employment in the UK, it is safe to say that the sector is fast growing. However, the percentage of women in core STEM occupations actually dropped from 23% in 2017 to 22% in 2018¹. This is certainly not the direction we want to be going, and re-emphasised the need to recognise leading and pioneering female scientists and engineers across industries. Within engineering the challenge is even greater as women make up less than 11% of the sector in the UK. With a large skills gap looming and the need for a more diverse workforce, it has never been more important to inspire and encourage more people, especially women, to choose a career in engineering.

On International Women's Day, 8 March 2019, 12 female scientists and engineers from across the world will be presented with hand-crafted jewellery at the Suffrage Science Awards ceremony, held at The Royal Society, London. The awards celebrate women in science and engineering and encourage others to enter science and reach senior leadership roles.

The 12 awardees are chosen by the previous award holders for their scientific achievements and ability to inspire others. The awards themselves

are items of jewellery, inspired by the Suffrage movement, and are passed on as heirlooms from one female scientist to the next.

Alongside the awards, science writer and broadcaster Vivienne Parry will lead a discussion on the 'Needs and Challenges in Engineering and Society' with Babylon Health CTO Caroline Hargrove, BAFTA nominated science presenter Fran Scott and current Suffrage Science awardee and Reader in Polymer Bioelectronics, Rylie Green.

The Suffrage Science scheme was initiated by Professor Dame Amanda Fisher, Director of the MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences (LMS) in 2011. Amanda says:

"Now in its eighth year, these heirlooms create a self-perpetuating network of talent and contacts to help others succeed in science and engineering. This year's awardees join a community of over 120 women scientists. Since 2011 the awards have travelled from the UK, across Europe to the USA, Hong Kong and to Uganda, illustrating the international nature of science and engineering, and the global effort to improve female representation."

The 2019 award winners are:

1. Professor Moira Jardine University of St. Andrews, UK
2. Dr Sarah Harris University of Leeds, UK
3. Dr Roisin Owens University of Cambridge, UK
4. Professor Tiny de Keuster Universiteit Gent, Belgium
5. Professor Karen Holford Cardiff University, UK
6. Professor Serena Best University of Cambridge, UK
7. Dr Tara Garnett University of Oxford, UK
8. Dr Isabel Palacios Queen Mary University, UK
9. Professor Amina Helmi University of Groningen, Netherlands
10. Professor Sue Kimber University of Manchester, UK
11. Professor Marzieh Moosavi-Nasab Shiraz University, Iran
12. Professor Melinda Duer University of Cambridge, UK

Space technology, future market for Iranian entrepreneurs



About half a century ago, human left footprints on the moon. For years, space technology was associated in the mind of public with launching satellites, astronauts in their weird costume exploring other planets. Space technology was unreachable and done behind closed doors!

However today the space is not limited to looking to stars and space centers. Nations face private funding, advances in technology and growing private-sector interest in space technology, which make it different from what we previously perceived.

Iran, as a country which has made several achievements in space technology in recent decades, is not an exception. Now, the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) promotes space-based businesses as one of the main factors for development of the country.

In an interview with YJC, the director of ISA space-based businesses development department Shabnam Yazdani said that the agency encouraged entrepreneurs to provide space-based creative solutions

for challenges and problems Iran deals with.

She said that ISA provides necessary data as well as some ideas for entrepreneurs to start their business for solving problems.

Smart agriculture and space technology

The space-based business and technology have a great impact on smart agriculture, which leads to a better process from seeding to harvesting.

The space-based business and startups can give consult to farmers in order to modify their cropping pattern and farm management, which leads to improvement of their harvest and increase its quality.

In mid-January, an agreement was signed between the agriculture research and development technology fund and ISA, in order to provide some facilities and data for the startups active in the field of smart agriculture.

However the startups need some meteorological data as well as some information provided by drones

for their services and the government can lay infrastructure for them to use these data.

Some startups in Iran have recently been launched providing services for farmers with some space-based data on meteorology and smart agriculture.

Smart city is fulfilled through space technology

The urban development nowadays is link with smart cities. The future cities are the places in which, the facilities and services are provided by hi-tech solutions, hence, no one can undermined the role of space-based services.

According to statista, smart cities, also commonly known as cyberville, digital cities, intelligent cities, and wired cities, are urban areas that collect electronic data from citizens, devices, and assets to manage available resources more efficiently.

A wide range of information and communications technology (ICT) applications are executed to enhance, reduce costs and resource use, as well as increase the communication between government and citizens. Ideally, these applications can enhance knowledge and innovations, promote working environments, and connect technology and society.

Space-based data and service can provide information with public transportation and energy efficiency.

Besides, driverless cars and electronic identity are main factors for having a smart city and can manage air pollution as a part of urban development through space-based technology.

Some navigation apps and startups has recently launched in the country to boost the concept of smart city.

Natural disaster and space technology

Measuring and anticipating the effects of is important in order to implement measures to mitigate the effects of disasters.

The space technology through satellite-derived information can have a crucial role in all phases of crisis management. The space-based technology also provides information for post-disaster response, recovery and reconstruction planning.

The satellite data can provide information about the places with concentrations of population, which are more vulnerable during disasters and decrease the risk.

Rapid damage assessment maps of affected area can be provided for civil protection and emergency response with timely and accurate measures for recovering after disasters.

Through satellite-driven data the urban planners and other organization can decrease the risk of natural disaster.

This is an untapped market for Iranian startups who can benefit from this market, which can save lives of





Zilu – An Original Artform from Iran



Zilu is a kind of light hand-woven carpet, the weaving of which provides hundreds of families their livelihood. The provincial Zilu-weaving center is Meibod, in which the craft has been traced to ancient era.

This light carpet has proven to be one of the most suitable and most enduring floor coverings, especially in desert areas.

Famous names in this hand-made traditional industry include: Naftal, Pert Toureh, Zolfak, Rokneddin, small eight-sided and large eight-sided zilus, Banrumi and Kelid. The oldest zilu dating back to many centuries ago, is presently available for visiting in Congregational Mosque of Meibod.

An analysis of structural techniques and designs shows that Zilu, although looking like a simple hand-woven thread rug, has a profound cultural richness and depth of thought.

Mahdi Najafian, head of the Ferdows Cultural Heritage Organization, in an interview with the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA), South Khorasan Province, said: "Zilu is a type of rug and floor covering that is woven with thread. It has major similarities to Hasir mats (made

of plant fiber). Zilu is a traditional, historical creation, and one of the original arts of the city of Ferdows. In his travel stories, Nasir Khusraw (1004-1088) mentioned the existence of 400 Zilus in the city of Toon."

He spoke about the provenance of this artform, saying, "In the weaving and the patterns, Zilu has major similarities to Hasir, mankind's earliest-known hand-woven item. It also, like Hasir, was mainly used in holy places like mosques and temples. Therefore, we can surmise that Zilu weaving may have evolved from Hasir weaving, or else perhaps the Zilu industry was inspired by Hasir."

Most people can tell the difference between Zilu and Kilim, since the two hand-woven products have major differences in their raw materials and also in their weaving styles.

There are complicated weaving techniques in Zilu, ones which are rarely seen in Kilim, or in any other hand-woven product. Zilu, since it's made of cotton, suits an agricultural and village lifestyle perfectly, whereas Kilim is more adaptable to livestock farming and nomadic lifestyles.



Kilim is made of wool, and is thus suitable for cold regions. Zilu, with cotton thread as its base material, is more appropriate for hot regions, especially on the borders of the desert. It seems, however, that Zilu weaving is at a more developed stage than Kilim.

Zilu mainly uses geometric patterns, and sometimes the designs take the form of inscribed tablets.

Contrary to other Iranian carpet types, Zilu has a limited variety of colours. The colours which are used, like those in other regions, were locally produced.

Generally, Zilu is categorized into three types based on colour and function. White and blue ones are mainly used in mosques and holy places. The red and blue ones are used inside houses, while green and red ones are of the highest quality.

Ziloo weaving is a hard work:

The common weavers of Ziloo are men. In past, just men wove ziloo because its device is very big and its weaving is so hard and needs lots of strength and energy. Nowadays, women also weave Ziloo in smaller size.

A Ziloo weaver should move about 13 km along the width for weaving a 6-meter Ziloo and lift more than 1400 kg weight.

World Crafts Council to Globally Register Persian

Zilu

The World Crafts Council is considering registering the Iranian-made Zilu, a type of Persian rug, on the list of international handicrafts.

Three experts from the World Crafts Council, an affiliate of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have arrived in the Iranian city of Meybod to look into the possibility of internationally registering the Zilu woven in Meybod, Yazd province.

“These experts, all of whom are women coming from India, Kuwait and Iran, have visited the Meybod Zilu Weavers’ Company, the Nari-Qaleh Cooperatives, the Shah-Abbasi Complex, and Zilu weaving workshops, the Zilu museum, and an exhibition showcasing photos and documents related to this art and industry,” said Alireza Abolhassani, a deputy governor of Meybod.

“We have made numerous efforts to have the Meybod Zilu registered internationally. This city has great potential and we have revived its potentialities over the past two months and are totally hopeful that we will achieve the desired result,” he said.

The official said a plan is underway to make a 400-square-metre tile with a Zilu design.



Meanwhile, head of the World Craft Council's Asia Pacific Region (WCC-APR) Ghada Hijjawi-Qaddumi hailed the Zilu industry during the first day of her visit to Meybod.

She said based on the information available and the visit she and other experts made, they found out that Zilu weaving is a popular industry in Meybod, and all family members are somehow involved in it, and that it is one of the main jobs of people in Meybod.

"During the course of these visits, we saw for ourselves all the stages of Zilu weaving and learned that from A to Z of the Zilu weaving process are done inside the town of Meybod, said Hijjawi-Qaddumi.

The WCC assessor said Meybod has the edge in the Zilu industry as authorities in the city are familiar with this art and they themselves are somehow professional Zilu weavers.

She then touched upon the Zilu weaving training centres in the city.

Hijjawi-Qaddumi said the Zilu weaving art in Meybod is noteworthy and it is very great that Zilu weaving is being taught with new methods in the

training centres.

She said the fact that women in Meybod are involved in Zilu weaving is a winning ace for the city.

The official underlined it would be important to pay due regard to the Zilu industry and to introduce it to world markets, adding Meybod has secured this accomplishment.

Hijjawi-Qaddumi then talked about the outcome of her assessment of the Meybod Zilu.

"It is still too early to make a decision in that regard, but given the existing evidence and documents as well as the papers received, this industry deserves to be registered globally; however, we should wait for the overall results [of assessments] regarding this issue to be announced," she noted.

She said after the experts wind up their visits to locations associated with the Zilu weaving art and industry, they will send a report to the World Crafts Council. She said after the report is shared with other members, and they express their full satisfaction, then good news may be announced.





Poets' Mausoleum, a prime cultural destination



Poets' Mausoleum or Maqbaratoshoara is a prime cultural destination for travelers to Tabriz. It attracts a great number of Iranian and foreign visitors interested in literature and art.

Undoubtedly Maqbaratoshoara can be seen as a symbol of culture and literary of this land. Because it comprises of more than 400 tombs of poets, mystics, and illustrious statesman of Iran and neighboring countries who died in the last 800 years.

In addition, architecture of the tomb's building is so beautiful and creatively designed that have a special place among the symbols and indices of the region; so special that it was surprisingly chosen as the symbol of the republic of Azerbaijan in Eurovision 2009.

Stunning and spiritual building of the tomb was proposed by Mr. Ghulamreza Farzan in a competition to design a memorial to the mausoleum in 1971.

Besides the cultural value of the mausoleum, the atmosphere of the mausoleum itself attracts every

person interested in culture and literature.

Surrounding area with a large lush yard and relaxing pool, handmade beautiful stone sculptures and the most famous contemporary poet's tomb, all turn it to an interesting place to go.

Some visitors say the site is photography heaven. Scenic, angular and interlocking concrete arches of the mausoleum maybe best viewed through a reflecting pool from the south.

Located in Sorkhab district, Maqbaratoshoara is where over 400 writers, poets, mystics and linguists are buried from the 11th century onwards. It is a testimony to the glorious cultural scene of the northwestern Iranian city.

Formerly known as Sorkhab cemetery, its original texture was hurt by earthquakes and floods over the course of time until it was renovated and adorned with a memorial monument in the 1970s. The precise date of its establishment is not known.

According to experts, Maqbaratoshoara is more than a cemetery and can be considered a literary complex. In the past it has also been known as Haziratoshara, Haziratolghozat and Sorkhab Cemetery.

Its modern design was developed by Iranian architect Gholamreza Farzanmehr who made an amalgam of modern and traditional elements of Persian architecture. Construction operation started in 1972 and was completed in 1982.

Iranian poet, linguists, and author Abu Mansur Ali ibn Ahmad Asadi Tusi is believed to be the first literary figure buried at the mausoleum. Narratives say that a tradition was established by entombing other prominent classical poets such as Khaqani, Anvari Abivardi, and Qatran Tabrizi.

Poets Shamseddin Sojasi, Shapur Nishapuri, and Homam Tabrizi are other examples of literary and cultural figures buried there.

Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar (1906 – September 18, 1988) is probably the most renowned contemporary Iranian poet being laid to rest at the site. His mausoleum is situated in the middle of the complex with almost 30 meters in height.

Soaked in history and dotted with splendid vibrant historical sites, Tabriz has much to offer its visitors such as

Azərbaycan Museum, Arg-e Tabriz, Elgoli Park, Shahriyar House Museum, Municipal Hall, St Mary's Church, Qajar Museum, Constitution House, Khaqani Park, and Sarkis Church just to name a few.

Tabriz has long been a place of cultural exchange since antiquity. Its UNESCO-registered bazaar complex gives reference to the city's glorious past when it was a peak commercial center on the Silk Road.

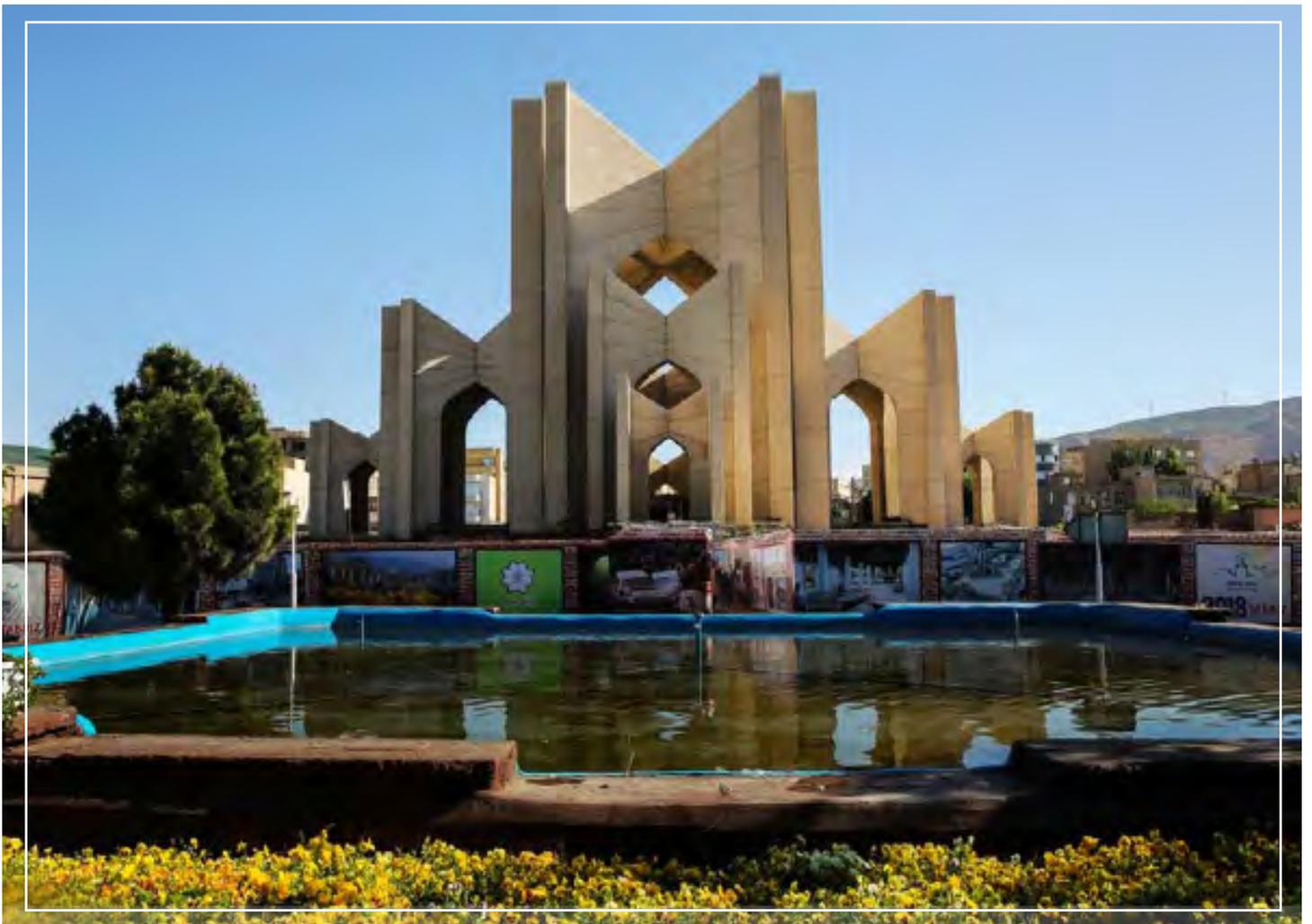
It is also famous for having hospitable people, ubiquitous carpet shops, abundant public places and efficient transport system.

Some 400 poets, mystics and luminaries of Iran and the region have been laid to rest there.

The first poet buried in this complex was Asadi Tusi.

Other famous Persian poets buried there include Anvari Abivardi, Zahiruddin Faryabi, Falaki Shirvani, Shams al-Din Sajasi, Mojiroddin Balaghani, Homam Tabrizi, Khaghani, Qatran Tabrizi, Mani Shirazi, Lesani Shirazi, Shakibi Tabrizi, Maghrebi Tabrizi and Shapour Neyshapouri.

Shahriar was the last poet to have been laid to rest in Maqbaratoshoara and the only one who worked both in Persian and Azerbaijani. The death and subsequent burial of Shahriar enhanced the profile of Maqbaratoshoara and made it a must-see tourist attraction of Tabriz.





The mausoleum of Shahriar is located in the middle of the complex at a height of 30 meters.

Gholamreza Farzanmehr, the designer of Maqbaratoshoara, said the design was selected in a competition held in 1970. Construction operations started in 1972 and it was completed in 1982.

Tabriz Municipality currently manages the mausoleum. Ali Akbar Safipour, director general of East Azarbaijan Culture and Islamic Guidance Organization, said Maqbaratoshoara is considered a treasury of Iranian-Islamic literati.

“It hosts a large number of domestic and foreign tourists annually,” he said.

He called Maqbaratoshoara as a spiritual and literary resort for intellectuals and educated people.

Under travelers’ eyes

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the Poet’s Mausoleum have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

“Tombs of poets”

The structure of the monument catches your eye from a far and you wouldn’t know at once that you are entering a sepulcher. The places is the resting place for a large number of Tabrizi poets, the most famous of

whom is Shahriar. Now, due to renovation process, one may not be able to get the photos he wishes to outside of the building. (Reza Sattarzadeh from Muscat, Oman; Reviewed September 2018)

“Visit the tombs”

After my visit I would say the outside of the building was more impressive then the inside. There are only a few tombs inside. (Leovanstraten2015 from Leeuwarden, the Netherlands; Reviewed April 2018)

“Not interesting”

The monument itself is not worth visiting, but the climb uphill and the view over Tabriz and its surrounding areas is splendid. If you decide to climb uphill together with a lot of locals you should do it in the early morning before it becomes too hot. (Rsmidt1959 from Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Reviewed December 2017)

“Very interesting”

Not somewhere we would normally visit but we did to try and better understand the Iran people, we are glad we went. Unfortunately work is being done outside which restricts the views but inside was very interesting. (Youngone51 from New Plymouth, New Zealand; Reviewed October 2017)



Leader urges preservation of natural resources and Vegetation



Ayatollah Khamenei planting a tree during Iran's nature Day

Iran's forest area is approximately 12 million hectares with 0.2 hectares per capita, which is one quarter of the world average, so attention to preserve the forest areas must be four times the global attention, faculty member of the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands has said.

Mohammad Darvish made the remarks on the occasion of the National Tree Planting Day, in which people are encouraged to plant trees across the country, held on the first day of the National Week of Natural Resources annually observed on March 6 to 13.

On the occasion of the National Day of Planting, Ayatollah Khamenei—the Leader of the Revolution—planted two fruit saplings this morning (Wednesday), March 6, 2019, in the garden of the Office of the Supreme Leader.

“This tree planting ceremony is a symbolic event to encourage the lively young and respectable people to become accustomed to planting trees, he said.

He said that Forests and ranges should be highly

valued and if these natural resources are used wisely, they will last forever because these are renewable resources. The Leader always says that “trees and plants are the symbols of life.”

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the National Day of Planting bears tidings that the Spring is around the corner, and it is indeed a reminder for the importance of flora. Pointing to the damages imposed on the country due to neglecting the forests, pastures and flora, he reminded his audience: The importance of trees and preserving the flora should find its real place in the public culture.

The Supreme Leader called the act of planting saplings on the National Day of Planting Trees a symbolic one, aimed at enhancing the culture of valuing trees, slamming the destruction of plants in plants-rich regions for the sake of constructing buildings, and went on to say: The departments in charge should be very serious in countering these transgressions and do not allow it to happen.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution also criticized planting harmful saplings in some areas of the country with the aim of preventing the expansion of deserts and stated, and held: The responsible entities should prevent these actions while making their best for preserving the forests and pastures. Monitoring establishments, such as the Judiciary, should endeavour to prevent damage to forests and woods.

Attaching significance to trees, plants and vegetation should turn into a public convention and culture

Tree Planting Day is a sign of the emergence of spring and it also reminds us of the importance of vegetation in the country. The point is that due significance should be attached to the issue of trees, plants, vegetation, forests and grasslands in the public culture of the country. In the present time, we have suffered damage as a result of negligence towards forests, grasslands and because of lack of attention to vegetation throughout the country.

This act of planting trees – planting two productive saplings, and two fruit trees – is of symbolic significance. I would like the issue of planting, preserving and attaching significance to trees and other forms of vegetation to turn into a public convention and a public culture in the country.

We sometimes hear that some cause damage

to certain tree-rich areas – they destroy trees – with the purpose of erecting buildings and the like. The organizations in charge should seriously confront this issue and prevent it from developing. It is also heard that some do not pay enough attention to the issue of planting harmful forms of vegetation in some areas of the country. Great significance should be attached to this issue. We have heard that certain saplings and trees which are unsuitable and harmful are planted in some areas of the country in order to prevent desertification. It is essential for the organizations in charge to do something to prevent this from happening. Also, they should seriously endeavor to preserve grasslands and forests. The organizations in charge – including supervisory organizations such as the judiciary branch – should do their best to prevent damage to forests.

I hope that by stimulating the people’s interest in trees and in the environment and by appreciating the value of it, the country and the people will reap more benefits from this area in the future, God willing. And Allah the Exalted will bless this move and the benefits of plants, greenery and the like will be many for the country, God willing.

Leader highlights preserving vegetation

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali





Khamenei on Wednesday emphasized the need to preserve vegetation, urging officials to take measures against forest encroachment.

The Leader made the remarks after planting two fruit tree saplings on the occasion of the Natural Resources Week.

“Some profit-seeking traders exploit forests and natural resources regardless of national interests. Forests should be safeguarded against encroachment,” he highlighted.

A lot of predicaments emerging from dust storms and air pollution are related to the shortage of vegetation, he said, adding that considering the country’s ecological situation and spread of deserts, the preservation of vegetation is of great significance.

The Leader further noted that forests in northern Iran are nearly unbeatable in the world but some profiteers ruin them, insisting “these forests must be preserved”.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he commented on the quality of fruits produced in Iran, saying import of fruits is among “wrong” acts which except in some rare cases it should be avoided.

At the end of his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei described tree planting as a symbol of respect to the nature and that everyone should be grateful for this blessing.



Iran's Nature Day

Sizdah Bedar, Iran's Nature Day



Families enjoying during the 13th day of Nowruz which is also referred to as Nature day

Spring in Iran is truly the season of renewal of nature's life. The pleasant fragrance of flowers of spring has spread all over Iran. Seedlings emerged from the soil and lawn-like green velvets has covered gardens and plains.

Mountains are full of colorful flowers whereas the yellow, white and red flowers amidst the green lawn have granted a specific beauty to the nature of spring.

Iran is home to numerous climates, every part of which welcomes eco-tourists. The Iranian people are highly interested in nature which is a divine blessing. Watching the green landscapes, coupled with pondering in the power and glory of God are parts of benefits of presence in the green and beautiful nature. The holy Quran considers the scene of creation as the display of God's glory and magnificence, and in many ayahs invites mankind to ponder in the nature so that he realizes the profound wisdom, prudence, and management of God Almighty. Therefore, the Iranian families, inspired by the Islamic culture, view and respect the nature as one of

the great divine blessings. In various opportunities, the Iranians spend their times in the nature and try to keep it clean.

Iranian people celebrate Sizdah Bedar, the Persian festival of nature, by spending time outdoors with family and friends.

The ancient Persian festival marks the 13th day of Farvardin the first month on the Persian calendar. The festivities include picnicking outdoors in parks, valleys, mountainsides, or the countryside.

Sizdah Bedar gives Iranians a chance to play outdoor games, have special food, and enjoy the fresh springtime air. It is also referred to as Nature's Day.

Ash-e reshteh, a popular Iranian stew made of noodles, greens and beans, and covered with curd, in addition to lettuce with sekanjabin, a traditional Iranian syrup made of honey and vinegar, are eaten by many people on this day.

Sizdah Bedar marks the end of the two-week Persian New Year (Nowruz) Spring holidays and has deep roots

in Iranian history.

Nowruz itself has been known for over 3,000 years and is celebrated worldwide, not only by the Iranians, but also by other groups and ethnic communities living in Western Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Black Sea region, and the Balkans.

Nowruz marks the first day of Farvardin and is the day of the vernal equinox marking the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

It usually falls on March 21. Families gather together on this day to observe rituals and celebrate.

A ritual performed at the end of the picnic day is to throw away the “sabzeh” (Sprout) from the Nowruz’s “Haft-Seen table”. The sabzeh is supposed to have collected all the sickness, pain and ill fate hiding on the path of the family throughout the coming year.

Touching someone else’s greenery on this day or bringing it back home is considered a bad omen.

Preserving the environment is also an integral part of what Iranians do on Sizdah-bedar.

It is also customary for young single people, especially young girls, to tie the leaves of the greenery before discarding it, expressing a wish to find a partner.

Throughout the initial days of spring in Iran, people visit their relatives and friends. Today is 13th of the Iranian month of Farvardin, referred to as The Day of Nature, which marks the end of Norouz celebrations.

On this day, according to an ancient Iranian tradition, people leave their home and spend the day outdoors to enjoy the nature, far from the anxieties of the everyday life. They also take with them some foods such as nuts, fruits and even their lunch. This raises a golden opportunity to describe parts of Iran’s green landscapes.

The Caspian Sea coastal belt, coupled with its thick and attractive forests, citrus fruit groves, tea farms, paddy fields and wooden houses with ceramic roofs is very beautiful. Therefore, many of the Iranian holidaymakers spend the Iranian New Year in this blessed region. The region of “Kelardasht”, which lies 50 kilometers from of the Caspian Sea in northern Iran, at a 1,000-meter altitude above the sea level, is a tourist attraction site for the eco-tourists, who long for the beauties of this region. In this region, the “Velesht” lake is engulfed by Alborz Mountains, creating a unique landscape.

On The Day of Nature, the residents of Iran’s mountainous regions attend foothills to enjoy the moderate climate of these regions in spring. The high mountains blanketed with snow, deep valleys, springs, wonderful waterfalls and the natural oak forests are among the wonders of nature in Zagros mountainous regions in western Iran. Ealam province, given its natural beauties and rainfalls throughout these days, is



MEHR NEWS AGENCY



decorated with bushes, and flowers, attracting a large number of eco-tourists to these scenic landscapes. Upon seeing the natural beauties of Ealam, we are further touched by the infinite divine glory.

Spring season in Shiraz in southwestern Iran is familiar to all, especially those who have come to this city. All have heard of beauty of spring in this city.

When the breeze flows on pine, and orange trees, one can see the power and glory of God in the delicacy of flowers.

On the Day of Nature, the attractive nature of spring in Shiraz attracts holidaymakers to this beautiful city, leaving them with ever-lasting memories of Shirazi people's hospitality.

The beautiful Golestan Kuh plain in the vicinity of Khansar city in Isfahan province is another place which attracts the lovers of nature on this day. In spring, the rare species of red and yellow tulips and many medical herbs adorn Golestan Kuh. The springs in various parts of this area add to its beauty and freshness. Exactly on

this time in southern Iran on the shores of the Persian Gulf, the pleasant weather and the sunshine grant a specific attractiveness to the port cities as well as Qeshm and Kish islands. Nature lovers in this part of Iran witness the species of colorful fish in the waters around Kish Island.

The heights around the capital Tehran have today turned into recreational regions for tourists, mountaineers, and athletes. On the nature day, the regions surrounding Tehran such as Suleqan, Darband, and Farahzad, are host to families, who enjoy the blessed nature on this day.

Every year, several organizations in various Iranian cities try to turn the nature day into a day full of happiness and security. Therefore, they prepare certain programs for people in parks so that people end the last day of holidays in a friendly atmosphere, and refresh themselves in the New Year.



Solid growth: A review of Iran's tourism in 2018 (1397)



The youth enjoying skii during winter

How Iran's tourism industry has performed over the current Iranian calendar year 1397 (ending on March 2019)? Well, according to data compiled by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, it has experienced a solid growth.

Based on CHHTO statistics, the Islamic Republic hosted over five million foreign nationals during the first eight months of the year, up 57 percent year on year.

Latest data shows more than seven million holidaymakers toured Iran during the first eleven months of the year, which is seen as a remarkable rise from the same period last year.

The country is also a growing destination for health and medical tourists from Iraq, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, the U.S., European countries and the Persian Gulf littoral states. According to official statistics, the country hosted some 400,000 medical tourists during the past Iranian year 1396 (ended March 20).

Official data shows medical tourist arrivals

nearly doubled in the first three months of the year, corresponding to spring 2018, from a year earlier.

Experts say that U.S.-led sanctions together with its anti-Iran propaganda campaign has lessened Western travelers to the Islamic Republic but the country is doing its best to attract more visitors from neighbors.

For instance, more than 2.2 million Iraqis visited Iran during the first nine months of the current Iranian year, which shows 113 percent year-on-year increase, turning the neighboring country into Iran's largest source of tourists.

Contrary to Americans, European arrivals in Iran has decreased. Some 1,980 U.S. citizens visited Iran during the nine-month period, which demonstrates 82 percent year-on-year growth, based on data compiled by the CHHTO.

However, the situation is totally different when it comes to outbound travels. Iran's outbound tourism fell by 30 percent in the current Iranian year as, according



to official data, it fell by 30 percent during the nine-month period (started March 21, 2018) from a year earlier.

A total of 5,900,381 Iranians traveled overseas during the aforementioned period, as the figure stood at 8,483,317 a year earlier.

The main reason behind the decline is deemed to be the sharp rise in the value of foreign currencies against rial that has pushed up the costs of traveling abroad.

The 2019 Travel Risk Map, which shows the risk level around the world, puts Iran among countries with “insignificant risk”, a category where the UK, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Finland are placed in.

Iran embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.



Bafgh desert in Yazd province, Iran



Badabe Soort Natural Springs located in Mazandaran Northern Iran



Nasir al-Mulk Mosque, Shiraz



The tombs of the Necropolis, Shiraz Province



Abyaneh village (Red village), Kashan in Isfahan province



Tehran City overlooking Damavand Mountain



VISIT
IRANKENYA.ORG

FOR MORE
INFORMATION ABOUT IRAN

Ambank House, University Way
P.O. Box 59595-00200 Nairobi-Kenya
Tel: (+254) 20 2241216 Mobile: (+254) 713 836041
Email: iranlib@yahoo.com culture@irankenya.org
www.nairobi.icro.ir www.irankenya.org