

Cultural Year 2025: Iran, Turkey Reaffirm Historic Bonds



ANKARA — Iran and Turkey, two nations with intertwined histories stretching back centuries, are commemorating 2025 as a “Cultural Year” dedicated to celebrating their longstanding cultural and literary ties.

At a ceremony honoring the revered Persian poet Hafez Shirazi here, Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi underscored the deep connections that have united the two countries from the Seljuk era through the Ottoman period and into the present day.

“From the dervish lodges of Konya to the schools of Isfahan, from Istanbul’s vast libraries to the literary circles of Tabriz, Persian and Turkish poetry and literature have coexisted and enriched the hearts and minds of our peoples,” Salehi said during his address, reflecting on a shared cultural legacy that transcends borders and politics.

He highlighted Hafez’s unique role as a cultural bridge, noting that the poet’s work has long been embraced not only in Iran but throughout the Turkic world. Ottoman scholars produced extensive commentaries on Hafez’s divan, studying his blend of mysticism, intellect, and social insight, which continues to resonate today.

Modern Turkish poets, including Yahya Kemal Beyatli, have drawn inspiration from Hafez’s themes of love, tolerance, and spiritual awakening.

“This message remains profoundly relevant amid the challenges facing our region and the world,” Salehi said, emphasizing the enduring call for peace and justice in Hafez’s poetry.

Despite geopolitical tensions and economic sanctions, Salehi noted that Iranian arts continue to flourish, with hundreds of films, thousands of theatrical productions, and more than 100,000 new books published annually.

He underscored the importance of ongoing cultural exchange and collaboration between the two nations, particularly in areas such as language education, translation, and scholarly research.

The Iranian minister’s visit included discussions with Turkish counterparts to establish a joint cultural and artistic committee, aimed at strengthening bilateral ties well beyond 2025. He expressed hope that the year-long celebration would deepen mutual understanding and appreciation among the peoples of both countries.

Archaeologists Discover Unique Bronze Age Temple Near Sarein



TEHRAN -- In the rolling landscapes near Sarein, Ardabil Province, a remarkable archaeological discovery is shedding new light on one of the ancient world’s enigmatic cultures.

For the first time, researchers have uncovered what appears to be a ritual temple belonging to the Kura-Araxes culture—an early Bronze Age civilization that flourished between 2900 and 2400 BCE across the South Caucasus and northwestern Iran.

Dr. Qader Ebrahimi, who led a three-month excavation in 2019 at the Anahita Mound (locally known as Kol Tepe), describes the find as “unique and invaluable.” Before this, no direct evidence of religious or ceremonial architecture linked to the Kura-Araxes had been found in Iran, Turkey, or the Caucasus region.

The discovery, marked by intricately carved and painted walls, offers a rare glimpse into the spiritual life of these early settlers,

who also left traces of their everyday life embedded in the mound’s layers.

The site’s rich stratigraphy tells a layered story: beneath the temple lie Kura-Araxes deposits, while higher layers reveal remnants from the Iron Age, the Parthian and Sassanian empires, and even a brief medieval Islamic settlement.

Nearby, an Islamic cemetery with distinctive box-shaped tombstones dating to the Middle Ages hints at the continued cultural importance of this area—though many of these gravestones have sadly been lost to looters.

At the heart of the settlement lies a vital natural spring, which helped sustain the community for thousands of years and remains a crucial part of the site’s story. The site’s traditional name, Kol Tepe, was replaced during heritage registration by the name Anahita—an example of how modern naming can sometimes obscure local traditions.

Silk Road Exhibition: Iran, China Celebrate Shared Heritage

TEHRAN — Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri highlighted the pivotal role of cultural diplomacy in fostering deeper relations between Iran and China during the reopening of the exhibition “The Gift of Silk: A Review of Iran-China Relations”.

“Cultural diplomacy is a key strategy for the advancement of cultural, economic, and political progress,” Salehi-Amiri said in a message delivered at the event. “The shared cultural heritage between Iran and China acts as a bridge connecting the hearts of our two peoples and deserves focused attention.”

Iran and China, two ancient civilizations spanning the East and West of Asia, have maintained rich cultural and commercial ties for millennia, Salehi-Amiri noted. The intertwined histories trace back to religious and cultural exchanges rooted in Zoroastrian and Manichean traditions, which played a significant role in shaping political and economic relations over centuries.

“The shared heritage reflects a profound cultural influence stemming from ancient Iranian religious roots, which helped cement economic and political ties,” the minister explained. “Historical exchanges of envoys and trade caravans further exemplify this enduring civilizational link.”

Salehi-Amiri emphasized that modern cultural diplomacy should move beyond purely economic considerations, nurturing a deeper connection that intertwines the cultural identities of the two nations. “This bond, grounded in a luminous past, illuminates our contemporary interactions,” he said.

Scientific and scholarly understanding of this shared heritage, Salehi-Amiri added, is essential. “Accurate



and methodical knowledge of our common cultural roots provides a clearer image of the ancient identities that Iran and China share. This fosters a collective civilizational spirit that inspires ongoing cultural dialogue.”

The exhibition “The Gift of Silk,” organized by Iran’s Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute, exemplifies this approach to cultural diplomacy by showcasing artifacts that illustrate the flourishing exchanges along the Silk Road—a historic trade network that facilitated not only commerce but also the spread of art, literature, and religion.

Salehi-Amiri also highlighted plans to explore maritime cultural heritage next, aiming to deepen understanding of ancient sea trade technologies and traditions shared by the two countries. “This collaboration could offer valuable insights into the creativity of our ancestors and strengthen ties between Iran and China,” he said.

The minister expressed hope that these cultural initiatives will encourage increased Chinese tourism to Iran, further cementing people-to-people connections alongside official diplomatic ties.

Prominent Dubber Saeed Mozaffari Passes Away at 83

TEHRAN -- Saeed Mozaffari, one of Iran’s most distinguished voice actors and dubbing directors, has passed away at the age of 83.

The news was confirmed by fellow voice actor Muhammad Ali Janpanah, who revealed that Mozaffari had been hospitalized for 15 to 20 days due to illness before his unfortunate passing.

Janpanah also noted that Mozaffari’s final dubbing work was on the film *The Unholy Trinity*, where he lent his voice to Pierce Brosnan’s character under his own direction as dubbing manager.

Over a career spanning more than five decades, Mozaffari became the iconic Persian voice for legendary actors such as Clint Eastwood in classics like *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* and *For a Few Dollars More*.

His voice also brought to life characters like Zaid (played by Damien Thomas) in *Muhammad: The Messenger of God*, Ryuzo—the husband of the main character in the series *Oshin*, Rick Grimes in *The Walking Dead*, and Ragnar Lothbrok in the hit series *Vikings*.

Mozaffari was the primary Persian voice for Ryan O’Neal and frequently dubbed major Hollywood stars including Pierce Brosnan, Matthew McConaughey, Brad Pitt, and Jackie Chan. His journey into dubbing began around 1962, with his first minor role being in the film *Miracle*, starring Roger Moore.

With his passing, the Iranian dubbing world mourns the loss of a voice that shaped generations of cinema lovers. Saeed Mozaffari’s rich legacy will continue to resonate through the timeless performances he helped immortalize.

Sabalan Mountain Nominated for UNESCO Listing



TEHRAN -- Rising 4,811 meters above the plains of northwestern Iran, Sabalan Mountain also historically known as Savalan is an imposing natural landmark with deep cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance.

Now, local officials in Ardabil Province are advancing efforts to have this volcanic giant designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognizing its importance not only as a geological wonder but also as a living cultural landscape.

According to Ebrahim Emami, the deputy governor for political and security affairs in Ardabil, the moun-

tain’s nomination is driven by the rich diversity that defines Sabalan: its unique alpine environment, the distinctive architecture of surrounding villages, winding rivers and valleys, and the vibrant nomadic communities that have lived in harmony with this landscape for centuries.

Sabalan’s story is inseparable from its people. The mountain has long been revered as a sacred site, believed by many to be connected to Zoroaster, the ancient Persian prophet. This spiritual heritage has helped maintain Sabalan’s place in local culture, where even today it is common for residents and pastoral nomads to swear oaths

by the mountain, reflecting a deep respect that transcends generations.

The mountain also plays a critical role in the region’s ecology. Its slopes are dotted with over a hundred hot springs, fed by the ancient volcanic activity that shaped the region. These natural thermal waters, along with the snowy peaks, attract visitors for both wellness and winter sports, including the popular Alvar ski resort. At the summit, a crater lake forms seasonally, a small but dramatic feature illustrating the mountain’s volcanic origins.

A notable aspect of the current effort is the push to restore the mountain’s original name, “Savalan,” which was changed to “Sabalan” during the Pahlavi era. This movement highlights the importance of cultural identity and historical accuracy in the recognition process.

If successful, Sabalan will become Ardabil’s second UNESCO World Heritage Site, following the Sheikh Safi al-Din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble, a 16th-century complex that is a masterpiece of Safavid architecture and religious history.

The UNESCO nomination is a step toward preserving Sabalan’s unique blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and historical significance.

Picture of the Day



Molla Hasan village in Samalqan County, North Khorasan, known as the “Village of Handmade Brooms,” has over 70% of households still practicing traditional broom-making, making it a major handicraft center registered as national heritage under number 1686.

Photo by Mizan Online