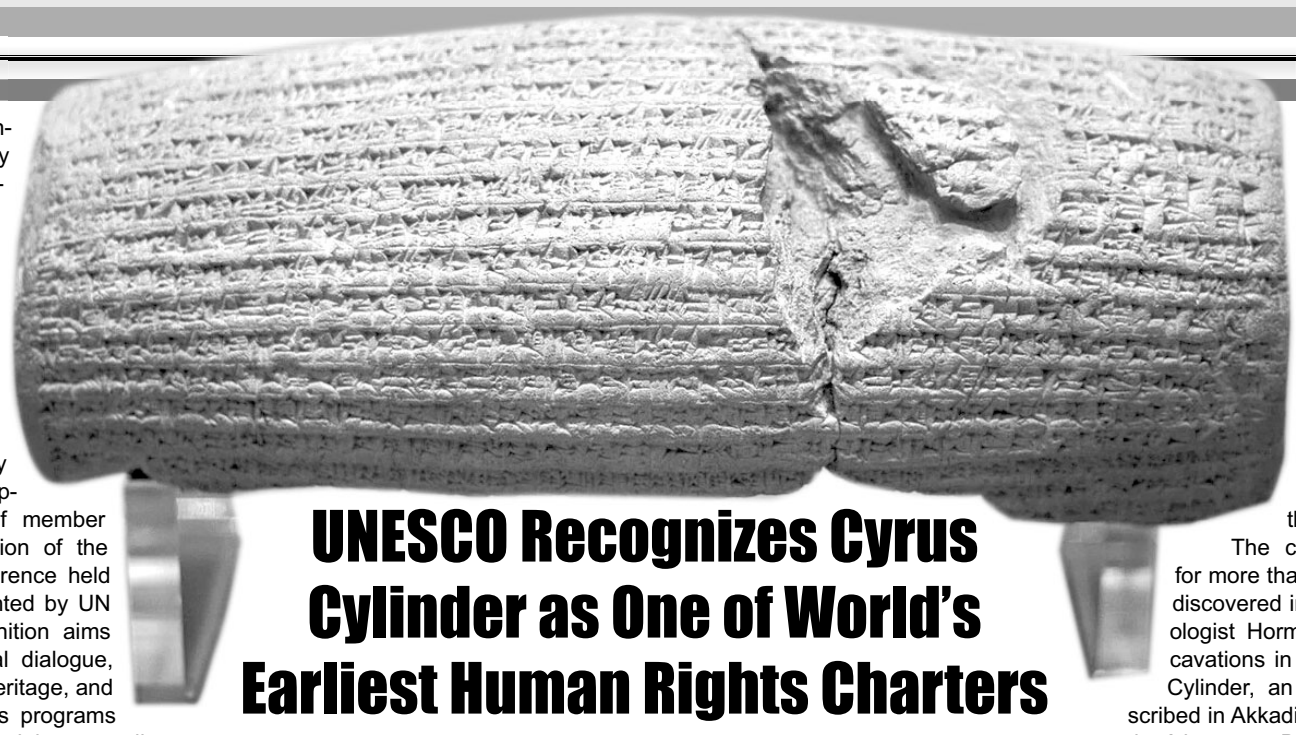
Hundreds of people spent their Friday evening at Tehran's Enghelab Square, waiting the unveiling of a statue depicting an event from nearly 2000 years ago.
As the curtains were pulled away and fireworks began, a carved stone emulating the ancient rock reliefs at the Naqsh-e Rostam archaeological site was revealed. It depicted Iran's Sassanid King Shapur I seated on a horse, with Roman Emperor Valerian (whom some historians suggest was Philip the Arab) kneeling before him. Behind the statue, a large mural read: "You will kneel again."
Iran is the oldest continuously existing nation, with a history spanning at least 4,000 years. It is only natural that such a long-lasting civilization has faced many adversaries throughout its history

A stone of pride

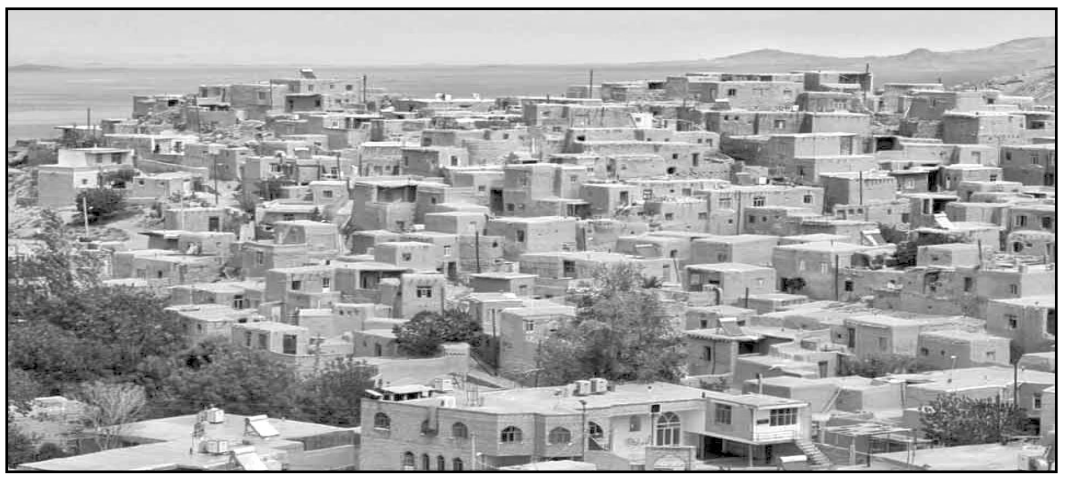


UNESCO Recognizes Cyrus Cylinder as One of World's Earliest Human Rights Charters

UNESCO's General Conference on Thursday adopted a resolution recognizing the Cyrus Cylinder as one of the world's earliest declarations promoting cultural diversity and human rights.
The resolution, titled "Cyrus Cylinder: An Early Charter of Human Rights and Cultural Diversity," was jointly proposed by Iran and Tajikistan and approved by a majority of member states at the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference held in Samarkand.As highlighted by UN cultural body, the recognition aims to strengthen intercultural dialogue, promote shared human heritage, and support the organization's programs related to justice, human rights, non-discrimination, and cultural tolerance.
Egypt, Iraq, Colombia, India, Nigeria, Algeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Senegal, Armenia, and Poland were among the countries voting in favor of the resolution.
The resolution encourages UNESCO member states to raise public awareness of the Cyrus Cylinder, translate its text into various languages for educational purposes, and use its values to promote peace and cultural coexistence.
It marks the first time an ancient Iranian artifact has been formally recognized at the global level as a document associated with the origins of human rights.
The Cyrus Cylinder, a small clay tablet measuring about 23 centimeters in length and 11 centimeters in width, is inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform and housed in the British Museum. It dates back to around 539 BCE, when Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, captured Babylon in present-day Iraq.
The inscription describes how Cyrus defeated Babylon's king Nabonidus with the favor of the god Marduk and subsequently allowed religious freedom in the city. It records that Cyrus returned displaced peoples to their homelands and restored their temples and deities.
One passage reads: "I commanded that all sanctuaries which had been closed should be opened. I brought back to their places all the gods of these sanctuaries. I gathered all their people and returned them to their dwellings."
The cylinder remained buried for more than 2,400 years until it was discovered in 1879 by British archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam during excavations in Mesopotamia.The Cyrus Cylinder, an ancient clay artifact inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform, dates from the 6th century BC. It records the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great in 539 BC and his restoration of religious sanctuaries and displaced peoples. The object was discovered in 1879 in the ruins of Babylon, in present-day Iraq, and is being kept in the British Museum.The cylinder gained renewed attention in the late 1960s when Iran's last Shah of Iran described it as the "world's first charter of human rights."

Zaveh, an Emerging Agritourism Destination in Northeast Iran

Zaveh county in northeast Iran has the potential to become a leading agritourism destination thanks to its high-quality saffron and vast areas dedicated to the cultivation of this valuable crop, a local official has said.
Ali Mohammadi, head of the Torbat-e Heydarieh and Zaveh Cultural Heritage Department, told ISNA that one of the key capacities that can be developed with saffron at its core is agritourism.
"Fortunately, the relevant ministries have adopted a positive approach toward this type of tourism in recent years," he said.
According to Mohammadi, saffron tours have been launched to showcase Zaveh's potential and familiarize tourists with various stages of saffron production. In addition to visiting saffron farms, plans are underway to include saffron-based products in souvenir packages for travelers, tourists, and pilgrims.He noted that, in recognition of October 27 as National Saffron Day, numerous specialized festivals and tours were held in the region this year. Since the beginning of the harvest season in early October, more than 35 tour leaders have expressed readiness to guide visitors through saffron farms, with these programs expected to continue until early December.

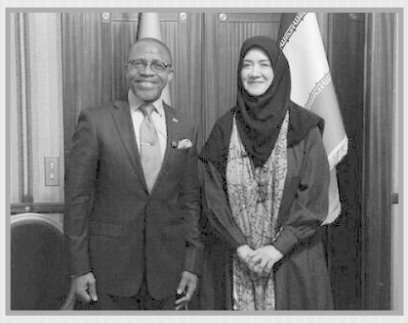


Emphasizing that saffron is not only an agricultural product but also a significant part of the local culture, rituals, and identity, Mohammadi said: "One of our main policies, alongside tourism development, is to preserve the traditional customs and practices associated with saffron."
He added that efforts are underway to register these rituals as elements of Iran's intangible cultural heritage. "The enthusiasm and joy of the people during the harvest—especially when they go to the fields before sunrise to pick saffron flowers—reflect Iran's authentic farming culture. Reviving these traditions is itself a valuable cultural and tourism attraction," he explained.
Mohammadi acknowledged that transforming saffron into a prominent tourism brand in Khorasan Razavi comes with challenges, the most significant being the lack of tourism infrastructure. To address this, consultations are being held with urban management and related organizations to develop and strengthen essential infrastructure, particularly in tourist villages that, in addition to saffron production, boast historical and natural attractions.
"The development of ecotourism resorts in these areas can play an important role in attracting more tourists and encouraging longer stays," he added.

Perspective

Iran, South Africa Emphasize Expanding Cooperation in Handicrafts

Deputy Minister of Handicrafts Maryam Jalali-Dehkordi in a meeting with Sehloho Francis Moloi, South Africa's ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran, emphasized the strengthening of joint relations in handicrafts sector.
In this meeting, which was held at Sa'dabad Historical and Cultural Complex with the aim of exploring ways to develop cooperation, the two sides exchanged views on various fields, including facilitating the export of handicrafts, sharing experiences and technical knowledge, and removing the legal obstacles, Mehr news agency reported.
Another main focus of the discussion was to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a joint innovation center so that artists and artisans from the two countries can create works and exchange experiences in an appropriate context.



Referring to the attractiveness, diversity, and desirability of Iranian handicrafts, South African ambassador expressed interest that the two countries, relying on their civilization and rich history, can transfer their common 'narratives and stories' to each other in the form of handicraft products and introduce them to the world.
Iranian handicrafts boast a rich history, deeply embedded in the country's cultural and artistic heritage. From intricate Persian carpets and porcelains to decorative pottery, metalwork, and textile arts, Iranian crafts are renowned worldwide for their artistry and intricate designs. Each province carries its own distinct styles, materials, and techniques, reflecting the cultural and environmental diversity.

Khorramabad to host Specialized Exhibition on off-road Tourism

A specialized exhibition of off-road tourism and related equipment is set to be held in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province, with the participation of professionals and enthusiasts, the provincial tourism chief announced on Tuesday.
Atta Hassanpour said the exhibition also aims to highlight Lorestan's natural and cultural attractions, strengthen cooperation among those active in tourism, ecotourism, and related industries, and support manufacturers of travel- and off-road-related equipment.
He noted that the event could serve as an effective step toward enhancing the province's economic and tourism growth. "Lorestan, with its unique natural landscapes, historical monuments, and rich indigenous culture, is among the country's most significant tourism destinations. Holding such exhibitions helps better highlight these potentials," he explained.
According to Hassanpour, the exhibition will run from November 17 to 21, daily from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Lorestan International Fairground. The event will host participants from the tourism and ecotourism sectors, off-road equipment manufacturers, and travel and adventure enthusiasts.
He also expressed gratitude for the cooperation of relevant institutions in organizing the exhibition, adding: "We hope that by continuing to hold such events, the path toward sustainable tourism development in Lorestan will become even more firmly established."

Year-round Wonder: How Iceland Found its Balance between Tourism and Tranquillity

Iceland has transformed from a seasonal hotspot into a year-round destination, encouraging visitors to explore beyond the usual routes while supporting local communities. The "land of fire and ice" is often imagined as a place of glaciers, geothermal hot springs, waterfalls, volcanoes and the elusive northern lights - a destination for thrill-seekers ticking off bucket-list experiences.But as Oddný Arnarsdóttir, head of Visit Iceland, explains, the country's real story is about a deliberate, sustainable transformation of tourism."Since 2018, the numbers have more or less been the same - of course, besides the COVID years," she tells Euronews Travel at this year's World Travel Market in London."We have between 2.1 and 2.3 million people visiting us on a yearly basis. There was growth during a certain time period, but what's so important to establish is that we went from being a three-month destination to a year-round destination, meaning 65 per cent of the growth was actually off-season."

Iceland to 'propose' higher tourist tax following record-breaking number of visitors

The Nordic country has worked to spread tourism more evenly across the year, outside of the peak season, while encouraging visitors to explore beyond the well-trodden Golden Circle.Infrastructure improvements, regional development and community-led initiatives have ensured that tourism benefits locals as well as visitors."People are moving back, tourism has brought employment to people and new activities around the country," Arnarsdóttir notes.Visitors can now explore new volcanic-themed attractions, wellness retreats like the Sky Lagoon in Kópavogur and growing accommodation options in northern towns such as Akureyri. This diversification encourages travellers to spend longer and venture further, reducing pressure on traditional hotspots, like the capital, Reykjavík.Culinary tourism has also taken off. Three Michelin-starred restaurants, including one recognised for green practices, signal the country's commitment to quality and responsible tourism. "We're lucky to have such fresh ingredients - the fish, for example, is incredible… Then there's the lamb that roams free in summer, and vegetables grown in greenhouses. Today, you can find great restaurants all over the country."Sustainability is also essential: "Iceland is, in its core, sustainable - with renewable energy and a strong respect for nature, which is our biggest attraction and asset."

"Tourism and sustainability go hand in hand. We talk about the four pillars of sustainability: the economy, the environment, the locals, and our visitors. In tourism, one doesn't go without the other," Arnarsdóttir explains. The wellness and hospitality sector exemplifies this ethos with geothermal spas built into the landscape, locally sourced supplies and carefully designed visitor experiences that leave minimal environmental impact.For those planning a trip, Arnarsdóttir urges a slower, more local approach: focus on one or two regions rather than racing through the whole country and embrace cultural traditions."And if you come on 13 December, you'll meet the Yule Lads - that might be something to experience!"Wondering who on earth the Yule Lads are?
Let's just say it's one of those Icelandic secrets you'll have to witness in person.