

## Sleep timing

A study has revealed that what you eat might influence when you go to sleep. According to the study, athletes who consumed more carbohydrates and vitamins B12 and C tended to go to sleep earlier and wake earlier than those who consumed less of these nutrients.

# Ta'arof, an old tradition of showing respect



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### EXCLUSIVE

Social etiquette is viewed as a cultural commonality among all nations. It refers to the various behaviors that occur between your family, friends and colleagues, or even strangers.

Ta'arof, as a sign of politeness, is a social norm in Iran and includes a wide range of behavior in the community. The original root of the word 'ta'arof' is Arabic and means 'mutual recognition'. Ta'arof, as a symbol of Persian culture, can be one of the first things you will experience when you interact with Iranians. For example, if you want to enter a room simultaneously with another person, you will say, "After you!" People practice ta'arof to show that they are polite and well-educated.

Moreover, Iranians have been very hospitable since ancient times and the comfort of their guests is of great importance to them. Persians ta'arof with their guests



to make sure that they are at ease and have everything they need. In fact, they want all the good things for their guests and try to provide the best foods and drinks for them.

Comfort of guests has always been a priority for Iranians. If you pay attention to the architecture of old houses, you will discover that the guest rooms are in the best part of the

building. The room, known in Persian as shahneshin, which literally means, where the king sits, is the biggest and nicest part of the house, decorated with colorful window panes, delicate mirror works, and beautiful tiling.

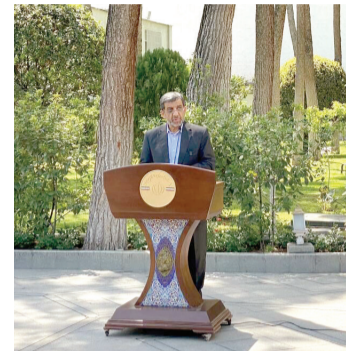
In distant years, people thought it was bad to go on a trip during Nowruz (Iranian New Year) holidays, lest a guest would come to visit them and face a

closed door. However, due to the hospitality of Iranians, the border between ta'arof and true kindness is very thin; thus, if you feel that your kindness goes beyond your expectations, you can ask them to refrain from ta'arof! It might be interesting to know that, according to this Persian custom, you must reject something offered to you twice, but

if they offer it again, you must accept it. Sometimes, people use ta'arof to reject the invitations that they actually want to accept, say something that they don't mean, and express what they don't feel. They even invite others to their homes without really intending to invite them, just as a ceremonial gesture. When people meet each other, they usually spend

a lot of time doing ta'arof. They ask questions, the answer to which is either already known, or not very important to them. It seems that life without ta'arof would be boring for Iranians, who learn to ta'arof from childhood, and practice it as a value. Perhaps parents wish to teach their children not to be selfish in their dealings with other people and respect their rights.

## Nowruz travels in Iran increase by 15%: Minister



### Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA

The number of trips made by Iranians during Nowruz, Persian New Year, holidays (from March 16 to April 4) increased by 15 percent compared with the previous year, said Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ezzatollah Zarghami.

He made the statement on Wednesday, adding that last year, a total of 50 million overnight stays were registered, and this year this index reached 57.1 million, which includes official stays as well as unofficial and emergency stays, IRNA reported.

Mazandaran, Gilan and Khorasan Razavi were the top three provinces in attracting Nowruz tourists, followed by Hormuzgan and Khuzestan, the minister noted.

He also said that this year during Nowruz, the country witnessed a record six million visits to cultural centers, and about \$620,000 of revenue was generated from these centers. The minister said the ministry's policy is to increase the number of countries which do not require a visa for entering Iran, in order to attract more tourists to the country, adding, "We have prioritized holding familiarization tours to attract visitors from China and Russia."

## Without intervention, Hyrcanian forests of Iran will be no more

### Social Desk

Northern forests in Iran are disappearing at an alarming rate, replaced by citrus plantations and luxury villas, according to environmentalists. The Hyrcanian forests have been divided into three categories: lowland, intermediate, and high-altitude oak and beech forests. Only two hectares of lowland forest remain, while the intermediate and high-altitude forests are under threat. Environmentalists attribute the degradation of the forests to urban sprawl, with many unauthorized edifices cropping up, including the usurpation of mountains, forests, and land in the northern provinces, especially Mazandaran. Despite environmentalists' outcry, officials have not exhibited resolute responsibility, allowing the commodification of nature and the resulting environmental destruction to continue.

### A catastrophe in the making

As soon as one traverses any of the northern thoroughfares that penetrate the forests, the scale of the catastrophe be-



comes apparent. The phenomenon has thwarted all endeavors to contain it, resulting in the degradation of both land and forest. Presently, experts and environmentalists opine that the commodification of nature engenders environmental destruction. A variety of methods has been employed to destroy not only the Hyrcanian forests but also other woodlands in Iran. Nonetheless, its intensity and severity in the northern regions of the country are higher due to escalating land values, buying and selling,

and the influx of migrants.

### Rise of luxury forest villas

One of the driving factors behind the deforestation is the exponential growth of the luxury forest villa market, with prices skyrocketing, sometimes reaching over 100 billion to-mans (nearly \$2 million), an increase of threefold. Advertisements for these villas feature phrases that underscore the degree of encroachment on forested land, including "attached to the forest," "pristine

area," "swimming pool and hot tub from a forest spring," "private road," "water and gas branching from the main pipe," and "free electricity for up to 5 years," incentivizing buyers and sellers alike.

### Impact of citrus plantations

Citrus plantations are another contributor to the loss of forested land. Farmers plant citrus seedlings in the heart of the forest, which abuts their land. Over time, as the citrus plants grow, the farmers start to cut down

the forest trees or burn the lower trunks and cover them with soil, effectively annexing the forested area and reducing the extent of the woodland. Environmental activists fear that within the next three to four years, the only thing that will remain will be gardens in the downstream areas. Not even small patches of woodland will remain.

### Ranchers turned developers

The situation is so dire that ranchers and forest herders have entered into annual contracts with the forest organization as tenants of the forest, with the contract permitting them to use a livestock pen for a temporary stay of two months and a forest area of several hectares. However, in practice, the ranchers have flagrantly disregarded these terms, cleared the land, felled trees, and erected structures. On occasion, they have even built as many as 13 or 14 houses and bequeathed them to their progeny as an inheritance, effectively appropriating the land for themselves that had once belonged to the public.

## Iranian director Samadi named jury member at Belgian festival

### Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA

Iranian director and scriptwriter, Farnoosh Samadi, was selected as a jury member of the Brussels Short Film Festival, slated to be held from April 26 to May 6, in Brussels, Belgium.

Samadi will judge the films at the International Section of the Belgian film festival, along with Lucie Zhang (France), and Antoine Wielemans (Belgium).

She was among the jury members of several international festivals including the Beirut International Women's Film Festival in Lebanon, the 24th Archipelago International Festival of Short Film and New Images in Italy, and the 66th Valladolid International Film Festival in Spain.

Samadi is an Iranian filmmaker who graduated from the Fine Art Academy in Rome. She worked as a co-writer in Ali Asgari's award-winning short films.