

Iran, Croatia closer than ever



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**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

On the occasion of our National Day, I would like to note that this year we celebrate 30th anniversary of Iran's diplomatic recognition of Croatia, as the first Asian country to do it. Given that, I feel obliged to admit how pleased I am by our nations' progress in deeper, mutual understanding and cooperation against all the odds, including sanctions and the corona virus pandemic.

Having its foundations in ancient times, our relation can be traced back deep into the history. Once upon a time, Croats (Hrvat) lived in Harvatia (Arachosia), whose king, Vivana, was

a strong ally of Darius the Great. Moving later to the west, Croats established White Croatia (modern Poland, Ukraine, Azov) and then they moved to the south, being invited by Byzantine Emperor Heraclius to fend off Avar invasion. As a gesture of gratitude, they were awarded today's territory along the Adriatic coast, which was then called Red Croatia. It's noteworthy that Old Persia used to name sides of the world by colors, white signifying the west and red indicating the south.

It's no surprise, therefore, that thousands of Croatian words, especially in the old Chakavian dialect, are derived from ancient Persian words; a case in point is the name of my country - Hrvatska or Harvatia - and the title of her ruler - 'ban', which means protector, custodian, or leader.

I strongly believe that emotions provide the basis for good and lasting bonds between nations, and all that is built upon them usually stands the challenges of times.

In that spirit, I'd like to mention that our two nations have a lot of common historical features. Examples are abundant. The Croatian coat of arms (chequers) as well as some other specific national decorations are also very present on Persian territory. The tradition of Nowruz, with its roots in Zoroastrianism, is very well alive in today Croatia. Cultural links of the two nations are quite robust as well. As an instance from the realm of art, tambur or tambura is an instrument loved and used fondly by Croats - we can trace and even speak about Tambur Road.

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Current geographic distance between our two

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nations, therefore, can never make us feel spiritually distant. Quite the opposite. Our two nations are equally adorned by their love for science and poetry, specifically mystical poetry. Both nations have had notable children over the course of the history who made significant contributions to the wellbeing of the humankind. Nikola Tesla, one of the greatest sons of Croatia, is a world cit-

izen and a great scientific benefactor of humanity. Avicenna, on the part of Iranians, is another notable example.

On yet another level of sympathy, a deep understanding exists between our two nations when it comes to martyrdom and sacrifices Iranians and Croats made in the face of external aggression several decades ago. What both nations keep close to their hearts is a sort of politics based on ethical principles and justice.

It's not by chance, then,

that Dragan Skočić is the fifth Croatian head coach of Iranian National soccer team. As a fan of two nations, I hope and wish that Croatia and Iran meet at the very finish of the World Cup Championship in Qatar.

And I'm convinced when the burden of sanctions is taken away, our relation will flourish, going from strength to strength.

God bless Iranian and Croatian nations and help them to grow in nobility of character and spiritual power.