



NOWŠAHR

NOWŠAHR, port city and sub-province in western Māzandarān Province.

The city. The coastal town of Nowšahr (lat 36° 39' N, long 51°30' E) is situated low on the Caspian shore at an elevation of 66 feet below global sea level, but still 23 feet above the Caspian Sea. It has a warm, humid climate with 56 inches of precipitation a year. Nowšahr is located five miles east of Čālus and 68 miles north of Tehran.

The town has a short history. Early in the 20th century it was known as Ḥabībābād village, after its benefactor Ḥabīb-Allāh Khan Sardār Kal'atbari, the father of Sepahdār A'zam Moḥammad-Wali Khan Tonekāboni. Ḥabībābād had 65 houses and was watered by the Kāčak stream, which made Rabino believe that the village corresponded to K^vāj(ak) of historical sources (Rabino, 1928, p. 28). It is possible that Ḥabībābād was the new name for the coastal village of Nowdeh mentioned in 1822 by Fraser (p. 122) as being located at the junction of the seashore and mountain roads (cf. Nowdeh, 4 miles east of Alamdeh; Razmārā, p. 307). Whatever its name may have been throughout history, the village was weighed down by the nearby Čālus, which was the chief coastal settlement of western Māzandarān.

The rise of the modern town of Nowšahr was related to the construction of two major highways that intercepted at the town. One road, built under Režā Shah's administration, traversed the entire coastal plain south of the Caspian Sea. The other one was the Tehran-Caspian highway along the Karaj and Čālus rivers (1931-33) and its major tunnel under the Kandovān pass (1938), which



facilitates traffic particularly in winter. At the terminal point of the latter highway, a harbor north of Čālus was planned to expand commerce with the Soviet Union (Wenzel, p. 265), but eventually the harbor was constructed in Nowšahr by a Dutch contracting firm in 1940. Having been used by the Allied forces during World War II to export provisions to the Soviet Union, Nowšahr grew further to a major port on the Caspian Sea (Razmārā, p. 310; Mošāḥab, p. 3081). In the following decades the town was equipped with new industrial, commercial, educational, and tourist infrastructure (Sāzmān-e Fār, pp. 183-86). In the 1960s, a master plan (Figure 1) was prepared for urban development of Nowšahr and Čālus as contiguous cities at a chief transit juncture (Borbor, 1964; idem, 1966; see also dariushborbor.com). The establishment of an airport (1953), an arboretum (see GARDEN iv. botanical gardens), a naval academy (1979), food and timber factories, and above all tourism brought forth a vibrant economy to the town, so much so that Nowšahr afforded its own professional football club, Šamušak, which won the second-tier national league in 2003. Within a half a century of decennial censuses the population of Nowšahr grew fifteen-fold, from 2,700 in 1956 to 40,600 in 2006 (Table 1).

Nowšahr owes much of its reputation to its seaside tourism. Every summer thousands of domestic vacationers are accommodated by its inns and private villas for the enjoyment of its fine beaches and surrounding natural beauties or for shopping in the local weekly market that the townspeople have managed to preserve fairly authentically even after the Islamic Revolution. Before 1979, Nowšahr and its immediate environs hosted several student camps, including the one sponsored by Catholic missionaries (UNESCO, p. 1212). Nowšahr was also the major royal summer residence under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.

The sub-province. The present Nowšahr *šahrestān* corresponds roughly to the historical district of Kojur (q.v. for the natural and historical geography). Under the late Qajar and early Pahlavi rule, the district belonged to Tonekābon. The administrative reforms of 1930s under Reżā Shah Pahlavi made Kojur one of the ten subdivisions constituting Māzandarān Province (Kayhān, II, p. 284). As the expansion of port of Nowšahr gained momentum, it was made the administrative center of a newly established (1946) Nowšahr sub-province (*šahrestān*; Mošāḥab, p. 3081), which then included the historical district of Kalārestāq to the west. At this stage the Nowšahr sub-province consisted of Markazi/Hūma, Čālus, Kalārdašt, and Kojur districts (*baḳš*), spread over 1,425 square miles. Its population of 75,000 in the 1940s (Razmārā, pp.

309-10) had grown to 110,351 by the 1966 census (Adamec, pp. 445-46; MAI, 1969).

In the early 21st century, Kalārestāq and Čālus were carved out of Nowšahr to form the new sub-province of Čālus within Māzandarān Province. Consequently, Nowšahr Sub-province was reduced to what was traditionally called Kojur. At the 2006 census, the sub-province of Nowšahr had a population of 116,334 (MAI, 2007), distributed among seven rural districts (*dehestān*; see Table 2). Aside from Nowšahr city, the following settlements of the sub-province ranked highest in population according to the 2006 census: (1) on the coastal plain (*qešlāq*): Kašk Sarā, 3,428; ‘Aliābād-e Mir 3,065; Tāza-ābād 2,735; Vanuš 2,483; Şalāheddin Kalā 2,370; K̄eyrud Kenār 1,756; Neyrang 1,705; ‘Aliābād-e Asgarḵān 1,680; Andarud 1,641; Helestān 1,512; Bandpey 1,447; Taskātok 1,423; Čalandar 1,383; (2) in highlands (*yeylāq*): Kojur 2,215; Pul 1,204 (MAI, 2007).

These demographical figures support the fact that the narrow littoral north of the sub-province prospered considerably, while the highlands, which constitute the bulk of the sub-province, remained rural. The humid coastal settlements owe their growth not only to transit and tourism (see above), but also to modern lifestyle, with house appliances such as refrigerators and air conditioners, as well as to the reclamation of swamplands for farmland and eradication of malaria, which rendered seasonal migration to the mountains no longer necessary.

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