

PARADE KICKS OFF CULTURAL FESTIVAL

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JOSIE LEPE — MERCURY NEWS

Wearing traditional Persian costumes, young women and girls wave from a float in downtown San Jose on Sunday during a parade celebrating "Norouz," the Iranian New Year. Page 3B.

CELEBRATING THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR



JOSIE LEPE — MERCURY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

Several thousand people turned out in downtown San Jose on Sunday for a parade celebrating "Norouz," the Iranian New Year, which traditionally begins with the first day of spring. "Norouz," which means New Day, is a cultural tradition that celebrates new beginnings, spring cleaning, renewal and good health. Parvin Kahnmohei, left, carried a Cyrus the Great sign and dressed as a messenger soldier of human rights. The parade featured music, dancers in traditional dress, food, and such dignitaries as San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed and prominent Iranian-Americans including San Mateo County Judge Susan Etezadi. It will be followed next weekend by a festival and concert at Vasona Park in Los Gatos. In Iran, people traditionally celebrate for the first 13 days of the new year, with many offices and schools closing, according to Mehren "Matt" Kamkar, a home builder and San Jose planning commissioner who helped organize this year's events.