

## Nowruz Declared as National Holiday in Georgia

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Nowruz, a holiday marking spring equinox, which is widely celebrated by a large Muslim community in Georgia, has been declared as a national holiday, President Saakashvili said on March 21.

Saakashvili was in the town of Marneuli in Kvemo Kartli region, predominately populated by ethnic Azerbaijani population, to participate in festivities marking Nowruz.

"Entire Georgia celebrates this holiday, because you are important part of our [society]," Saakashvili said while addressing an outdoor gathering in Marneuli.

"On behalf of the Georgian government I want to declare this holiday as a national holiday and from now on this holiday will be marked like any other major Georgian holiday. This is a nationwide Georgian celebration," he said.

"It demonstrates once again that for us there is no difference between our compatriots," Saakashvili added.