

Iran takes action as NY auction reveals more stolen ancient coins

Arts & Culture Desk

The New York auction house Classical Numismatic Group (CNG) recently unveiled 15 ancient coins, including pieces from the Achaemenid and Sasanian eras, stirring serious concerns among Iranian cultural activists.

This announcement comes just days after the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran initiated legal proceedings to reclaim two Sasanian coins that were linked to illegal excavations in the Beyza archaeological site of Fars Province, ILNA reported.

The ministry acted swiftly following the initial revelation last week, when CNG showcased two Sasanian coins believed to be part of a larger trove of over 600 artifacts looted by unauthorized diggers last year.

Speaking on the matter, Fatemeh Davari,

spokesperson for the Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, stated, "As soon as we became aware of the auction involving Iranian historical coins, we took immediate steps to investigate the situation and pursue the matter further."

The newly revealed coins have raised alarms among heritage advocates, as it remains unclear how many of these artifacts have entered the auction circuit through illicit means. The situation is particularly troubling given that the coins in question were excavated from the Beyza site, where illegal excavations have long plagued Iran's rich archaeological landscape. Reports indicate that these coins were initially funneled into international markets via various intermediaries.

Davari elaborated on the ministry's ongoing efforts, emphasizing that they are committed to preventing the sale of any

artifacts that have been illegally obtained. "Our process involves verifying the authenticity of any historical items that surface in auctions. After compiling documentation, we work collaboratively with relevant authorities to halt the auctions and initiate legal claims for restitution," she explained.

The recent auction announcement has prompted Iran to bolster its claims under the UNESCO 1970 Convention, which mandates countries to take necessary measures to prohibit and prevent the illegal import and export of cultural property. As the auction approaches, scheduled for January 14, 2025, the Ministry is diligently preparing a comprehensive case to ensure the return of these invaluable artifacts.

Among the coins featured in the upcoming auction is a particularly rare gold coin from the reign of Hormizd I of the Sasanian



dynasty, minted around 272-273 AD. This coin, estimated to weigh 7.41 grams, has a minimum bid of \$45,000 and could fetch up to \$75,000, according to the auction house. Another notable coin, attributed to the Achaemenid era under Darius II, weighs 8.37 grams and dates back to 420-375 BC.

As the auction nears, Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts remains vigilant. "We are determined to see these historical artifacts returned to their rightful home, and we hope that our efforts will lead to the successful retrieval of these coins," Davari concluded.

Iran's forest ecosystems in peril, urgent action needed for conservation: DoE chief



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The head of Iran's Department of Environment (DoE), Shina Ansari, expressed concern over the deteriorating condition of the country's forests, emphasizing the need for increased efforts in their preservation and conservation.

In a message read by her senior advisor at the 6th National Forest Conference of Iran, held at the University of Tehran, Ansari highlighted the rich biodiversity and diverse ecosystems of Iran's varied geography, climate, and topography, Tasnim reported.

"Iran, with its vast expanse, has less than nine percent of its land covered by forests, including the Hyrcanian and Zagros forests," Ansari said.

She further noted that Iran is among the world's dry and semi-dry countries with less rainfall than global standards and limited forest cover. "From ancient times, Iranians have tried to preserve natural resources through sustainable management of water and soil resources," she added.

Ansari emphasized the crucial role of forests in maintaining the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and moisture on Earth, stating that they account for 40 percent of the world's total oxygen.

She also highlighted that 80 percent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity is found in forest ecosystems, and the livelihoods of more than a quarter of the world's population depend on forests.

The DoE head listed the various services provided by forests, including their intrinsic value, biodiversity, cultural and historical heritage, watershed protection, food cycles, carbon storage, biodiversity benefits, sustainable timber production, non-timber forest products, ecotourism, and flood and erosion control, among others.

"Today, biodiversity conservation and habitat protection are among the most important indicators of sustainable development worldwide," Ansari said. She added that by 2030, UN member states should strive to achieve sustainable development goals at national, regional, and international levels. Enhancing ecosystem quality, preventing biodiversity loss, combating climate change, promoting healthy living, and improving community welfare are among the key objectives in the field of environment and forests.

Ansari pointed out several indicators of the declining state of Iran's forests, including the emergence of various diseases, dieback of boxwood trees in the Hyrcanian forests, degradation

of Zagros forest ecosystems, oak dieback, wood smuggling, over-exploitation of forests, deforestation, land encroachment, and change of forest land use.

She stressed the need for increased efforts in conserving the limited forest areas and protecting the biodiversity of forest ecosystems through protective and participatory measures.

Ansari emphasized the importance of adhering to the recommendations and policies regarding the environment and natural resources, as well as the principles and goals of sustainable development. These include explicit emphasis on protecting unique forest ecosystems, preserving essential ecological processes and life-supporting systems, conserving biodiversity and vulnerable species threatened with extinction or rare, and sustainably utilizing species and ecosystems.

She suggested several ways to save Iran's forests, including expanding protected forest areas, promoting convergence in implementing territorial programs among various or-

ganizations, enforcing natural resources and environmental policies, raising awareness and implementing participatory conservation programs with a priority on cooperatives and local communities, controlling wood smuggling, installing monitoring and control tools at forest road entrances and wood and paper industries, and thoroughly evaluating the environmental impact of infrastructure development projects.

Ansari also mentioned additional measures such as preventing ecosystem disruption, assessing environmental economics and incorporating it into project cost-benefit models, utilizing modern technologies to reduce natural and human hazards like wildfires, monitoring and evaluating programs to resolve conflicts between livestock and sensitive and vulnerable habitats, implementing adaptation programs and increasing resilience to climate change, and finally, preparing a sustainable forest management package based on sustainability indicators with the participation of stakeholders.

Iranian filmmaker joins two Indian festival juries

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Behzad Rezaei, a writer, director, and acting instructor, was appointed as a jury member for the documentary section of the 8th New Delhi Film Festival and as a permanent jury member of the Jaipur International Film Festival.

The 8th New Delhi Film Festival, which will take place from February 21 to 23, 2025, is one of Asia's most prestigious film events and is managed by the organizers of the Jaipur International Festival, Mehr News Agency reported.

The Jaipur International Film Festival is one of the oldest film festivals in India, holding a special place among filmmakers worldwide. The 17th edition of this festival will be held from February 17 to 21, 2025.

Rezaei is the producer and director of the documentary 'The Breath,' which participated in the 8th edition of the Nebrodi Cinema DOC International Festival in Italy. 'The Breath' vividly portrays the loneliness and lack of human connection during the coronavirus epidemic.

Iran celebrates legacy of father of Persian poetry

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In a message, Esmail Baghaei, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, commemorated the birthday of the renowned Persian poet Rudaki, known as the "Father of Persian Poetry."

Baghaei extended his congratulations to Persian speakers and cultural enthusiasts worldwide, particularly in Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan.

In a post shared on X, Baghaei noted, "December 24 is the birthday and celebration of Rudaki, the great poet of the 4th century AH, who is rightly referred to as the father of Per-

sian poetry. He was a wise and talented poet who perceived the world through the power of imagination and the eye of the heart, vividly portraying it with his words."

He emphasized that Rudaki's work continues to connect the hearts of Persian speakers and lovers of Iranian culture across a vast geographical expanse.

Ahmad Ta'mimdari, a professor of Persian literature at Allameh Tabataba'i University, highlighted Rudaki's unique position in Persian poetry as the first poet whose body of work has been officially recorded. "It is impossible for Iran, which had a thriving culture and civilization

for centuries, to have had no poets or writers before Rudaki," he stated in an interview with ISNA.

Ta'mimdari elaborated on the historical context, explaining that while many poets existed in pre-Islamic Iran, the Sasanian dynasty's prohibition on literacy among the populace stifled their recognition. "Rudaki is indeed the first poet whose collection is documented, but many of his verses have been lost," he said.

The professor also cited an estimation that Rudaki composed over 1.3 million verses, of which only about 700 remain. He asserted that even this

small number reflects Rudaki's mastery and intellectual depth. "The significance of Rudaki is not merely in the quantity of his surviving works, but rather in the profound impact of his poetry," Ta'mimdari noted.

He shared a poignant narrative regarding Rudaki's blindness, suggesting that it may have been politically motivated due to his Shiite beliefs during a time of conflict with the Abbasid caliphs. "Rudaki was a court poet for the Samanids. There are historical accounts that suggest he was blinded by the order of the Abbasid caliph," Ta'mimdari explained.

The professor highlighted Ru-

daki's diverse contributions to poetry, particularly his poignant reflections on aging and the human experience. Notably, he referred to Rudaki's famous poem 'Dandaniyeh,' where the poet laments his old age and frailty. Ta'mimdari pointed out that Rudaki's works encompass not just personal themes but also philosophical musings on life and the passage of time.

He further argued that Rudaki was not merely the first Persian poet post-Islam but also one of the foundational figures in the evolution of Persian literature. The Sasanian and Buyid periods, according to Ta'mimdari, were crucial for the flourishing

of Iranian and Islamic civilization, providing a backdrop for Rudaki's artistic endeavors.

Ta'mimdari concluded with reflections on the accessibility of classical Persian literature compared to Western classics like Shakespeare's 'Hamlet.'

He noted that while Shakespeare's works have undergone multiple translations, Persian literature from figures like Rudaki and Ferdowsi has not faced similar linguistic evolution. "The grammatical changes in the Persian language occurred significantly during the Sasanian era, affecting how contemporary readers engage with classical texts," he explained.