



Islamic culture binds Iran, Uzbekistan, says NLAI chief

Arts & Culture Desk

National Library and Archives of Iran Director Gholamreza Amirkhani said that "Islamic civilization" remains the enduring link between Iran and Uzbekistan, as Tehran inaugurated a new cultural "Uzbekistan Room" on its premises.

Amirkhani opened the space at the National Library in central Tehran in the presence of Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Iran, Fariddin Nasriyev, and virtually, Firdavs Fridunovich Abdukhalikov, head of Uzbekistan's Islamic Civilization Center, IQNA reported.

The room is stocked with books, manuscripts and historical sources on Uzbek and Islamic heritage.

The inauguration marks a tangible deepening of cultural diplomacy between Tehran and Tashkent. It draws on high-level political support and seeks to reinforce ties across academic, cultural and spiritual spheres despite geographical separation. It

also reflects both sides' recent efforts to translate diplomatic visits into enduring institutions.

Amirkhani recognized that centuries of shared history "transcend borders" even though Iran and Uzbekistan no longer share a common frontier.

He added that Uzbekistan's "enlightened" President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian both champion stronger ties with Central Asia at official levels. He said that Iran feels no "fundamental difference" between cities like Isfahan, Shiraz or Mashhad and Uzbekistan's Ferghana, Samarkand, Bukhara, Termez, and Khwarazm — all parts of a shared cultural geography.

Speaking online, Abdukhalikov said that a delegation from his center had visited Iran to advance cultural cooperation seeded by their presidents.

He said last year's joint international conference with Iranian scholars and ongoing collaboration with the Astan Quds Razavi Library paved the way for this "Uzbekistan Room," now



National Library and Archives of Iran Director Gholamreza Amirkhani (r) and Head of Uzbekistan's Islamic Civilization Center Firdavs Fridunovich Abdukhalikov pose for a photo during the opening of the Uzbekistan Room in Tehran, Iran, on August 15, 2025.

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established in Iran's national library. He added he hoped that growing cultural exchanges would "solidify relations" further and invited Amirkhani to a future symposium in Uzbekistan. Scientific Secretary of Center of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan Rustam Jabbarov said the new room opens "a fresh page in spiritual relations" between the two nations.

The new envoy described Iran and Uzbekistan as "friendly countries" and credited this inauguration as a result of the 2023 visit of the Uzbek president to Tehran.

He said bilateral trade reached over \$500 million in 2024 and pledged to boost it to more than \$2 billion in



coming years. He also noted that over 100 Uzbek businessmen have traveled to Iran,

tourism is rising with two flights per week, and cultural cooperation continues to expand.

London online auction features Iranian artists



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The Modern & Contemporary Middle Eastern Art online auction at Bonhams in London featured works by Iranian artists including Ebrahim Olfat, Sirak Melkonian, Marcos Grigorian, Y.Z. Kami, and Babak Kazemi. The auction concluded on August 14 with no confirmed sales

reported, according to public data from Bonhams and Art-Chart, ISNA reported.

The auction offered a diverse selection of Iranian art, such as Ebrahim Olfat calligraphic piece titled 'Love' — portraying a poem by Hafez and estimated at £3,000–£5,000.

Sirak Melkonian presented two untitled works and 'Palheva-

nan,' each carrying estimates of £8,000–£12,000. Marko Grigorian's 'Earthwork' and Y.Z. Kami's collage on paper 'Rumi' were offered with similar estimates of £8,000–£12,000 and £4,000–£6,000, respectively.

Also, five works by Babak Kazemi were listed, each estimated between £800 and £1,000. Despite the robust scope of the auction, no results for these lots have appeared in Bonhams' publicly available results or in aggregated auction summaries. Bonhams carried out the auction in London via its online platform, concluding at 12:00 BST on August 14, 2025, from its New Bond Street saleroom. The sale offered 45 works by 33 artists as part of the Modern & Contemporary Middle Eastern Art category—but notably, Art-Chart reports show that none of the artworks sold, with zero realized sales despite total estimates ranging from approximately £192,700 to £301,700.

Parliament pledges full support for tourism as foreign visitor numbers surge

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Parliament has committed to providing comprehensive backing for the country's tourism sector through enhanced cooperation between lawmakers, government officials and private industry leaders, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said during a high-level meeting in Tehran.

The three-way partnership aims to boost Iran's position in the global travel market amid recovering visitor numbers that showed strong growth before regional conflicts disrupted the sector.

Mohseni-Bandpey told participants that foreign tourism jumped 16 percent in the Iranian year 1403 (March 2024–March 2025) compared to the previous year. The momentum picked up speed in the first month of 1404, with overseas arrivals climbing 5.48 percent over the same period last year.

"One of the most significant recent achievements has been strengthening tourism's role within the country's governance system and boosting our presence in international diplomacy," the deputy minister said at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The upward trend came to a halt during what officials termed the "12-day imposed war", referring to Israel's military operations in the region that led to widespread booking cancellations.

Ali Yazdikhah, deputy chairman of parliament's Cultural Committee, praised the ministry's five-year development plan covering cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts



sectors.

He called the ministry's achievements "outstanding and important" while expressing optimism about reaching set targets during the country's seventh development program. "Given that we're approaching the drafting of the 2026 budget, the Cultural Committee stands ready to support the tourism industry," Yazdikhah told the gathering.

The government has rolled out incentives for tourism facilities, offering special terms for hotels with physical completion rates above 50 percent and other tourism establishments exceeding 70 percent completion.

Mohseni-Bandpey highlighted meetings with top economic officials, including the finance minister, tax organization chief, social security insurance head and central bank deputy governor, as evidence of government-wide support for the sector.

The ministry plans to present ten priority issues to Parliament for resolution, creating what officials described as a "triangular synergy" between private sector organizations,



Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey (c) addresses government officials and private industry leaders during a meeting in Tehran on August 15, 2025.

● CHTN

the heritage ministry and Parliament.

Hormatollah Rafiei, Director General of the Association of Air Transport and Travel Agents of Iran (AATTAI), said private sector groups had processed refunds for reservations cancelled during the recent regional conflict. His organization pledged to work alongside the ministry toward achieving tourism development goals.

Industry representatives can now raise concerns freely with government officials, marking a shift toward greater public-private cooperation in the sector, Mohseni-Bandpey added. Parham Janfeshan, director-general of tourism oversight and services, outlined regular meetings with private associations representing tour guides, travel operators, hotels and eco-lodges. His department is working to streamline conditions for tourism businesses, he said.

Round the clock ...

A major operational highlight this year was the rollout of 54 vehicles—ambulances, off-road relief trucks, and field units—provided

by the Iranian Red Crescent Society and local resources to safeguard pilgrims' health.

Emergency medical posts were also set up outside the border, in Iraq's Sheib area near Chazabeh and in Shalamcheh, to enhance healthcare delivery. At the three Red Crescent medical centers, volunteer healthcare staff treated more than 14,500 patients for respiratory, cardiovas-

cular, gastrointestinal, renal, ocular, dermatological, trauma, and heat-related conditions. Prescribed medicines were dispensed free of charge.

In addition, 3,100 people received paramedical services, including ECG tests, oxygen therapy, IV infusions, suturing, and injections.

From the start of the mass pilgrimage until now, over 14,300 people have received rescue services at the Shalamcheh and Chazabeh borders and along the Tariq al-Hussein route. Since July 30, 310 people were treated on site, while 92 oth-



ers were transported by ambulance to medical facilities.

Preventive health measures included blood pressure and blood sugar screenings for more than 13,900 pilgrims—10,250 at Shalamcheh and 3,650 at Chazabeh.