

Art guards timeless name as Iran marks Persian Gulf Day

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran marked National Persian Gulf Day on April 30 with nationwide cultural events and the launch of the 16th International Persian Gulf Cultural and Artistic Festival, as officials urged artists to turn historical memory into lasting creative expression, the Culture Ministry said.

The annual observance, held on April 30, commemorates the 1621 expulsion of Portuguese forces from the Strait of Hormuz and has evolved into a flagship cultural platform projecting Iran's historical identity through film, music, visual arts and research.

In a message to the festival, Culture Minister and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi framed the Persian Gulf as more than a geographic label, describing it as a "living narrative" of Iran's civilizational continuity.

He urged cultural figures to render the "truth" of national sacrifice in artistic

form, arguing that memory must be actively produced to endure across generations.

The festival unfolds this year against a charged backdrop, with recent months reinforcing themes of resilience and national unity. Cultural programming has increasingly foregrounded heritage as both archive and expression, linking historical legacy with contemporary identity-building.

Alongside the festival, officials in the southern province of Hormozgan unveiled the national heritage registration plaque for the historic Shajareh Tayebeh School in Minab.

The site, associated with a deadly wartime attack that killed 168 civilians, has been formally recognized as a place of collective memory and "resistance," marking efforts to institutionalize remembrance through cultural preservation.

Authorities say such designations expand the scope of heritage policy

beyond architecture to include sites shaped by modern history. The move also aligns with broader initiatives to anchor regional identity in tangible landmarks, particularly along Iran's southern littoral.

National Persian Gulf Day has, over the past two decades, become a focal point for cultural diplomacy and domestic engagement. Through festivals and public events, Iran has sought to reinforce the historical usage of the name while channeling artistic production into narratives of continuity, sovereignty and coexistence.

Organizers say this year's edition places added emphasis on interdisciplinary work and youth participation, aiming to embed historical awareness within contemporary creative practice.

As Salehi put it, the most decisive victories risk fading without cultural representation, a reminder that art remains central to how nations remember, and how they endure.



Iran calls for legal case on Golestan Palace, pushes UNESCO action

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A senior Iranian Foreign Ministry official on Wednesday urged an accelerated legal and diplomatic drive to document damage to cultural assets and prepare a case on Golestan Palace for international adjudication, including at The Hague.

Speaking at a specialized forum on safeguarding civilizational heritage held at Golestan Palace, Ahmad Hamisi, head of the ministry's international organizations department, said Tehran must swiftly compile "official" records, finalize damage assessment forms and build legal dossiers that will underpin claims before arbitration bodies and international courts, IRNA reported.

He stressed that enhanced protection mechanisms through UNESCO remain "pursuable," but warned delays in submitting documentation risk forfeiting



Golestan Palace's Mirror Hall was damaged, after US-Israel strikes in March, with intricate mirrorwork shattered. ● IRNA

opportunities. "The first stage is information," he said, adding that Iran has already drawn global attention through a 120-page report on cultural damage circulated to embassies, prompting UNESCO to condemn attacks on heritage sites.

Citing precedents, including the 2017 threat by former U.S. president Donald Trump against Iranian cultural sites and UNESCO's response, Hamisi said the international environment is receptive to firm reactions on cultural threats and should be leveraged to increase pressure.

He called for elevating Golestan Palace into a symbol of "cultural

victimhood" through a draft resolution, drawing a parallel with Mosul's global status after the destruction wrought by the Daesh terrorist group.

Hamisi also outlined plans to stage a dedicated exhibition at UNESCO headquarters within two months, featuring images, footage and verified reports to present the full scope of the incident.

Fatemeh Davari, adviser to the deputy for cultural heritage, said assessment forms have been prepared for 35 cultural properties, with separate evaluations planned for World Heritage sites. She added that museums and cultural centers require urgent, coordinated action.

US-Israel strikes damage 449 health facilities in Iran, 40,000 treated free

Social Desk

Iran's emergency chief said Wednesday that 449 healthcare and medical facilities across the country were damaged during what officials call the "Third Imposed War," while more than 40,000 wounded people received free treatment as the health sector remained fully operational throughout the conflict.

Speaking at a press conference at Ardabil University of Medical Sciences, Jafar Miadfar said 26 emergency personnel were killed and 118 injured during the hostilities. Miadfar said the damage extended to 74 logistical support units, 62 ambulances, 54 emergency bases and 42 hospitals, with nine hospitals completely destroyed and forced out of service.

He said four of Iran's air ambulance helicopters and the country's only marine emergency ves-



Extensive damage to Gandhi Hospital in northern Tehran following US-Israeli airstrikes on early March 2026 ● IRNA

sel — used to transfer patients from Hormuz to Bandar Abbas — were struck by the United States and Israel.

"The health sector was present with 100% capacity," Miadfar said, adding that all victims were treated free of charge. He said 1,283 surgeries were performed during the war.

Among the injured were 5,046 women and 2,018 people under 18, he said. The youngest fatality was a three-year-old child, while the oldest was 88.

Miadfar said 30 of Iran's 31 provinces and 272 cities came under

attack, with only North Khorasan Province spared.

He also highlighted the performance of Ardabil's medical university, calling it one of the country's top 10 institutions in pre-hospital emergency care.

Iran currently operates 4,500 ambulances nationwide, but 3,000 are worn out and due for replacement, Miadfar said, adding that 20 new ambulances are set to be procured for Ardabil Province.

Iranian officials say the conflict began on February 28, as Tehran was engaged in serious negotiations with Washington, when the United States and Israel launched strikes on multiple locations across Iran.

Iran post-war tourism revives as arrivals show early increase

Arts & Culture Desk

The early signs of renewed foreign arrivals are emerging as conditions stabilize, adding that Iran has put in place the infrastructure and strategic planning to host a broad influx of international visitors, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey said on Wednesday.

Addressing a meeting of senior tourism officials attended by Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri, Mohseni Bandpey pointed to a 48.5% rise in inbound tourists in the first month of the last Iranian year as evidence of "real demand" for travel to Iran.

He attributed the increase to active tourism diplomacy and sustained engagement with target markets, according to ISNA.

As part of that outreach, Iran last spring hosted 16 tour operators from 26 countries, a move he said helped "showcase" the country's cultural assets and expand its international visibility. The ministry now expects that, with a ceasefire or a de-



finite end to wartime conditions, pent-up demand could translate into a sharp recovery in arrivals, requiring "maximum readiness" across the sector.

Mohseni Bandpey stressed the role of media and private-sector associations in advancing tourism goals, urging managers to maintain open channels with stakeholders and uphold transparency and accountability.

"Engagement is essential," he said, describing participatory governance as a cornerstone of effective tourism management.

He also cited newly approved regulations under Iran's Seventh Development Plan as a "key step" in smoothing the path for sectoral growth, say-

ing the framework creates more favorable conditions for both domestic dynamism and international outreach.

The deputy minister highlighted more than 80 provincial visits by Salehi-Amiri that brought attention to counties with tourism, heritage and handicrafts potential, calling the approach a driver of more balanced regional development.

He added that dividing the country into nine tourism zones and deploying managers in the field, particularly during crisis periods, has strengthened oversight and improved travel management.

Digital tools and real-time monitoring of travel flows have enabled quicker, more precise decision-mak-

ing, he said, while the national Travel Services Coordination Headquarters remains a "central pillar" for aligning agencies and ensuring coherent operations.

Looking ahead, Mohseni Bandpey said a draft strategic tourism document is being prepared based on multiple scenarios, prioritizing "protection," "resilience" and the rebuilding of Iran's national tourism brand.

He also pointed to government-backed support and incentive packages for industry stakeholders, approved following directives from the president, as measures designed to sustain activity, bolster resilience and steer the sector toward long-term, sustainable growth.