

Tehran, Moscow expand tourism diplomacy with new travel initiative



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Russia moved to deepen tourism diplomacy and public engagement during talks in Moscow, agreeing to expand cultural cooperation, facilitate travel and strengthen tourism exchanges as part of a broader effort to turn their long-standing civilizational ties into practical partnerships, Iranian officials said. Meeting on the sidelines of the sixth International Tourism Forum in Moscow, Hojjatollah Ayoubi, head of the Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy at Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, and Russian Deputy Culture Minister Andrey Malyshev discussed measures to remove barriers to travel, promote joint tourism initiatives and broad-

en cultural cooperation between the two countries, IRNA reported. The forum opened on June 10 and will run through June 14 at VDNH in Moscow. The talks followed the signing of a 2026-2028 tourism cooperation roadmap by Tehran and Moscow on June 11, a plan aimed at improving air connectivity, facilitating payments, implementing existing agreements and boosting visitor flows between the two countries. Ayoubi said tourism and cultural diplomacy had become among the most effective tools for bringing nations closer together and opening new avenues of cooperation. He described Iran and Russia as countries with deep historical and cultural roots that can draw on their shared civilizational assets to

foster stronger people-to-people ties. "Cultural and tourism cooperation can help build trust, strengthen regional convergence and create new horizons for collaboration," he said. The two sides agreed to pursue closer cooperation in tourism marketing, destination promotion and the use of modern digital tools to showcase attractions in both countries. They also discussed measures to simplify travel procedures and encourage greater engagement between tourism operators. Ayoubi said Iran was well positioned to attract a larger share of Russia's outbound tourism market, citing the country's rich cultural heritage, diverse historical and natural attractions, hospitality traditions and growing health tourism sector.

KotorArt festival taps Iranian tenor Reza Fekri for opening gala

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Iranian tenor Reza Fekri, a member of the Croatian National Theatre Opera in Zagreb, will perform as a featured soloist at the opening concert of the 2026 KotorArt International Festival on July 13 in Kotor, Montenegro, placing an Iranian artist at the forefront of one of Southeast Europe's leading classical music events. The opening gala, titled "Trajanje" ("Duration"), will take place at 9:30 p.m. local time in the historic square facing St. Tryphon's Cathedral, a landmark venue in the UNESCO-listed Adriatic town. The program will feature "Triptihon," a major work by renowned Croatian composer Ivan Brkanović. Fekri will appear alongside Croatian soprano Mihaela Kristina Molinarić and bass-baritone Krešimir

Stražanac. The performance will bring together the Bokelj Symphony Orchestra and the Academic Choir Ivan Goran Kovačić under the baton of Croatian conductor and composer Mladen Tarbuk. Widely regarded as one of the Balkans' premier classical music gatherings, KotorArt has built an international reputation for attracting leading performers and ensembles from across Europe and beyond. Fekri's appearance marks another milestone in a career that has steadily expanded across Europe's classical music scene. In addition to his ongoing work with the Croatian National Theatre Opera, he has maintained artistic collaborations with Russia's Mariinsky Theatre and has regularly taken part in projects led by acclaimed Iranian conductor and composer Ali Rahbari.

His professional portfolio also includes performances with Moscow's Helikon Opera, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and the Fars Symphony Orchestra, as well as appearances in opera, symphonic and oratorio productions across Europe. Among his recent engagements were a performance of Gioachino Rossini's "Stabat Mater" in Varaždin, Croatia, with the Varaždin Chamber Orchestra under Anđelko Igrec, and appearances as tenor soloist in Mozart's "Requiem" during the project "A Challenge for Mozart," conducted by Tarbuk in Zagreb and Požega. The KotorArt opening concert extends the successful artistic partnership between Fekri and Tarbuk while bringing an Iranian voice to the opening night of one of the region's most prominent cultural events.

'Dream Land' rolls out across Turkish cinemas after festival success

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Iranian animated feature 'Dream Land' began its theatrical run across 28 cities in Turkey on Friday, June 12, marking a major international release for the award-winning production, according to the film's producers. Directed by Mohsen Enayati and produced by Mostafa Hassanabadi, 'Dream Land' is a joint project of the Soureh Animation Center, Mahwa Animation Center, Tehran Municipality's Cultural Department, and Ayandeh Negar Studio. The film recently captured the Best Animated Feature award at an international children's film festival in India, adding momentum to its overseas rollout. The coming-of-age adventure follows Arat, a teenager driven by dreams of heroism. As he journeys with friends toward a mythical dream city, he

uncovers unexpected truths that reshape his understanding of the world and himself. Turkish distributor MC Film has launched the film in cinemas across Ankara, Istanbul, Antalya, Bursa, Gaziantep, Kayseri, Konya, Erzurum, Van and more than a dozen other cities, giving the Iranian production one of its broadest regional releases to date. The release comes as Iranian animation continues to expand its international footprint through festival appearances and commercial screenings. 'Dream Land' was recently selected for the main competition of the 11th Kinolub International Film Festival for Children and Youth in Poland, where it will compete alongside entries from around the world later this month. Veteran dubbing director Amirhoshang Zand oversaw the film's voice cast, which includes Mir-taher Mazloumi, the late Manouchehr



Valizadeh, Manouchehr Zendedel, Negin Kianfar, Ardeshtir Monazzam, Leila Kouhsar, Arezoo Afri, and Arsalan Joolaei. International distribution is handled by the Soureh International Center.

Iran's biodiversity shapes cultural mosaic of a civilization

Social Desk

Iran's extraordinary biodiversity has helped forge one of the world's richest cultural landscapes, the head of the National Committee for Cultural and Natural Heritage at Iran's National Commission for UNESCO said during a visit to the Pardisan National Museum of Natural History in Tehran, according to the Department of Environment (DOE). Ahmad Mohit Tabatabaei said Iran's cultural diversity has emerged from the country's vast ecological variety, creating a shared heritage rooted in the natural environment. "The two fundamental assets of any civilization are cultural heritage and natural heritage," he said. "Together they shape the identity of a nation. Without one, the other loses much of its meaning." DOE reported. He described natural heritage as

nature's interaction with human communities over centuries, a process that has given rise to traditions, literature, customs and distinct ways of life. Mount Damavand, he said, is not merely a natural landmark but a powerful symbol embedded in Persian mythology, poetry and collective memory. Likewise, the ancient Hyrcanian forests have influenced the music, traditions and cultural identity of communities along the Caspian coast. Mohit Tabatabaei said modern museums have evolved beyond collections of artifacts and now serve as bridges between the past and the future. "The future belongs to nations that understand their past," he said, stressing that such understanding must encompass both cultural and natural heritage. He noted that national parks and protected areas increasingly function as "ecomuseums," preserving

living ecosystems while showcasing natural history in its original setting. Golestan National Park, Iran's oldest national park, stands as "a living museum" where visitors can experience wildlife and natural history firsthand, he added. Calling children, cultural heritage and natural heritage the three pillars of the future, Mohit Tabatabaei urged greater investment in education and public outreach. Museums, he said, act as mirrors reflecting Iran's natural and cultural identity and can inspire stronger stewardship of these national treasures. He also highlighted the establishment of the Pardisan Biodiversity Museum during the years of the Iraqi-Imposed War (1980-1988), describing it as evidence of a forward-looking vision that safeguarded Iran's natural legacy even in the most challenging circumstances.

Nearly three centuries on, Magtymguly Pyragy still unites the region

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian scholars, diplomats and cultural figures gathered at Kharazmi University on Thursday to commemorate the 293rd birth anniversary of Magtymguly Pyragy, the celebrated Iranian-Turkmen poet and mystic, marking his enduring role in fostering cultural dialogue and regional understanding. The ceremony, attended by ambassadors from Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, officials from the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), academics and researchers, featured traditional music performances and cultural rituals that reflected the rich heritage associated with the renowned 18th-century literary figure. Ali Rahbar, secretary of the event and director of the Turkmen Cultural House Institute, described the gathering as an opportunity to honor "one of the great cultural luminaries of Iran and the region,"



saying that cultural icons serve as powerful symbols of identity and can help strengthen cultural diplomacy among nations. "Magtymguly lived in a turbulent era, yet his thoughts carried messages of peace, friendship, spirituality and wisdom," Rahbar said. "Today, he remains a shared civilizational figure linking Iran, Turkmenistan and neighboring countries." Mohammad Javad Haghshenas, cultural adviser to Iran's minister of cultural heritage, said Pyragy's legacy transcended linguistic and geographic boundaries through its

emphasis on ethics, justice, human dignity and social solidarity. "Commemorating Magtymguly is not merely remembering a poet," Haghshenas said. "It is a tribute to a valuable part of Iran's cultural heritage and to the contribution of Turkmen culture to the country's historical richness." ECO Institute President Mohammad Hasan of Pakistan called Pyragy "a shared cultural figure among the peoples of the region," while Tajik Ambassador Nizomiddin Zahedi said the poet's works had become a cultural bridge connecting Iran, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and other regional nations. Turkmen Ambassador Ilyas Gayypov said the poet's legacy had evolved into a key pillar of cultural cooperation between Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, adding that his enduring messages of patriotism, humanity, unity and peace continue to resonate nearly three centuries later.