

Russia pledges help to restore Iran's damaged heritage sites

Arts & Culture Desk

Russia has offered to help restore Iranian historical sites damaged during recent attacks and agreed to expand tourism and cultural cooperation with Iran, senior Iranian heritage official Hojatollah Ayoubi said after meetings with Russian officials in Moscow. Ayoubi, senior adviser to Iran's minister of cultural heritage and head of the ministry's Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy, made the announcement at the conclusion of a visit to the Russian capital, where he attended the sixth International Travel Forum "Puteshestvie" and held talks with Russian cultural and tourism authorities, IRNA reported. The forum was held in Moscow from June 10 to 14. "We witnessed a strong determination within Russia's Ministry of Culture to introduce Iran's culture, art, history and cultural heritage more broadly," Ayoubi said. "They have also expressed readi-

ness to dispatch restoration experts to Iran promptly to assist in rebuilding damaged historical monuments." The discussions came as Iran advances efforts to safeguard and restore heritage sites affected by recent military attacks. Earlier this month, Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri said 149 historical sites across the country sustained varying levels of damage, with some suffering losses ranging from 10% to 90%. Tehran and Isfahan recorded the heaviest impact, including parts of the UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace and sections of the historic Chehel Sotoun complex. Ayoubi said Russian officials also signaled strong interest in accelerating tourism exchanges. During meetings with Russia's deputy minister of economic development for tourism and the head of Moscow's Tourism Committee, both sides discussed removing structural barriers that have limited travel flows between the two countries.



Damage caused by US and Israeli strikes on Iran is seen at the Qajar-era Golestan Palace in Tehran, Iran, March 3, 2026.
● IRNA

"There is a very strong will on the Russian side to rapidly expand tourism relations with Iran," Ayoubi said, noting that many Russian travelers currently visit destinations in the region despite Iran's extensive cultural and natural attractions. The two sides signed a Tehran-Moscow tourism cooperation action plan covering 2026-2028. One of the key initiatives seeks to facilitate financial transactions for Iranian and Russian tourists traveling between the two countries. The forum, held at Moscow's VDNKh exhibition complex, brought together representatives from Russia's regions and delegates from 32 countries, including Iran. Addressing a specialized panel on tourism and international co-



operation, Ayoubi highlighted new tourism routes across Iran and underscored the enduring strength of the country's civilization and cultural heritage. Salehi-Amiri has said technical assess-

ments and emergency conservation measures are already underway, while a national and international campaign is being organized to support the restoration of damaged sites.

US-Israeli strikes ravage wildlife on Kharg Island

At least 25 deer killed as war exacts environmental toll

Social Desk

At least 25 deer were confirmed dead on Iran's southern Kharg Island following attacks during US-Israeli aggression against Iran, with environmental officials warning the actual toll is likely significantly higher. The deaths represent one of the most visible impacts of the war on Iran's wildlife, highlighting the often-overlooked environmental consequences of armed conflicts beyond human casualties, Press TV reported on Sunday. "The latest reports indicate that at least 25 deer have died on Kharg Island," said Masoumeh Safaei, deputy director of Iran's Office for Wildlife Protection and Management. "This figure only covers areas outside military zones, and the real number of casualties is higher than what has been recorded so far," Safaei was quoted as saying by Fars News Agency. Environmental experts warn that the effects of warfare on wildlife extend far beyond direct fatalities. Explosions, habitat destruction, and prolonged exposure to intense noise can leave lasting physical and psychological scars on animal populations. According to Safaei, severe stress caused by nearby blasts also affected animals held in captivity. At Tehran's Lavizan Bird Garden, some birds reportedly lost control of their behavior amid the shock of explosions and collided with enclosure walls, resulting in injuries and deaths. "Some birds experienced ex-



treme fear and stress due to the powerful sounds of explosions," she said, noting that authorities are still assessing the full extent of the damage. Reports have also emerged from a wildlife rehabilitation and conservation center in Alborz Province, where officials observed heightened behavioral stress among animals and a limited number of fatalities. While no large-scale losses have yet been officially documented among species such as wild goats, wild sheep, or large carnivores in natural habitats, specialists caution that the absence of reports does not necessarily indicate the absence of damage. Many animals retreat to remote or inaccessible areas during periods of war, making comprehensive assessments difficult. Smaller species, including insects, rodents, reptiles, and animals living near or below the soil surface, are considered particularly vulnerable to blast waves and habitat destruction. Shiva Roustaei, an environmental researcher, said the indirect consequences of war can be more severe and

long-lasting than immediate casualties. "In many cases, the indirect effects of war are far more extensive than direct losses," Roustaei was quoted as saying by Fars News Agency. "Explosions and intense noise pollution increase the production of stress hormones in animals, weakening their immune systems and increasing the risk of disease, reduced reproduction, and even death." She added that international studies have shown wildlife in conflict zones often experience disruptions to migration routes, feeding patterns, and breeding cycles. "In some species, miscarriage rates increase, while others display aggressive behavior or symptoms associated with depression," she said. Environmental specialists stress that wildlife constitutes an important part of a country's natural heritage and ecological security. They say documenting losses, monitoring affected populations, and implementing habitat restoration programs should become key components of post-conflict recovery efforts.

Pakistani scholar joins Persian Language Academy

Arts & Culture Desk

Pakistani Persian scholar and bibliographer Arif Naushahi received honorary membership in Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature at a ceremony in Islamabad attended by Pakistani Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri-Moghaddam, Iranian Cultural Attaché Majid Meshki, and a gathering of academics and Persian-language enthusiasts. The honor recognizes Naushahi's more than five decades of scholarship, teaching, and preservation efforts devoted to Persian language and literature in Pakistan, underscoring the enduring cultural ties

between Tehran and Islamabad, Tasnim News Agency reported on June 14. Speaking at the ceremony, Khichi described Persian as a language that served as the official administrative and cultural medium across the subcontinent for nearly eight centuries. "Pakistan's history and culture are deeply intertwined with the Persian language," he said, calling Naushahi's appointment "another chapter in the profound historical bonds between Iran and Pakistan." Amiri-Moghaddam said the honorary membership was awarded in recognition of Naushahi's distinguished contributions to Persian studies and with the aim of further expanding cultural rela-

tions between the two neighboring countries. He noted that Persian "remains alive thanks to the efforts and affection of the people of Pakistan." Meshki said the selection of a Pakistani scholar reflected the academy's appreciation for the prominent place of Persian in Pakistan and the depth of cultural connections between the two nations. Born in Pakistan's Punjab province in 1955, Naushahi has dedicated much of his academic career to Persian manuscript studies, bibliography, and literary research. He has authored dozens of Persian-language books and donated around 10,000 Persian manuscripts and volumes to the Ganj Bakhsh Library in Rawalpindi.

Magtymguly Pyragy keeps shared heritage alive across Iran, Central Asia



By Ali Rahbar
Head of the Turkmen Cultural House

OPINION

Magtymguly Pyragy is one of the most prominent literary and intellectual figures within the civilizational sphere of the Turkmen people and Central Asia. His stature cannot be confined merely to the framework of the national literature of a single ethnic group or country. His significance lies in the fact that he stands at the intersection of the region's linguistic, mystical, and ethical traditions and, through his poetry, has reproduced a kind of shared cultural language among the historically neighboring societies of Iran, Turkmenistan, and other Central Asian lands. In contemporary analyses of cultural diplomacy, Magtymguly can be regarded as one of the region's "transnational cultural luminaries" and "shared symbolic assets", concepts that emphasize the reality that certain cultural figures, by virtue of

the depth of their intellectual influence and the breadth of their social acceptance, transcend political borders and become part of a region's civilizational memory. Within this framework, Magtymguly's poetry is not only a carrier of ethical, justice-oriented, and mystical values, but has also functioned as a medium of communication between the cultural traditions of Greater Iran and those of the Turkmen and broader Central Asian world. From the perspective of international cultural relations, the importance of such shared cultural figures lies in their capacity to generate what may be called "cultural trust capital." At times when relations between states may fluctuate under the influence of political and geopolitical variables, the sphere of culture and shared heritage can serve as a stable and low-tension layer through which dialogue can continue and mutual understanding can be strengthened. For this reason, revisiting the legacy of Magtymguly is not merely a literary endeavor; it is also part of

a long-term strategy for cultural engagement at the regional level. At a deeper level, Magtymguly's works may be seen as a reflection of a kind of shared social ethic across the civilizational domain of Iran and Central Asia, an ethic that emphasizes justice, spirituality, social responsibility, and humanity's connection to truth. These elements have enabled his poetry, over time, to remain open to reinterpretation and to sustain its relevance, preserving its place in the cultural memory of successive generations throughout the region. Accordingly, engaging with Pyragy through cultural and scholarly programs constitutes a form of investment in soft diplomacy and in strengthening the foundations of regional convergence. Such an approach can help redefine the relationship between Iran and Turkmenistan at the cultural level, elevating it from the realm of purely political interactions to a deeper level of civilizational understanding and shared consciousness.