

Iran targets tourism brand rebuild in postwar recovery plan



Iran's Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey (9th L.) attends a strategic tourism meeting in the central city of Yazd on June 18, 2026.
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Arts & Culture Desk
 Iran plans to rebuild its national tourism brand, expand investment opportunities and diversify tourism products as part of a

broader postwar recovery strategy, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey said during a strategic tourism meeting in the central city of Yazd on Thursday.

Mohseni-Bandpey said the government views tourism as a development-driven and job-creating sector capable of drawing on Iran's vast cultural and civilizational assets to strengthen its

position in regional and international markets, IRNA reported. "Rebuilding and upgrading Iran's national tourism brand in international markets will be one of the central priorities of the new period," he said, adding that tourism diplomacy, international engagement, investment facilitation and stronger private-sector participation would also remain at the forefront of government policy. Speaking at a meeting of the Strategic Council for Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Mohseni-Bandpey said Iran's tourism industry had

demonstrated significant resilience despite challenges arising from recent wartime conditions and related restrictions. "The tourism sector has shown a strong capacity for recovery, reconstruction and a return to the path of growth," he said. He called for a comprehensive roadmap for the postwar period, saying Iran must diversify its tourism offerings, strengthen marketing and promotional efforts and design products tailored to the evolving expectations of domestic and international travelers. According to the deputy minister, more than 1,000 experts, academics and industry professionals participate in the ministry's strategic council network, contributing to policymaking and practical solutions across the cultural heritage, tourism

and handicrafts sectors. Mohseni-Bandpey highlighted Yazd as a model for tourism investment, crediting provincial authorities and the private sector with creating favorable conditions for capital inflows and infrastructure development. He said the province has expanded projects ranging from heritage restoration and rehabilitation to five-star hotels, tourism complexes and eco-lodges. A UNESCO-listed city renowned for its earthen architecture, windcatchers and historic urban fabric, Yazd is widely regarded as one of Iran's premier cultural tourism destinations. Officials say its combination of heritage assets, desert tourism, wellness experiences and local cuisine positions the province to play a key role in the country's tourism-driven economic recovery.

Five-year revival effort rescues 66 fading handicraft traditions



Arts & Culture Desk
 IRNA
 Iran has revived 66 traditional handicraft disciplines that were at risk of disappearing over the past five years, a senior cultural heritage official said, stressing efforts to preserve the country's artisanal legacy while supporting more than 623,000 craftspeople nationwide. Behrouz Nedaei, acting head of the Handicrafts Department at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, told IRNA that the endangered crafts were restored between 2021 and 2025 through targeted support programs designed to rescue artistic traditions facing extinction due to dwindling numbers of practitioners and structural challenges. Among the crafts revived in 2025 were traditional Givoh shoemaking in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, metalworking in North Khorasan, Pelas weaving in Sistan and Baluchestan, Turkmen traditional footwear in Golestan, Orosi wooden lattice-window making in Lorestan, and traditional dyeing techniques in Hamedan. "Many of these artistic treasures were on the verge of being forgotten," Nedaei said. "Our priority is to ensure they return to active production and remain part of the country's living heritage." He said the ministry identifies endangered crafts annually and channels training and financial support toward their revival, relying heavily on the traditional master-apprentice model to transfer indigenous knowledge to younger generations. Iran's handicrafts sector currently employs more than 623,000 artists, including about 508,000 women, highlighting the industry's role as a major source of cultural and economic activity. Nedaei said licensed activities cover 299 handicraft fields, representing roughly 80% of the country's active craft disciplines. He added that Iranian handicraft production is increasingly shifting toward practical and market-oriented goods, with an estimated 60% to 70% of products now combining artistic value with everyday use, a trend expected to strengthen both domestic sales and export potential.

Jalil Shahnaz, sonority that never returned

By Ali Reza Sepahvand
 Journalist

In the history of Persian music, few artists are remembered not merely as performers but as artistic schools unto themselves. Master Jalil Shahnaz was one of those rare figures, an artist whom many scholars and musicians consider him the greatest tar virtuoso of the last century. His stature was not simply the result of technical mastery or command of the radif; rather, it stemmed from a unique combination of profound musical knowledge, extraordinary improvisational genius, a deep understanding of Persian vocal traditions, and an unparalleled ability to shape sound, or what musicians call sonority. Born into a musical family in Isfahan, Shahnaz grew up in an environment where music was an integral part of daily life. He was influenced by the Isfahan school of tar playing and inherited the legacy of masters such as Abdolhossein Shahnazi. Yet what later came to be known as the "Shahnaz Style" transcended imitation and evolved into a completely personal artistic language. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Shahnaz's artistry was the unique sonic quality of his instrument. Few musicians in Persian music history have been able to extract such a vast palette of tonal colors from the tar. The sound of his instrument was not merely clear and resonant, it possessed a distinct personality. Through subtle variations in plectrum angle, extraordinary right-hand control, masterful use of vibrato, delicate manipulation of string pressure, and a complete command of the instrument's natural resonance, he endowed every note with an individual identity. Many musicians could play a phrase; Shahnaz could make it speak. In essence, he drew from the tar what a great vocalist draws from the human voice. This quality is precisely why musicians often referred to his playing as vocal in character. When Shahnaz performed avaz accompaniment or instrumental responses to a singer, one did not feel that a stringed instrument was merely answering a vocalist. Rather, it seemed



as though two master singers were engaged in a profound musical dialogue. His phrasing possessed breath, pauses, emphasis, ornamentation, and even emotional inflection. This rare ability made his collaborations with Iran's greatest vocalists some of the most enduring treasures of Persian music. Yet perhaps Shahnaz's greatest distinction lay in his improvisational artistry. In Persian classical music, improvisation represents the highest form of creative expression, requiring the performer to remain faithful to the structure of a modal system while simultaneously creating in the moment. Shahnaz elevated this art to extraordinary heights. His improvisations often appeared more coherent and architecturally complete than many fully composed works. Rather than treating the radif as a collection of memorized patterns, he used it as a language through which he could tell new stories. Every performance became a fresh narrative, unfolding organically before the listener. This brilliance is particularly evident in his performances of Abu Ata, one of the principal derivatives of the Dastgah-e Shur. Abu Ata carries an atmosphere of tenderness, introspection, spirituality, and emotional intimacy. Many musicians, when performing this mode, either fall into monotony or become overwhelmed by sentimentality. Shahnaz, however, achieved an extraordinary balance between emotion and

structure. In Abu Ata, he preserved the sweetness and delicacy of the mode while simultaneously employing sophisticated melodic development, subtle rhythmic variation, and dazzling technical passages that left seasoned musicians astonished. The result was music that appealed equally to ordinary listeners and to highly trained specialists. The secret of this achievement lay in his profound understanding of the inner logic of Persian modal music. Shahnaz never used technique for the sake of display. Rapid passages, powerful tremolos, crisp dorab ornaments, wide melodic leaps, and complex embellishments were always subordinated to musical expression. Consequently, the average listener experienced only beauty, elegance, and emotional immediacy, while professional musicians recognized the immense technical complexity hidden beneath that apparent simplicity. From a formal perspective, Shahnaz's improvisations are also remarkable examples of musical architecture. He approached a performance much like a master storyteller. A calm introduction gradually expanded into larger musical ideas, leading toward carefully calculated climaxes, moments of tension and suspense, and ultimately a satisfying resolution. Everything unfolded according to a compelling narrative logic. This is why

even his longest improvisations never become tiresome. Listeners are unconsciously guided through the story he constructs, following its emotional and structural progression from beginning to end. Another significant aspect of Shahnaz's artistry was his ability to revive neglected corners of Persian classical music. Rather than limiting himself to the most frequently performed gushehs, he explored hidden possibilities within each modal system. In doing so, he expanded the expressive horizons of the tar and opened new pathways for future generations of musicians. His influence on Persian music became so profound that even the greatest vocalists acknowledged their debt to his artistry. Mohammad Reza Shajarian, widely regarded as one of Iran's most celebrated singers, frequently spoke with admiration and amazement about Shahnaz's playing. It is often said that Shajarian absorbed many subtleties of vocal phrasing from listening to Shahnaz's tar. Indeed, Shajarian's admiration ran so deep that he later named his ensemble "Shahnaz," a tribute to the immense impact that the master's sound had on his own artistic development. If one were to summarize Jalil Shahnaz's legacy in a single sentence, it would be this: he erased the boundary between instrumental performance and singing. Before Shahnaz, the tar was an instrument. After Shahnaz, the tar became a language, a language capable of weeping, laughing, whispering, narrating, and expressing love. As we commemorate the anniversary of this legendary musician's birth, perhaps the most fitting description is the one repeatedly offered by the great masters of Persian music themselves: Jalil Shahnaz was not merely an outstanding performer; he was the very standard by which beauty in Persian tar playing came to be measured. Even today, whenever discussions arise about tonal beauty and sonority, improvisation, vocal-style phrasing, and expressive elegance, the name Jalil Shahnaz stands as a towering peak in Persian classical music.