



Restoration begins on historic Abbasi Mosque after war damage

Arts & Culture Desk

Restoration of the tilework and reinforcement of the stone base of the historic Abbasi Mosque in Iran's central city of Isfahan have begun after damage caused by explosions during a 40-day war, a heritage official told IRNA on Saturday.

Javad Rahmati, head of the Naqsh-e Jahan World Heritage Site office, said the repair followed damage to the mosque during the war, which began in late February with US and Israeli strikes on Iran.

Some of the tiles had already been damaged before the war, while others were affected by air pressure from explosions during the conflict. "After those explosions, we saw the gradual collapse of tiles in the following days and weeks," Rahmati said. A restoration contract has been signed and work has begun, with crews first removing damaged tiles in areas that suffered the most severe deterioration

and are at risk of falling. Tile restoration is being carried out alongside work on the stone base because the greatest damage has occurred at the boundary between the two.

Rahmati said erosion of materials, moisture penetration and the passage of time had caused some tiles to separate from their base, shifting their weight onto the stonework below. In some places, the stones have moved 5 to 7 cm out of position and are at risk of falling.

About IRR80bn has been allocated to the project, of which around IRR28bn has so far been received. Part of the funding is being provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, while another portion is coming through market insurance contributions to cultural heritage.

A separate contract is also being arranged with the University of Isfahan to study war-related damage, geology and vibrations affecting the historic structure.

The restoration is part of a three-way agreement between Isfahan provincial authorities, the provincial Cultural Heritage Department and the private sector to repair historic sites damaged in the conflict, including the Abbasi Mosque.

The first phase has secured IRR80bn in private-sector funding for emergency restoration, focusing on the mosque's 400-year-old tiles and areas damaged by blast waves.

Tiles on parts of the mosque's northern and western iwans fell after an attack on March 8 on a street near Naqsh-e Jahan Square. Other historic buildings around the square were also damaged by the blasts.

Further damage was reported after the bombing of the Isfahan provincial government building in the Safavid Government House area, affecting the square's Grade 2 protected zone and the Grade 1 protected zone of Chehel Sotoun Palace.

Built during the Safavid era,



the Abbasi Mosque is one of the landmark monuments of Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square

and is internationally known for its elaborate architectural decoration. The mosque and

Naqsh-e Jahan Square were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980.

Iran calls for release of pilots captured in Qatar during US-Israeli aggression

Social Desk

An Iranian military official on Saturday called for the release of three pilots he said were captured in Qatar during an air strike on an American base in the tiny Persian Gulf country days after the US and Israel launched a war of aggression against Iran.

"Three Iranian pilots were captured alive by Qatari forces after their Su-24 fighter jets crashed during the war," General Mohammad Baqerzadeh of the Iranian Armed Forces said, ISNA reported.

"Javad Salehi, Abdolmajid Dashi, and Omran Behraveshtian have been held by Qatari forces for six months," he added in a letter addressed to the International Committee of the Red Cross. In the letter, Baqerzadeh noted that the pilots had not been allowed to meet or contact



The combo shows three Iranian pilots which Iran says are alive and held in Qatar following a raid on a US military base in Qatar in early March.

● kalanshahr.ir

their families.

Last month, the Army said it had retrieved the body of Iranian pilot Majid Kazemi, who was killed during an attack on Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar in early March.

Iran had previously said the other pilots were missing but news of their capture was not publicized at the time.

The Al Udeid base in Qatar includes forward components of US Central Command (CENTCOM), as well as the command's air forces and special operations forces, according to AFP.

It is the largest US base in the

region.

The war broke out on February 28, when the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran, which retaliated with attacks across the region on US bases as well as on Israel.

Diplomatic efforts led to an April ceasefire, ending nearly 40 days of fighting, before the signing of a framework for peace talks in June, which later collapsed.

Iran and the United States have since traded fire sporadically, with fighting mainly centered in southern Iran and around the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

A lull in fighting has been in place since late July.

Rahbari to conduct leading composers works at Russia's Mariinsky Theater

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian composer and conductor Ali Rahbari will take the stage at Russia's Mariinsky Theater in St Petersburg on September 25, opening his sixth artistic season at the historic opera house. Rahbari will conduct works by some of the world's leading composers, including Wagner, Grieg and Berlioz, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Appointed "permanent guest conductor" of the Mariinsky Orchestra by Valery Gergiev, the legendary Russian conductor, Rahbari has won strong support from audiences and critics over his first five



seasons, conducting 28 varied programs.

During that period, he has brought to the stage a wide range of major works from the Western classical repertoire as well as prominent Iranian compositions.

One of the highlights of his work at the Mariinsky has been his efforts

to introduce Iranian musicians and music to international audiences.

Rahbari, a musician, composer and international orchestra conductor, was born in Tehran in 1948. He has previously served as permanent guest conductor of orchestras including the Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic and Belgrade Philharmonic. Gergiev first invited him to the Mariinsky during the 2021-22 artistic season to conduct two works by renowned Russian composers. Following those performances, Rahbari was immediately appointed permanent guest conductor of the institution.

Iranian animation 'The Last Deer' tells silent story of loneliness of species' final survivor

Arts & Culture Desk

An Iranian animated film, The Last Deer, directed by Mehdi Barzadegan, tells the story of the final survivor of a species, a deer that escapes hunters to reach its family, only to find them dead and eventually stop running, allowing itself to be hunted.

The six-minute film, which has recently been selected for the International Festival of Animation Films Animaevka-2026 in Belarus, uses no dialogue. Instead, the story unfolds through the reactions of its sole character, the deer.

Barzadegan told IRNA on Saturday the idea for the film came from a three-second student animation about the death of a soldier as the "last person". He later turned the idea into a story about a deer and named the project The Last Deer.

The director said the animal's loneliness was central to the film. He sought to convey it through distant shots of an empty forest. At first, the deer has a strong connection with its surroundings, but once it begins to flee, the forest becomes frightening and unsafe, eventually causing it to lose its way home.

One of the biggest challenges was conveying the deer's emotions without dialogue. "Without a word being spoken and without even showing the hunters or their dogs, I had to tell everything through the deer's reactions. Our animation has only one character, and that is The



Last Deer," Barzadegan said.

The film was initially planned as a 30-second animation consisting of five or six scenes. It was later developed into an animated documentary following a proposal by Iran's Center for the Development of Documentary, Experimental and Animation Cinema. The unspecified forest was turned into a forest in Iran, while the deer was given a more defined identity. Barzadegan said he drew on documentary filmmaking techniques, where camera crews generally keep their distance from animals.

"In documentaries, the cameraman cannot get too close to animals, so shots are usually recorded from a distance. I brought this feature into the animation and used many long shots," the filmmaker said.

He also sought to recreate camera movement, camera shake, filming errors, focus shifts and motion blur. Barzadegan simulated camera lenses and, in some scenes, intensified the light, overexposed parts of the image and painted other sections black from the outset to reproduce

these visual characteristics.

Studying light behavior was among the hardest parts of the project, he said, requiring extensive trial and error to portray different times of day and night.

The animation was produced frame by frame using digital painting. Production took about a month and a half.

Barzadegan said the film's main strength lay in its technical and visual direction.

"The trump card or the most important feature of this film is mostly in the technical and visual direction. No ready-made effects were used in this animation and everything was designed. If something was supposed to be blurred, it was painted blurred from the beginning, and if something was supposed to burn in the light, it was drawn that way from the outset," he said.

The director said the film has recently entered the festival circuit and secured a place at Animaevka in Belarus. The bitter emotions running through the film, he said, have come across effectively and are among The Last Deer's strengths.