



Minab tragedy to become national, global cultural narrative



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri (C) speaks at a meeting of the National Minab Martyrs Headquarters in Tehran, Iran, September 22, 2026.

● CHTN

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri on Tuesday called for the creation of a broad cultural and international narrative around the children killed in Minab, southern Iran, as part of a national initiative to preserve their memory. Speaking at a meeting of the National Minab Martyrs Headquarters in Tehran, Salehi-Amiri said the story of the children should not remain a "local event" but should reach audiences worldwide through cultural, artistic, educational and media initiatives, CHTN reported. "We must make the global conscience sensitive to Minab," he said, stressing the need to introduce the incident to students, academics and wider audiences both inside and outside Iran.

The minister outlined plans to draw on museums, literature, poetry, storytelling and public art to preserve the memory of the victims and turn the Minab narrative into a "national and global cultural movement." A coordinated national approach is also being developed to bring together government institutions and existing initiatives rather than replace them. A central website dedicated to the Minab martyrs is planned in cooperation with the Art Bureau and is intended to serve as a comprehensive platform for information and cultural content. Salehi-Amiri also called for a unified public memorial to the children and said discussions were under way over naming a street or square after the Minab martyrs. The initiative is also set to incorporate tourism and educational programs.

Travel agencies could help develop tours to Minab and other destinations in southern Iran, while existing educational and cultural programs could be expanded to introduce visitors to the region and its history. The minister emphasized that preserving the memory of the victims should go hand in hand with supporting the people of Minab and paying attention to their livelihoods, local capacities and future. He also called for multilingual outreach, asking the government's information council to ensure that material about the Minab victims is made available in several languages. The initiative aims to bring together cultural institutions, schools, museums, artists and media organizations to preserve the memory of the victims and establish Minab as part of Iran's wider cultural and historical narrative.

VP calls for greater university autonomy as new academic year begins

Social Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref has called for greater university autonomy, urging the government to give academics special powers to resolve higher education challenges as the new academic year gets underway. In a message marking the start of the academic year, Aref described universities as "smart drivers of national strength" and centers of social capital and hope, emphasizing their role in scientific progress, innovation and addressing the country's needs, fvpresident.ir reported. He said the government welcomed transferring university affairs to academics within the framework of national policies and development plans, stressing that higher education institutions should be empowered to manage

their own challenges. Aref also urged faculty members to strengthen students' confidence, encourage critical thinking and expand opportunities for in-person interaction and open discussion. He called on universities to provide a safe, rational environment where students can raise questions, express criticism and receive evidence-based responses. He highlighted the need for universities to engage more directly with national challenges, particularly structural imbalances in water, energy and financial resources. Moving beyond identifying problems, he said, academic institutions should develop practical solutions and bring technologies to market. The first vice president also called for stronger scientific diplomacy, expanded academic cooperation with regional countries

and the Islamic world, and greater engagement with Iranian scholars and students abroad to showcase the country's scientific achievements. Aref reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting faculty members' dignity and livelihoods, improving student and staff welfare, and creating a calm and vibrant learning environment. He also encouraged philanthropists and private-sector supporters to contribute to higher education infrastructure and strategic scientific fields. Expressing confidence in the academic community's ability to advance the country's scientific and technological capabilities, Aref said the new academic year could become a turning point in addressing national challenges and strengthening public solidarity.

Tourism ministry advances digital transformation with startups

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Tourism Ministry is moving to accelerate digital transformation in the tourism sector by bringing startups, knowledge-based companies and universities into its planning and development efforts, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said Tuesday at a Tourism Week news conference in Tehran. The initiative aims to harness artificial intelligence and emerging technologies to improve destination selection, travel planning, service reservations, tourism marketing and visitors' overall experience while preserving Iran's cultural and historical identity, IRNA reported. "Technology must serve people," Mohseni-Bandpey said, stressing that digital tools should enhance human capabilities rather than create excessive dependence on technology. He said tourism plays an important cultural role by introducing the country's heritage, ethnic diversity, attractions and narratives to international visitors. The



ministry therefore plans to use technology to better understand tourism markets, promote destinations and improve efficiency. The official called for greater participation by the private sector, universities and innovation-focused businesses in designing the sector's digital future. He said the ministry was developing different scenarios, including a "neither war nor peace" situation, to adapt tourism policies to changing conditions. Mohseni-Bandpey also outlined a two-track strategy focused on expanding domestic tourism and developing foreign visitor markets. For international tourism, the ministry is prioritizing neighboring countries, with Iraq at the

forefront. Nine areas of cooperation have been identified to strengthen tourism exchanges between Iran and Iraq, while efforts are also underway to activate Iranian travel-service offices in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The ministry plans to maintain a presence at international tourism exhibitions to showcase Iran's diverse destinations, even when logistical challenges require multiple flight connections. Mohseni-Bandpey said tourism had recorded significant growth in the final quarter of the previous Iranian calendar year and the first month of the current year, before the 12-day war disrupted the trend. He described tourism as a dynamic but highly sensitive sector whose recovery requires sustained planning and renewed confidence. Despite the challenges, the ministry is pressing ahead with development plans. Around 3,000 tourism projects, including three five-star hotels in Mashhad and other cities, are scheduled to come on stream during Tourism Week.

In search of...

Geopolitical-energy dimension: Iran knot, China's real vulnerability

Here's a point that tends to get lost in most analyses: China's energy crunch was never simply "managed," it was genuinely serious. Before the war in Iran, China was importing roughly 1.4 million barrels a day of Iranian crude, about 13% of its total oil imports, and roughly half of all Chinese oil imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz. One report warned that if the strait stayed closed, China would face a real shortage within about two months, and other analysts have pointed out that China depends more

heavily than any other country on oil flowing through Hormuz, taking in 5.35 million barrels a day compared to India's 2.09 million. Beijing's official response is telling in itself: China's foreign minister said closing the strait serves no one's interests in the international community, and the foreign ministry spokesperson urged both sides to honor the temporary ceasefire and pursue political diplomacy, a stance that shows Beijing is deliberately avoiding getting boxed into a choice between a tactical alignment with Tehran and its relationship with Washington, especially with the summit approaching. In other words, the common assumption

that China is negotiating from a position of strength on Iran doesn't quite hold up. The reality is that China's own energy vulnerability is pushing it toward restraint rather than toward turning up the pressure on the United States.

Point that goes largely unsaid: mismatch in domestic urgency

What most analyses miss is that all this pomp and the warm tone from both sides owe more to domestic political pressure on each leader than to any real strategic convergence. Trump, with his approval numbers sagging ahead of the midterms, needs a win he can sell, whether

that shows up as lower gas prices (which ties directly back to reopening Hormuz and squeezing Iran) or simply as symbolic images of strength. China, for its part, is wrestling with a property slump, deflationary pressure, and youth unemployment, and what it genuinely needs is a stable external environment, not necessarily a symbolic concession. This asymmetry in urgency means Trump is chasing a visible short-term achievement while Xi is after long-term predictability, and that difference in goals may explain why a package deal, one that bundles several issues together (say, limited cooperation on Iran in exchange for a longer trade truce), is more likely

than one sweeping, comprehensive agreement. Put differently, all this ceremony may be less a sign of genuine warmth and more an exercise in audience management. Both leaders need to show their domestic publics that they've come home winners, even if the substance of what's actually agreed turns out to be limited and temporary. Political-security dimension: Taiwan as quiet red line Taiwan remains the one issue where neither side is prepared to make even a symbolic concession. Congressional pressure on Trump to move forward with the arms package, combined with Asian allies' worry that Taiwan could become an eco-

nomie bargaining chip, keeps this file walled off from the atmosphere of trade councils and goodwill gestures. This summit looks less like a strategic turning point and more like a stress test for a fragile truce, one that has to manage several parallel crises at once (trade, technology, energy, Taiwan). The Iran-energy knot shows that real vulnerability, not symbolic leverage, is what's actually driving Beijing's behavior. And the mismatch in domestic political urgency between the two leaders helps explain why the diplomatic show is so elaborate, even as the substance underneath is likely to be limited and doled out in stages.