

Iran, UNESCO step up cooperation on protection of damaged heritage sites

Iranica Desk

Iran and UNESCO have agreed to expand technical and international cooperation to assess, document, restore and protect heritage sites damaged in Iran, with UNESCO planning to send representatives to conduct field assessments.

According to Mehr News Agency, the agreement was discussed at a meeting between Farhad Azizi Zallani, Director General of Iran's World Heritage Sites, and Lazare Eloundou Assomo, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity, organized by the UNESCO World Heritage

Centre in Hanoi, Vietnam.

During the meeting, Azizi Zallani presented an update on the condition of Iran's cultural heritage sites and complexes, particularly properties inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List that were damaged during the recent war. He also outlined the prospects for expanding cooperation between Iran and the World Heritage Centre, as well as the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts' expectations regarding the organization's technical, specialist and international capacities.

The report outlined the extent of the damage, as well as ongoing expert assessments,

documentation efforts and emergency measures taken to protect, restore and safeguard the affected sites.

The discussions focused on expanding expert cooperation, exchanging technical knowledge and experience, supporting conservation programs, and facilitating the participation of international experts in assessing the condition of damaged heritage sites.

Eloundou Assomo, for his part, reaffirmed the World Heritage Centre's support for cultural heritage sites and properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. He said plans were underway to dispatch UNESCO representatives to conduct field



assessments, determine the extent of the damage, and identify

potential forms and areas of support and cooperation.

He also stressed the importance of maintaining expert-level communication and coordination among relevant institutions, saying continued professional engagement could help strengthen conservation efforts and facilitate more effective approaches to safeguarding Iran's World Heritage.

The two sides emphasized Iran's historical, civilizational and international significance in the field of cultural heritage and underscored the need to strengthen and expand cooperation between Iran and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, while making targeted use of existing capacities to protect shared human heritage.

Iran unveils 246 projects during Tourism Week

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Despite wartime conditions and existing challenges, 246 tourism projects in 27 provinces were unveiled during this year's Tourism Week (Sept. 27-Oct. 4), while another 128 projects became operational during Government (Week Aug. 24-30).

According to IRNA, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks at a ceremony marking Tourism Week in Bushehr.

He said that, overall, 500 tourism projects had been unveiled or inaugurated across the country over the past year, stressing that "despite the pressures, the wheel of development never stopped turning."

"Tourism is an engine that sets all the wheels of the economy in motion, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts is determined to accelerate this process," Salehi-Amiri said.

He added that Bushehr must prepare for an influx of tourists from around the world, saying that during foreign visits, Iranian officials had observed a change in how other countries viewed and interacted with Iran. "The world is interested in seeing the new Iran up close," he said.

Salehi-Amiri said a new tourism corridor in southern Iran was emerging and that "southern tourism" would become one of the country's main priorities in the national tourism calendar. He said Chabahar, Makoran, Hormozgan, Qeshm, Kish, Bushehr and Khuzestan would be promoted more extensively to domestic and international tourists.

"The southern coastline must become an active tourism corridor in Iran's tourism calendar, and Bushehr can become one of the country's hubs for marine tourism," he said.

Referring to Bushehr's potential for marine tourism, the



minister said the development of ports, marinas, hotels and coastal tourism complexes was essential to accommodate large numbers of visitors. He invited investors from across the country to invest in southern Iran, particularly Bushehr Province. He said tourism investment packages for Bushehr had been

prepared and added that, alongside support for air, road and rail transportation, the ministry would provide the necessary assistance to strengthen the province's tourism infrastructure. The minister also stressed the need to expand eco-lodges in Bushehr, saying the province has one of Iran's largest poten-

tials for ecotourism. The ministry, he said, would support operators throughout the process — from licensing and construction to the launch of their businesses — through financial assistance and interest-free loans. Highlighting Bushehr's cultural and historical assets, Salehi-Amiri said the province was not merely a tourism destination but also embodied a distinct identity and historical heritage.

"It has more than 6,000 years of history and civilization, extending from the Elamite civilization to the present day," he said.

The minister said some 670,000 people are currently engaged in handicraft production across Iran, with women accounting for 80 percent of them.

He also said Iran currently has 800 museums, of which about 300 are state-run, while the remainder — equivalent to 62.2 percent — are privately operated.

Speaking at the opening and re-

design ceremony of the Rais-Ali Delvari Museum in Tangestan, Bushehr Province, Salehi-Amiri said the government was pursuing a policy of "one museum for every city," with the aim of opening 100 new museums each year.

He described museums as the collective memory of nations and stressed the importance of accurate interpretation and storytelling in museums. According to the minister, qualified professionals with sufficient knowledge should be employed to present the history and culture of different regions of the country.

Referring to the renovation and modernization of the Rais-Ali Delvari Museum, Salehi-Amiri said the facility had been transformed from an ordinary space into a conceptual museum featuring modern design that could appeal to younger generations. "The Rais-Ali Delvari Museum is one of the most beautiful museums in Iran in terms of both design and concept," he said.

Forgotten buildings keep Bandar Anzali's history alive

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Bandar Anzali, a city with a rich history, culture and architectural heritage, is home to buildings scattered throughout the city, each of which tells a part of its identity and collective memory. Some of these structures may receive little attention today, but their walls continue to preserve stories from Bandar Anzali's past.

"Music Jiga" and the "Municipality Building" are just two examples of these historic structures. Their stories continue to live on in different corners of the city, and Tourism Week (Sept. 27-Oct. 4) could provide an opportunity to revisit, introduce and revive this overlooked heritage.

"Music Jiga" was a space that gained historical significance through its governmental and public



Music Jiga
● wikipedia.org

functions, while various accounts of the site have remained part of the collective memory of local residents. The building bears a striking resemblance to Hafezieh in Shiraz. However, according to available sources, Hafezieh in Shiraz was constructed in 1935, while Music Jiga was built in 1932.

Zahra Jahani, head of

the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Bandar Anzali, told ISNA that, according to available information, the Music Jiga building was constructed in 1932. At the time, Bandar Anzali's geographical position and extensive connections with Russia and other parts of the world, particularly European countries, brought

diplomats, merchants and travelers from various countries to the city. Under such circumstances, she said, the presence of a musical ensemble at the site to perform during ceremonies and welcome guests — particularly when the king or his guests were present — was of particular importance. However, Music Jiga was not merely a venue associated with official and governmental events; it also held a special place in the memories of local residents.

One notable account associated with the site concerns an orphanage in Bandar Anzali where children without parental care were housed. According to this account, at a designated time each day, the musical ensemble would walk along the route to the orphanage on Si-Metri Street, playing their instruments before



Bandar Anzali Municipality
● IRNA

arriving at the site, where they would perform for the public.

Residents would gather to watch the performances, an event that, on the one hand, created a space for social interaction and, on the other, helped ease the children's suffering while raising public awareness of their circumstances, Jahani said.

Jahani also referred to the

Bandar Anzali Municipality Building, which is also known as the Municipality Theater and Cinema Building, although different accounts exist regarding the relationship between and distinctions separating these two structures.

One of the longstanding issues surrounding the history of urban administration in Iran is a historical disagreement among

cities such as Tabriz, Rasht, Bandar Anzali and Tehran over which city established the country's first municipality.

However, Jahani said, it is important to distinguish between a Baladieh (municipal administration) and a modern municipality when examining the issue. According to the explanation provided, the National Consultative Assembly issued a directive requiring cities meeting certain population and area criteria to establish a Baladieh, a measure referred to as the "Baladieh Resolution."

For this reason, the history of the establishment of a Baladieh cannot be equated with the date on which a municipality building was constructed. Different sources also give different dates for the construction of the Bandar Anzali Municipality Building.