



The third Iran-Russia Cultural Committee meeting was held in St. Petersburg on Saturday, attended by the two countries' culture ministers and other cultural officials and executives. The two sides discussed new cooperation initiatives aimed at shaping the future of their relations within the realm of culture and art. At this meeting, attended by Abbas Salehi, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and Olga Lyubimova, Russia's Minister of Culture, the heads of the three specialized working groups under the Joint Cooperation Commission's cultural committee presented reports on the status of ongoing cooperation and offered proposals for the future.

**Iran and Russia
hold Third Cultural
Committee Meeting
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**S. Korean
Ambassador
Highlights Iran's
Ecotourism Potential**



South Korean Ambassador to Iran Kim Junpyo has highlighted the potential of Iran's ecotourism sector to support local economies and offer visitors authentic experiences of local culture and daily life. What is taking shape in Iran's ecotourism sector today is not merely the provision of accommodation services, but the creation of experiences rooted in local communities and people's real lives, Kim said, according to a report published by the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and carried by IRNA. The ambassador made the remarks during a meeting with Yavar Abiri, head of the Iranian Ecolodge Association, at the Sangan Ecolodge in Tehran, held during the National Tourism Week. Kim said tourism was changing globally, with travelers increasingly seeking opportunities to interact with local people, explore indigenous cultures and experience the lifestyles of destination communities rather than simply visit tourist attractions. Reflecting on his approximately two and a half years in Iran, the ambassador said the country had considerable tourism potential because of its history, culture and civilization. He added that Iran could introduce its distinctive cultural characteristics to international visitors. "Iran has considerable potential for tourism rooted in culture and local life," he said, referring to the diverse cultures and lifestyles he had encountered during his stay.

Drawing on South Korea's experience in developing cultural tourism, the ambassador said tourism experiences with stronger local and authentic characteristics had greater potential for international promotion. He noted that preserving traditional architecture, historic houses, clothing, cuisine and handicrafts in some parts of South Korea had become an integral part of the visitor experience. Abiri said the meeting aimed to introduce Iran's ecotourism potential to South Korean travelers and create opportunities to expand tourism cooperation between the two countries. He said ecotourism lodges offer visitors more than accommodation, allowing them to discover local culture, cuisine, handicrafts, nature and the lifestyles of communities in different regions. Given Iran's climatic and cultural diversity, the country could host tourists throughout the year, Abiri said, adding that ecotourism lodges could help attract international visitors by offering distinctive local experiences at affordable prices. Participants also stressed the importance of strengthening links between Iranian ecotourism operators and specialized tourism organizations in South Korea, as well as exchanging experience in rural tourism, traditional accommodation and community development.

Perspective



Iran, UNESCO Discuss stronger Intl. Cooperation to Protect World Heritage Sites

Iran and UNESCO have discussed expanding technical and international cooperation to assess, document, restore and protect Iran's World Heritage sites, including properties reportedly damaged during the recent war. Farhad Azizi Zelani, director general of Iran's World Heritage sites under the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, on Wednesday met with Lazare Eloundou Assomo, director of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity in Hanoi, Vietnam. During the meeting, Azizi Zelani presented an update on the condition of Iran's cultural heritage sites and properties, with particular focus on World Heritage sites that were damaged during the recent conflict with the combined forces of the US and the Israeli regime. He outlined the reported extent of the damage as well as ongoing expert assessments, documentation and emergency measures aimed at protecting and restoring the affected sites. The Iranian official also outlined the ministry's expectations from UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, emphasizing the need to make greater use of its technical, professional and international capacities.

From Heritage to Events: Shiraz Eyes a Year-Round Tourism Future

Shiraz has the potential to become a year-round destination for event-based tourism by drawing on its cultural, artistic, historical and natural assets and by strengthening the role of the private sector, Mohammad Ali Choubini, deputy mayor of Shiraz and head of the Shiraz Municipality's Cultural, Social and Sports Organization, has said. Speaking to Tourism, Choubini said Shiraz should redefine its position in the tourism industry and move beyond being viewed solely as a historical destination associated with attractions such as Persepolis, Hafezieh and Saadieh. According to Choubini, the city and its surrounding areas offer a diverse range of tourism opportunities, including literary and cultural tourism, art, gastronomy, health tourism and nature-based tourism. Shiraz can transform these assets into a dynamic and sustainable tourism economy in which the private sector and tourism businesses play a meaningful role, the deputy mayor said. Choubini identified institutional fragmentation and a lack of coordination among different organizations as two of the main obstacles to tourism development. "In many tourism projects and destina-

tions, several institutions are involved, but without sufficient coordination and synergy, part of the available resources and energy is wasted," he said. Choubini stressed that if tourism is recognized as a provincial priority; all relevant institutions should contribute to its development. Referring to sites and projects such as Dar al-Salam Cemetery and the proposed cable car, he called for greater cooperation among the municipality, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts authorities, the Endowment Organization, environmental authorities and other relevant bodies. "Simply saying no is not an achievement. The real art of management is to find solutions while taking expert considerations into account," he said. He also proposed establishing joint, participatory management structures for major tourism sites such as Hafezieh and Saadieh, allowing different institutions and organizations, including Shiraz University, to contribute their expertise and capabilities. **A People-Centered Approach to Tourism** Choubini said successful tourism events should put people at the center and involve the pri-



Choubini, Shiraz Deputy Mayor: The city can turn its cultural, artistic and natural assets into a year-round tourism economy driven by events and private-sector participation

ate sector, artists, cultural institutions and local businesses. Events, he argued, should not simply consist of a series of scheduled programs. They should create a distinctive experience that motivates visitors to travel specifically to attend the event. He cited examples such as the Koocheh Festival in Bushehr and music and cul-

tural events in different Iranian cities as evidence that local traditions and cultural practices can be transformed into tourism attractions. **Shiraz and Fars: A Regional Tourism Hub** The deputy mayor emphasized that Shiraz's tourism potential should not be limited to the city itself.

The wider Fars region offers a combination of natural, cultural and historical attractions, including the rosewater traditions of Meymand, narcissus fields and diverse landscapes. "Shiraz should be considered together with its surrounding areas and, ultimately, with the tourism potential of Fars as a major destination in southern Iran," he said. He added that Shiraz could host a succession of distinctive cultural, artistic, literary and nature-based events throughout the year. At the same time, Choubini warned that the sheer diversity of Shiraz's tourism assets could become a weakness without a clear focus. "We have so many capacities that sometimes we fail to focus sufficiently on any one of them," he said, suggesting that dedicated programs and secretariats could be established for major tourism fields. **Cultural Infrastructure and Major Events** Choubini also highlighted the importance of cultural infrastructure in strengthening Shiraz's position as an event destination. He described the City's Amphitheater as an important opportunity for hosting

major concerts, theater productions and other artistic events. He pointed to the strong public response to Alireza Ghorbani's concerts in Shiraz as evidence that the city has an audience for large-scale cultural events. He suggested that the Amphitheater's first major event could be a prestigious multidisciplinary production centered on an iconic Iranian cultural figure such as Hafez or Saadi, or a character from the Shah-nameh. **A Cultural Week for Nowruz Countries** Looking toward international cultural tourism, Choubini proposed organizing a "Cultural Week of the Nowruz Countries" in Shiraz. "If conditions allow, this event could be developed for Nowruz 1406," he said, referring to the Iranian calendar year beginning in March 2027. He also proposed a "Cultural Week of Shiraz's Sister Cities," which could bring together partner cities such as Dushanbe and other sister cities to showcase their cultural identities and strengthen tourism ties. Choubini described art as one of the most effective common languages between nations and highlighted the potential of the "Shiraz Symphony" as a

tool for international cultural diplomacy. He said the symphony could be performed not only in Shiraz's sister cities but also in other cities around the world that have symphony orchestras, providing an opportunity to introduce Shiraz through music and culture. **Why Shiraz?** Asked what he would tell a foreign tourist considering a trip to Shiraz, Choubini gave a simple answer: "The people of Iran." If he had to recommend just one attraction, however, he would choose Vakil Bazaar, a historic marketplace where visitors can experience architecture, history, commerce and the everyday life of Shiraz all in one place. Choubini concluded by describing Shiraz as more than just a historical destination. In his view, the city offers a cultural and civilizational experience rooted in tolerance, interaction and coexistence—values that, he believes, can convey a meaningful message to the contemporary world. For Shiraz, he said, the challenge is not a lack of tourism assets, but creating the coordination, focus and sustainable structures needed to turn those assets into a year-round tourism economy. **By: Homa Haseli**

20 Historical Bazaars Undergoing Revitalization across Iran



Around 20 historical bazaars across Iran are currently being revitalized in cooperation with municipalities and local shopkeepers, a former head of the Urban Regeneration Company of Iran has said. Abdolreza Golpayegani

told ISNA that efforts to revive historical urban areas also include the restoration of historical houses in several cities, including Kerman, Sari, Hamedan, Isfahan and Khorramabad. He said cultural and heritage considera-

tions are of particular importance in the regeneration of historical districts. "We have taken supportive measures to improve service infrastructure, upgrade streets and create suitable conditions for construction and strengthening buildings," Golpayegani said, adding that the broader objective is to improve the urban environment and create conditions conducive to the restoration and revival of historical houses. Regarding the historical bazaars, he said the ongoing projects include paving, organizing roofs and improving the façades of around 20 bazaars in cooperation with municipalities and shopkeepers. "When a historical bazaar is restored and brought into suitable condition, it naturally creates the basis for revitalizing construction and restoring houses in the surrounding area," he said. Golpayegani also highlighted efforts to restore historical houses, some of which had fallen into poor condition over the years. Among the projects, he cited the restoration of the Badie al-Sanae' House in Isfahan and the Salehan House in Hamedan. He said restoring a historical house and converting it into a suitable, high-quality service facility can have a posi-

tive impact beyond the building itself, encouraging the improvement, renovation and strengthening of neighboring properties. The former official also referred to the restoration of historical bathhouses in several cities, saying the projects are being carried out with the assistance of municipalities and funding allocated by the Urban Regeneration Company of Iran. Following restoration, the bathhouses can be converted into service facilities, he added. Golpayegani said several medium-sized and small cities across the country have also taken effective steps toward reviving historical buildings with support from the Urban Regeneration Company. "There is still considerable potential and much work to be done in this field, and we hope this process will continue," he said. He stressed that revitalizing historical districts should not be limited to restoring individual buildings. Instead, a comprehensive approach involving street improvements, provision of services, the revival of bazaars and historical buildings, and the creation of appropriate new uses for them is needed to gradually stimulate the regeneration of entire historical areas.