

## **Ceremony to mark partial reopening of historic Soumela monastery**



**A ceremony marking the reopening of the historic Panaghia Soumela Monastery, following restoration works that begun in 2015, is set for Saturday.**

The monastery, located near the southeastern Black Sea coast, in modern-day northeast Turkey and specifically in Trabzon province, had for millennia served as a center of Orthodoxy and Pontian Hellenism, since its founding in the 4th century AD, and until it was abandoned in 1923 — following the forced removal of the ethnic Greek population in the mountainous region.

Turkey's Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism, Nadir Alpaslan, will attend the opening.

In the first phase, the historic monastery's courtyard will be open to the public. A crucial part of restoration and reconstruction works is to prevent a massive boulder, calculated as weighing 1,600 tons, from falling onto the monastery.

A second phase of restoration affects the actual buildings, chapels and monks' cells at the monastery.

The Turkish government allowed the site to reopen in 2010 after 88 years of abandonment and decay.