

Iran's 'Twenty-one Weeks Later' to debut globally at Busan festival



MEHR – In its first international appearance, the Iranian short film, 'Twenty-one Weeks Later,' directed by Nasrin Mohammadpour, will compete at the 28th Busan International Film Festival in South Korea.

Mohammadpour's film serves as the only official representative of Iranian short films at this festival. To mark this achievement, the English poster for the short film, designed by Martin Kheybali, was released and unveiled.

The 28th edition of the Korean film festival is scheduled to take place from October 4 to 13 in South Korea.

Similar to the director's previous works, this short film delves into women's issues, this time focusing on a subject related to motherhood. The film features a cast including Banafsheh Riazi, Leila Hosseinzadeh, Soodabeh Bahraminejad, and Parisa Asgari.

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The Grandeur of Arbaeen in Iran



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Arts & Culture Desk

In a remarkable turn of events, a record-breaking number of pilgrims flocked to Iraq for Arbaeen rituals this year, as confirmed by Iran's Police Chief, Ahmad Reza Radan.

During a recent visit to the Chazzabeh border crossing in southwestern Iran, Brigadier General Radan announced that more than four million people traveled to Iraq from Iran through six border crossings en route

to Karbala, Iraq, to participate in the Arbaeen procession, paying tribute to Imam Hussein (PBUH). The police chief noted that over 400,000 foreign pilgrims from 10 countries also crossed Iran this year to travel to Iraq

for the Arbaeen rituals. Radan expressed gratitude towards the Iraqi government for their remarkable cooperation during this year's Arbaeen, characterizing it as "extraordinary" and truly heartening.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi underscored the profound meaning of Arbaeen, emphasizing that it sends a powerful message of freedom and independence across generations while ensuring that the memory of Imam Hussein (PBUH) endures. Speaking in Birjand, the capital of South Khorasan Province, Raeisi stated, "Arbaeen is a flag to keep Ashura alive and conveys a message of freedom and independence. It reminds the people that they should always live with the memory of Imam Hussain (PBUH)."

He further noted that Ashura, Imam Hussein's sacrifice, serves as a source of inspiration for human history's devel-

opments and serves as the bedrock for uprisings, movements, and revolutions. This year, Karbala, the holy city hosting the shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH), attracted 22 million pilgrims, according to Iraqi officials.

Furthermore, Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, emphasized the evolving dynamics of Arbaeen.

He pointed out that young men and women, particularly those born in the 2000s, have enthusiastically embraced this public expression of faith, with women and girls comprising nearly 55 to 60 percent of the participants.

Esmaeili emphasized the need to recognize and celebrate the dignity, sacrifices, and strong presence of women in this significant religious gathering, demonstrating that Arbaeen continues to evolve and resonate with people from all walks of life.

Iran's participation in international tourism exhibitions

Arts & Culture Desk

According to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism's plan, Iran is expected to participate in 18 foreign tourism exhibitions by the end of the Iranian year (March 19, 2024). However, assessments indicate that the political behavior of some countries may affect Iran's decision to attend certain exhibitions.

As reported by ISNA, participation in international tourism exhibitions is considered one of Iran's most significant promotional tools for tourism. While some tourism officials believe that participating in international exhibitions only had a minimal impact on attracting foreign tourists, private sector stakeholders and tourism investors hold a different view. They argue that Iran's absence from foreign exhibitions will significantly harm its tourism industry, leading to its gradual decline, especially as they assert that promoting Iran's tourism in foreign media requires minimal cost and Iran's international tourism advertising efforts have been limited to exhibitions and B2B commercial meetings.

Due to the easing of COVID restrictions and the reopening of international exhibitions, Iran's presence in its target and traditional markets has been notable. However, a review of its presence reveals a lack of comprehensive and targeted strategies to make a tangible impact on tourism. This situation has been exacerbated over the past year due to the political behavior of certain countries.

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism has planned to participate in 10 tourism exhibitions in the top-targeted countries by the end of the current Iranian year. However, some of these exhibitions have been hindered due to reasons such as U.S. sanctions or sporadic political behavior in certain countries. Some Iranian tourism agencies have stated that they will attend these exhibitions as visitors to maintain Iran's visibility. According to prioritization and planning, Iran is expected to have a presence in exhibitions in France, China, Italy, the UK, Spain, Turkey, India, Germany, and Russia by the end of the Iranian year. However, Iran will not have a pavilion in the exhibitions in France due

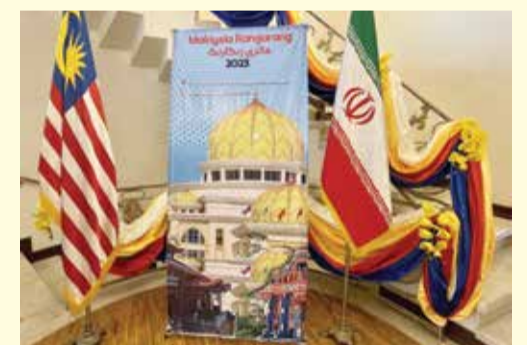
to insufficient number of participants, and in the case of the highly competitive English exhibition, the private sector will be responsible for the representation.

China's leading outbound travel exhibition, known as COTTM, has temporarily excluded Iran due to US sanctions, but Iran is expected to have an official presence at the ITB Shanghai exhibition in China.

In addition to these exhibitions, for secondary-target markets, Iran plans to participate in exhibitions in Armenia, Oman, Japan, Qatar, Poland, Austria, and Serbia. The decision to attend these exhibitions will be made based on the number of applicants and exhibition conditions.

Iran, which, according to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism, attracts the most travelers and tourists from neighboring countries, has primarily focused on these nations over the past year. However, marketing efforts in these countries still follow traditional methods. As part of the ministry's marketing plan, it is expected to organize specialized tourism exhibitions in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

Malaysians celebrate National Day in Tehran



Malaysians in Tehran marked the 66th National Day and 60th Malaysia Day on Tuesday at the residence of Malaysian Ambassador to Tehran Khairi bin Omar.

Both days are significant for Malaysians as August 31 marks independence from colonial rule, while September 16 marks the date when the peninsular states of Malaya merged with Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore to form Malaysia in 1963.

The ceremony titled "Malaysia Rancangan" was participated by a number of senior officials including ambassadors of some other countries as well as officials from Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ambassador of Malaysia welcomed the participants and briefed them on the occasion and he also pointed to the good relations between both states.

Malaysia has been one of Iran's friends since the start of their political relations following the independence of Malaya as both countries are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which have used these frameworks to develop political ties.

The journey towards Malaysia's independence was led by its first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, along with a delegation of ministers and political leaders. They engaged in negotiations with the British to secure the country's freedom.

