

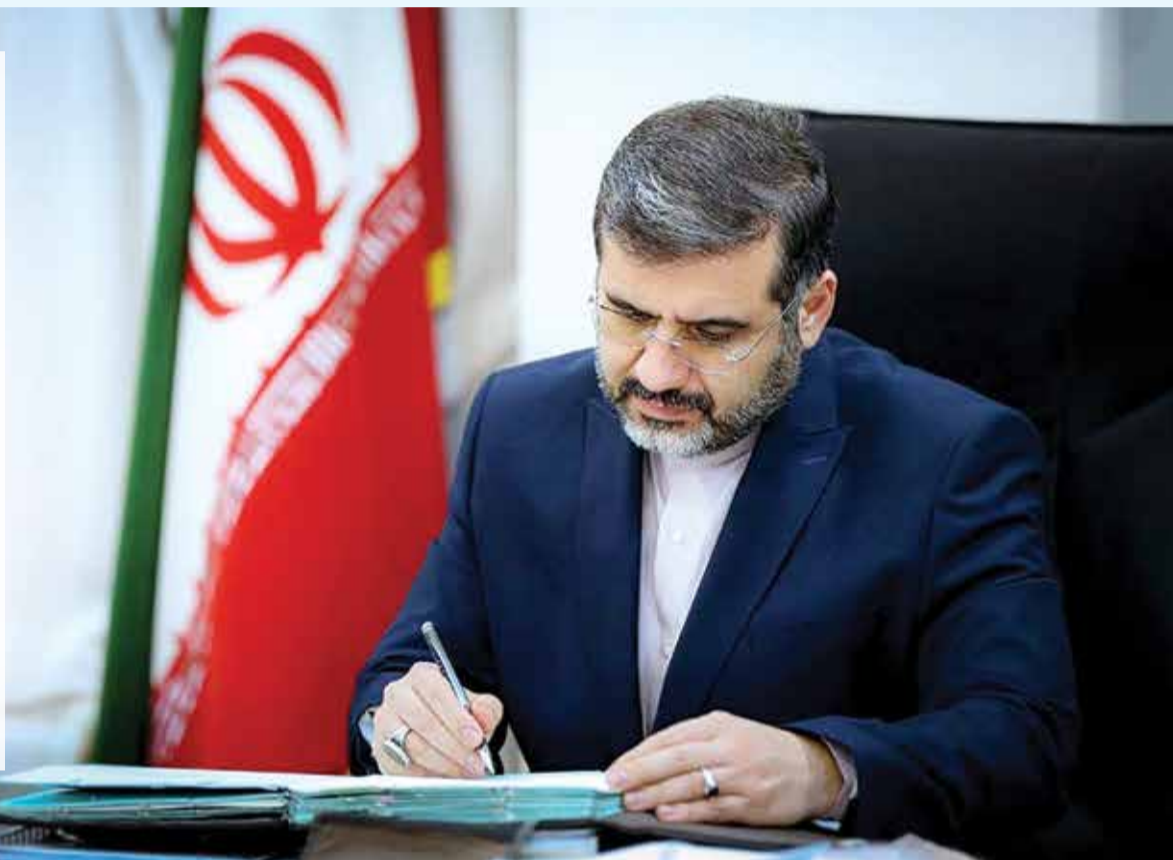
# Iran prioritizes preservation of southern islands' traditions: *Minister*

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad-Mehdi Esmeaili highlighted the government's commitment to preserving the rich cultural heritage and enduring traditions of the southern islands. Speaking at the 816th session of the National Cultural Council, Esmeaili stressed the need for a cultural transformation in the Persian Gulf region, with a focus on maritime economy while prioritizing the preservation of cultural balance and traditions in the southern islands and regions, IRNA wrote. He emphasized that the unique islands, such as

Qeshm, boast a diversity of clothing, cuisine, music, and melodies, making them central cultural hubs in the northern and southern Persian Gulf. However, he criticized an unwise perspective that attempts to reduce these regions to mere showcases for lifestyle and cultural representation. Esmeaili announced the initiation of a policy to establish cultural regions in three areas: West Azarbaijan, the central region including Hamedan and Zanjan, and Khorasan Razavi. He provided recommendations for Nowruz (Persian New Year) travel, stating that while

people are fully committed to religious practices such as fasting during the month of Ramadan, measures should be taken to facilitate travel for individuals during this period. He underscored the importance of cultural and artistic programs tailored for those observing religious practices or choosing not to travel during specific times, emphasizing the need for regional colleagues to prepare special cultural and leisure activities. Esmeaili concluded by announcing that a Qur'an exhibition would be held in Tehran and various provinces from March 20.



## Iran's Saket, Japan's Tsumuzi to stage joint concert

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Iranian musician Keivan Saket will perform a joint concert alongside Japanese composer and violinist Tsumuzi in a unique cross-cultural concert. The concert featuring Keivan Saket, Siavash Saket, and Tsumuzi is scheduled to take place at Libra Hall in Japan from March 7 and 8, ISNA wrote. Tsumuzi, renowned for his dis-

tinctive musical style, often referred to as the 'Mr. 5 beats' is a Japanese violinist residing in Tokyo. His musical journey began while studying at a medical school, and he released his debut studio album, 'Devilish Waltz of A Soul - The Tango of February 26th' in 2013 after completing his medical degree. Living up to his unique monikers, Tsumuzi has released four more albums to date, including 'The Guernica Dogma' (2015),

'Libertango My Own' (2016), 'Japan Neo Soul 2020' (2019), and 'Quintuple Meter's Bible' (2022), along with 'Five Beats on the Border' (2023). The collaborative concert promises a harmonious fusion of Iranian and Japanese musical influences, showcasing the diverse talents of Saket and Tsumuzi. Music enthusiasts can anticipate an evening filled with cross-cultural melodies at Libra Hall this March.



## Japan's new births fall to record low in 2023 as demographic woes deepen

The number of babies born in Japan fell for an eighth straight year to a fresh record low in 2023, preliminary government data showed on Tuesday, underscoring the daunting task the country faces in trying to stem depopulation. The number of births fell 5.1% from a year earlier to 758,631, while the number of marriages slid 5.9% to 489,281 – the first

time in 90 years the number fell below 500,000 – foreboding a further decline in the population as out-of-wedlock births are rare in Japan, Reuters reported. Asked about the latest data, Japan's top government spokesperson said the government will take "unprecedented steps" to cope with the declining birthrate, such as expanding childcare and promoting wage hikes for young-

er workers. "The declining birthrate is in a critical situation," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters. "The next six years or so until 2030, when the number of young people will rapidly decline, will be the last chance to reverse the trend." Mindful of the potential social and economic impact, and the strains on public finances, Prime Minister

Fumio Kishida has called the trend the "gravest crisis our country faces", and unveiled a range of steps to support child-bearing households late last year. Japan's population will likely decline by about 30% to 87 million by 2070, with four out of every 10 people aged 65 or older, according to estimates by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.

## Iran welcomes Singapore travelers with no visa requirements

Singapore nationals can now enter Iran for tourism without the need for a travel visa, and remain in the destination for no more than 15 days for every 180 days. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Singapore said

the move was enforced on February 4 this year, ttgasia.com reported. Iran has been working to raise the profile of its tourism industry, and had hosted the 17th International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition from

February 12 to 15 this year. Minister of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts, Ezzatollah Zarghami, told the media during the event that Iran has plans to develop areas for tourism, launch tourism campaigns, and facilitate urban investments.

## Iran pledges scholarships, tourism collaboration with Afghanistan

The Islamic Emirate's Ministry of Information and Culture reports that the Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kabul committed to collaboration on scholarships and the exchange of tourism and cultural experiences between Afghanistan and Iran. Maulvi Saad Al-Din Saeed,

Finance and Administrative Deputy of the Ministry of Information and Culture, discussed solutions for issues in the air and land visa sector and the facilitation of processes during the meeting, avapress.com reported. Ruhollah Hosseini, the cultural attaché of the Iranian Embassy in Kabul, assured the resolution of existing

problems and pledged cooperation in the areas of scholarships and the exchange of tourism and cultural experiences between Afghanistan and Iran. This aligns with previous statements from various Iranian officials expressing their commitment to cooperation across different sectors with Afghanistan.