

Iran to propose group visa for SCO members



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ali-Asghar Shalbfafian, announced proposals to strengthen tourism cooperation among the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Speaking at the SCO tourism ministers' meeting in Kazakhstan, Shalbfafian emphasized the importance of facilitating easier

travel within the region, IRNA wrote. Shalbfafian proposed the introduction of group visas for SCO member countries as a means to increase tourism and ease travel restrictions. He noted that Iran has already waived visas for 64% of SCO countries and that 37% of Iran's incoming tourists are from these nations. He also suggested creating a dedicated tourism sec-

tion on the SCO website to share marketing data and best practices, helping members stay updated on the latest developments. Addressing the audience, Shalbfafian acknowledged the recent loss of Iran's President Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and other officials, thanking SCO members for their condolences. He highlighted Raisi's commitment to enhancing international and regional

cooperation, particularly through tourism. The meeting saw members observe a minute of silence in honor of the late President Raisi and his colleagues. Shalbfafian underscored the vast potential of the SCO region, which encompasses over three billion people, to become a major tourism market. He pointed out that Iran offers a rich cultural heritage, including 27 UNESCO

World Heritage sites and a diverse climate ranging from mountainous regions to hot springs. In addition, Shalbfafian proposed establishing a network of tour operators within the SCO to improve cooperation and manage tourist flows effectively. He also suggested leveraging the historical Silk Road to promote regional unity and sustainable development through joint projects.



Iranian films to be screened in Russia

Five Iranian films are set to be showcased at the 33rd Golden Knight International Film Festival in Russia. The films include 'Hook' directed by Hossein Rigi, 'Captain' directed by Mohammad Hamzeie, 'Leather Jacket Man' directed by Hossein Mirzamohammadi, 'Number 10' directed by Hamid Zargar Nezhad, and 'No Prior Appointment' directed by Behrouz Shoaibi. The festival, supported by the Orthodox Church, has screened about 9,000 films over its 30-year history, focusing on meaningful, ethical, and social films. It has hosted over 8,000 cultural figures from 60 countries. This year's festival runs from May 22 to May 29.



Iranian translator Amraei dies at 36

Iran's young translator and journalist Niloufar Amraei, daughter of Asadollah Amraei died at the age of 36. Abolfazl Bani, director of the "Baharan" institute, confirmed the news to ISNA, stating, "Unfortunately, today, May 25, Niloufar passed away. She had an underlying medical condition and suffered a drop in blood sugar, which led to her death." Niloufar was known for her work in children's literature, with notable books including 'Mrs. Cherry's Kitchen,' 'What Do You Do with an Idea?' 'The Clocks: Activity Book with Drawing, Coloring, and Stickers,' and 'Learning at Home (Numbers).'

Smoking deaths in Iran surpass 50,000 annually: Report

Social Desk

Iran's deputy health minister has proposed a fourfold increase in cigarette taxes to combat the high rates of smoking-related deaths in the country. Hossein Farshidi, Deputy Health Minister, highlighted that over 50,000 deaths each year are attributed to tobacco use, costing billions in healthcare. Speaking at a National No Smoking Week (May 25 to 31) press conference, Farshidi emphasized the detrimental effects of smoking and the need for higher taxes on tobacco products. He pointed out that the appearance of cigarettes has changed over the past decade, with a worrying trend of increased usage among young people, particularly girls. He also criti-

cized media portrayals that glamorize smoking. Farshidi stressed the illegality of e-cigarettes in Iran, stating that they are neither produced nor imported legally and that the ministry is actively work-

ing to curb their distribution. He also mentioned that the tobacco tax revenue from last year was not allocated to the Health Ministry. In response to a question about oxygen hookahs,

Farshidi explained that a pilot project is underway in some provinces to replace traditional hookahs with oxygen versions, which are considered less harmful. Jafar Jandaghi, the head of the Occupational and En-

vironmental Health Center of the Health Ministry, noted the rising trend of smoking among teenagers and called for stronger enforcement of anti-tobacco laws in public places. Behzad Valizadeh, Head of the National Tobacco Control Committee, reported a significant increase in hookah use and daily smoking rates among women. He advocated for higher pricing and stricter regulation of tobacco products to reduce consumption. Valizadeh also highlighted the ministry's efforts to ban online sales of tobacco and to remove tobacco products from the household consumption. He called for increased public awareness and educational initiatives to combat the harmful effects of smoking.



Weight loss, gain drugs harm digestive health, expert warns

Social Desk

More than 30% of Iranians suffer from fatty liver disease, warned the President of the Iranian Association of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. At a press conference marking Digestive Health Week (May 25 - June 1), Farhad Zamani cautioned against the use of weight loss and weight gain drugs, which he said are harmful to the digestive system. Zamani explained that weight gain drugs contain cortisone, while weight loss drugs have amphetamines, both damaging to the gut. Additionally, bodybuilding powders can harm the digestive system and kidneys. He emphasized that fatty liver disease is often linked to other health issues such as diabetes and high blood pressure but can be prevented through lifestyle changes like regular exercise and a healthy diet. Zamani also urged people to avoid unproven traditional remedies for liver and digestive issues, as these can damage the liver and lead to the need for transplants. Overuse of antibiotics, he added, can destroy beneficial organs and damage the gallbladder, advising against self-medication. Irregular sleep patterns and stress also negatively impact the digestive system and can contribute to gastrointestinal cancers.