

Iran, Turkmenistan hold joint tourism event to boost cultural ties

Arts & Culture Desk

The second Turkmen-Iranian Tourism Festival was held at the Exhibition Hall of the Academy of Arts in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, with the aim of strengthening cultural and economic ties between the two countries.

The festival, which took place from October 22 to 24, was attended by high-ranking officials, including the head of the Ministry of Culture of Turkmenistan, Akiniyaz Agamuradov, Ali Mojtaba Rouzbhani, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Turkmenistan, Navid Rassouli, Cultural attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Turkmenistan, and diplomats from various countries, as well as representatives of 23 tourism and handicraft companies from Iran and Turkmenistan. The festival aimed to promote cultural exchange, tourism cooperation, and economic ties between Iran and Turkmenistan, and to strengthen the friendly relations between the two neighboring countries.

Agamuradov expressed his satisfaction with the growing tourism industry in Turkmenistan, which he attributed to the country's rich cultural heritage and historical landmarks, such as the ancient city of Nisa, the fortress of Dehistan, and the historical site of Merv.

He noted that the number of foreign tourists visiting these sites is increasing day by day. Agamuradov also highlighted the im-

portance of promoting Turkmenistan's tourism potential worldwide and expanding cooperation with neighboring countries.

He mentioned that Turkmenistan is located on the ancient Silk Road and has been a crossroads of seven roads connecting East and West.

He emphasized that the country's goal is to attract more foreign tourists and develop its tourism industry. Rouzbhani emphasized the multifaceted nature of tourism, which not only promotes cultural exchange and understanding but also generates significant economic benefits.

He noted that the tourism industry is considered the largest service industry in the world, with over 1.5 billion international travelers and a revenue of over \$2 trillion annually.

He also highlighted Iran's rich cultural and natural attractions, including Persepolis, the city of Isfahan, and its diverse cultural heritage.

Rouzbhani expressed his hope that the festival would contribute to the growth of tourism cooperation between the two countries and promote people-to-people exchanges.

He noted that Iran and Turkmenistan have had a growing trend of cultural and tourism cooperation in recent years, including people-to-people exchanges, tourism exhibitions, and cultural events. One of the directors of the Turkmen State Institute of Culture, highlighted the historical and cultural ties between the



two countries.

He noted that culture has always been a bridge between people and that Turkmenistan and Iran have a long history of cultural exchange.

He emphasized the importance of cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions in promoting cooperation between the two countries.

He also mentioned that Turkmenistan has a rich cultural heritage, including historical sites such as Nisa, Dehistan, and Merv, as well as natural attractions. He noted that Iran is famous for its cultural and historical sites, such as Persepolis and the city of Isfahan.

He expressed his hope that joint tourism programs could attract not only local tourists but also foreign tourists,

contributing to the development of economic and cultural ties between the two countries.

Rassouli emphasized the importance of tourism as one of the most important industries in the world, with significant economic and social benefits.

He noted that tourism is the largest service industry in the world, accounting for one-third of global service trade. He highlighted the growth of the tourism industry in both Iran and Turkmenistan, which have rich cultural and natural attractions.

Rassouli expressed his hope that the festival would promote cultural exchange and understanding between the two countries and contribute to the growth of tourism cooperation.

He noted that Iran and Turkmenistan have a common history, culture, and traditions, which could be showcased through joint tourism programs.

The first Turkmen-Iranian Tourism Festival was held in October last year. Visitors familiarized themselves with unique items of traditional folk crafts, handmade art products, national heritage, and modern trends of Turkmen and Iranian art masters.

The festival featured an exhibition of tourism companies from both countries, showcasing their capacities and potential. The event was attended by ambassadors and diplomats from several countries, including Russia, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Japan, Uzbekistan, Palestine, and Libya.

Curtains down on 41st Tehran International Short Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The closing ceremony of the 41st Tehran International Short Film Festival (TISFF) was held on October 23 at the Milad Tower in Tehran and the winners were announced. This year, the festival received 13,651 submissions from more than 30 countries. The number



of submitted films was a new record in the history of the event, about twice the number of submissions last year.

The line-up includes 59 short fiction films, 21 animated movies, 18 documentaries, and nine experimental films. The submitted works are from India, China, Poland, the US, Egypt, Greece, France, Pales-

tine, Turkey, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Russia, Australia, Japan, Germany, Italy, and Cuba among others.

The ceremony then paid tribute to the martyrs of resistance, including Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Ismail Haniyeh, Yahya Sinwar, and Qassem Soleimani, with a slideshow of images from the Israeli regime's brutal attacks on Palestine and Lebanon, ILNA wrote.

A memorial ceremony was also held for Mehdi Ashiri, a member of the Iranian Youth Cinema Society who was martyred in the imposed war. The ceremony was attended by Raed Faridzadeh, head of the Cinema Organization of Iran (COI), the festival's secretary Mehdi

Azarpendar, and Mohammad Ali Bashe Ahangar, a film director.

Faridzadeh then took the stage and said, "When someone returns to his home, the Iranian Youth Cinema Society (IYCS), after 23 years, they cannot remain silent. The enthusiasm and excitement we witnessed during the festival has increased our responsibility."

He added, "The Tehran International Short Film Festival has reached its 41st year and has matured. With over 12,000 submissions from around the world, this year's festival has become a major international event. We have also held various workshops and showcased new and innovative topics,

demonstrating that the short film festival is a pioneering event that has incorporated modern technologies."

At the end of the ceremony, Shahab Hosseini, a jury member in the national competition, said, "Outside of the judging process, I witnessed some films being appreciated in this ceremony, but they were not good films. If they were good, we would have noticed them in the judging process. My advice to filmmakers is to work with new and talented actors instead of relying on professional actors, which can harm your work."

The Golden Leaf and a \$2,000 cash prize for the best international film, which will be intro-

duced to the Academy Awards, went to Ibrahim Handel for the narrative film 'A Short Film about Children' from Palestine.

The members of the jury panel of the International Section include the Indian musical composer and record producer A. R. Rahman, Ghanian-Belgian director Anthony Nti, Bangladeshi screenwriter and film critic Sadia Khalid Reeti, Italian filmmaker Maja Costa, and Russian festival producer Ekaterina Yakovleva, as well as Iranian filmmakers Ahmad Reza Mo'tamedi and Masoud Madadi. The Golden Leaf for Best Film from the Audience's Perspective went to Mohajer Tohidparast and Fuad Javdan for the film 'Art Festival'.

Iran sees decline in hepatitis B after widespread vaccination

Social Desk

The acting head of the Iranian Center for Communicable Disease Control at the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education announced a significant decline in the prevalence of hepatitis B in Iran, thanks to the country's vaccination efforts.

Ghobad Moradi stated that prior to the vaccination program, the prevalence of hepatitis B was over 2.5%, but with the vaccination of all individuals under 37 years old, the prevalence of the disease

has dropped to nearly 1% across the entire population, ISNA reported.

Moradi pointed out that the National Hepatitis Prevention Week, observed from October 22 to 28, aims to prevent the disease by promoting public awareness and strengthening preventive programs, screening, and control of viral hepatitis.

He emphasized that viral hepatitis is one of the major public health problems worldwide, with millions of people contracting the disease every year, leading to severe consequences, includ-

ing death.

According to Moradi, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been focusing on hepatitis B and C in recent years, encouraging governments to step up efforts to combat the diseases.

He noted that the most effective intervention in controlling hepatitis B is vaccination, which has been successful in Iran, allowing the country to be listed among those that have eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HBV. Regarding hepatitis C, Moradi stated that the prevalence of the disease in



Iran is estimated to be around 0.1% to 0.3%, with the highest prevalence found among high-risk groups such as injecting drug users and individuals with high-risk behaviors. Although there is no vaccine for hep-

atitis C, Moradi emphasized that new and effective treatments have made it possible to control the disease, and Iran can work towards eliminating hepatitis C in the near future by expanding access to treatment.