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Iran, Russia sign MoU to enhance cultural, scientific collaboration

Gholamreza Amirkhani (2nd L), head of the National Library and Archives of Iran, and Vadim Duda (2nd R), director general of the Russian State Library, hold a memorandum of understanding signed on the sidelines of the BRICS National Libraries Summit, in Moscow, Russia, on December 10-11.



Arts & Culture Desk
 In a formal meeting, the National Library and Archives of Iran and the Russian State Library signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at expanding mutual cultural and scientific cooperation between the two institutions. The agreement was formalized

during a meeting between Gholamreza Amirkhani, the Head of the National Library and Archives of Iran, and Vadim Duda, the Director General of the Russian State Library, IRNA reported. During the meeting, both parties discussed the expansion of their cooperation in various fields, including cultural, scientific,

and research areas. They emphasized the importance of multifaceted cooperation in different contexts. Duda highlighted the significance of fostering cultural values across countries, stating, "A platform for the exchange of cultural values among countries has been provided, so that cultural narratives can resonate positive-

ly and equally with each other." He also addressed the exchange of valuable items in contact with the historical treasures of Iran in the Russian State Library and a program for transferring copies from Russia to the National Library of Iran. Amirkhani, welcoming the proposals from the Russian State Library, stressed the importance

of this cooperation, saying, "This memorandum of understanding will not only strengthen the cultural and scientific relations between Iran and Russia but can also serve as a model for expanding cooperation on a global scale and among BRICS countries." Key aspects of the memorandum include the exchange of

scientific and cultural resources, organizing joint literary and cultural events, and developing research projects at the bilateral level. Within the framework of this memorandum, both parties agreed to facilitate the exchange of specialists for work on historical documents and the development of cataloging and digitization of archives.

Iranian filmmaker wins top cinematography award at Knoxville fest



Farahbakhsh Farhidnia, a talented cinematographer, director, and editor from Iran's northern province of Mazandaran, was awarded the Best Cinematography Award at the Knoxville International Christian Film Festival in the United States. The festival's jury recognized Farhidnia for his outstanding work on the documentary 'I Won't Remain Alone,' directed by Yaser Talebi from Sari. The film tells the poignant story of an elderly couple in Mazandaran who, after five years, hear the heartbeat of their child once again, IRNA reported. The Knoxville International Christian Film Festival is a notable event in the realm of religious and international cinema, showcasing films from around the world that highlight spiritual and humanitarian values.

In addition to this recent accolade, Farhidnia was honored as the artist of the year in cinematography at the Mazandaran Cinema Celebration in 2023. His extensive portfolio includes contributions as a director, cinematographer, and editor across various cinematic works, documentaries, TV series, and programs, making him a prominent figure in the Mazandaran artistic community. The documentary, produced by Chosen Image under the management of Fariba Arab, has garnered several awards at various international festivals, including Best Documentary at the Saratov Sufferings International Film Festival of Documentary Drama in Russia (2021) and Best Short Documentary at the Today's Religion Film Festival in Italy (2021).

Iran's Talebi joins jury of TRT Int'l Documentary Awards in Turkey

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian documentary filmmaker Yaser Talebi from Mazandaran was invited to serve as a jury member for the 15th TRT International Documentary Awards in Turkey. The festival, known for its standing in the regional documentary scene, kicked off December 12 in Istanbul, showcasing a diverse array of films competing for various awards, ILNA reported. Talebi, a prominent figure in Iranian documentary cinema, joins the panel of judges that includes Imamura Keichi from Japan's NHK network, Turkish filmmaker Derviş Zaim, Turkish documentarian Zeynep Kececiler, and Bosnian journalist and researcher Arijana Saracevic.



Recognized for his impactful contributions to the documentary genre, Talebi was expressed gratitude by the festival organizers for his professional stature and body of work. He will also present his acclaimed film 'Destiny,' which will be screened out of competition. This documentary has previously received accolades, including the Best Documentary Award at the 63rd Krakow Film Festival in Poland. 'Destiny' tells the poignant story of a teenage girl's struggle to balance familial responsibilities, faith, and personal aspirations. Expressing his excitement about participating as a juror, Talebi remarked, "Being alongside international filmmakers and watching their works is a valuable experience." He also shared his enthusiasm for the special

screening of 'Destiny,' hoping that it will resonate with a new audience. The 15th TRT International Documentary Awards runs from December 12 to 15 in Istanbul, marking Talebi's fourth time serving on a jury at international festivals. Previously, he has been a juror at the International Outdoor Documentary Film Festival of China (OUTDOCS) in China in 2021, the Pambujan International Film Festival in the Philippines in 2022, and Diogenes in Tbilisi in 2022. Talebi's works have been showcased at various festivals, including IDFA, Berlinale, and HotDocs, and he is a graduate of cinema, as well as a member of the Iranian Documentary Filmmakers Association (IRDFA). Over the years, Talebi has accumulated numerous awards, such as the Best Audience Award at HotDocs Canada, Best Director at the 63rd Krakow Film Festival in 2023, and many more, totaling around 20 international accolades for his impactful storytelling and directorial prowess.

Future of Iran-Syria ...

Recent developments in Syria can be attributed to the convergence of several key factors. Russia's involvement in the Ukraine war and Moscow's significantly reduced military and political support for Damascus, the weakened position of Lebanese Hezbollah following recent conflicts with Israel, and Turkey's decisive support for Syrian opposition groups, including both terrorist groups and political opponents, along with undeniable deep public dissatisfaction with Syria's economic conditions, all contributed to this fundamental change. These factors, combined with the gradual erosion of forces loyal to the Damascus government, created conditions that allowed opposition groups to take control of the capital with unexpected

speed. The tripartite division has the potential for long-term conflicts. Unclear boundaries between zones of influence, disputes over natural resources, and regional power competition could lead to ongoing tensions. Additionally, this situation could serve as a model for the fragmentation of other countries in the region and create a wave of instability in the Middle East. As evident, the balance of power in the region has been severely affected by these developments. Turkey, as one of the main winners of these changes, is now in a better position to exert influence in Syria. Meanwhile, the resistance axis led by Tehran must update its capabilities and approaches in accordance with current developments to face

new threats likely to emerge soon from Turkey and other rival and enemy countries in our peripheral area. Syria's practical division creates significant security risks for neighboring countries - Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Refugee flows, cross-border violence, and potential sectarian tensions are likely to increase. Turkey, currently hosting over three million Syrian refugees, hopes that with Assad's fall, these refugees will return to their country. For Iraq and Lebanon, this instability could worsen their fragile political and economic situations. In the current circumstances, the international community must play a more active role in managing the Syrian crisis. The absence of a unified and internationally-recognized government

in Syria likely means continued sanctions, which could exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and create conditions for extremism to flourish. In this situation, efforts to create an inclusive governmental structure that considers the interests of all ethnic and religious groups appear necessary. Although the fall of the former regime and Assad's relinquishment of power was met with joy by Syrians dissatisfied with the status quo, it's unlikely that this political change will quickly lead to improved economic conditions in the country. In the coming months, as complex consequences of this instability emerge, we might witness positive and nostalgic feelings towards Assad's era and desires for his return to power! Overall, Syria's and the re-

gion's future depends on how this transition period is managed and the cooperation between regional and international actors. Success in this path requires a deep understanding of existing complexities and adopting a realistic and comprehensive approach. In these circumstances, our country, as one of the main allies of the Syrian nation and former political system, is naturally affected by developments in Damascus. However, our country can still preserve some of its interests in Syria by emphasizing and highlighting common ground between the two countries. Of course, there are many challenges in this path, the most important being the psychological and media warfare by resistance enemies who will try to shape an unfavorable image of Iran in

Syrian public opinion and thus prevent the preservation and development of ties between the Syrian and Iranian nations. Therefore, one of the Islamic Republic of Iran's most important approaches towards Syria should be utilizing media diplomacy and highlighting Iran's services and achievements in Syria and in serving the Syrian nation. We must recognize that today's Syria is no longer Assad's Syria, and naturally, our approaches, policies, and even expectations from this country should be adjusted according to current circumstances. Personally, I believe that in this new era, the country's cultural and media diplomacy should seriously focus on presenting a clear picture of Iran's historical role in Modern Syria.