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# Minister: Theater catalyst for national unity, educational growth

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, emphasized the role of theater as a dialogue-driven art form that fosters national unity. "Unity is fundamentally based on dialogue, and theater embodies this very essence," he made the remarks on the sidelines of the 43rd Fajr Theater Festival and after attending a performance of 'Border', directed by Neda Ghorbaniyan. The minister elaborated on the interconnectedness of performers and audiences, stating, "Those on stage and those watching are engaged in a dialogue. Sometimes, these conversations manifest verbally, while

internal dialogues unfold within the audience, linking with the on-stage interactions." He underscored that national cohesion is grounded in collective discourse, asserting that the performing arts, particularly theater, can significantly contribute to this goal. Salehi also highlighted the educational potential of theater, stating, "The art of theater creates numerous opportunities within the educational sector, enhancing students' confidence and fostering contemplation and dialogue." He acknowledged past periods when the ties between the education system and theater were stronger, expressing hope for a renewed partnership. "If we

critique the educational system today, theater can assist from multiple angles," he added. He called on educational professionals to leverage such cultural gatherings, emphasizing that student performances serve as valuable opportunities for learning and growth. "We at the ministry strive to facilitate this pathway and hope our colleagues in the educational sector respond positively to our invitation." **Iran country of cultural fusion** In a separate meeting on the sidelines of the festival, Atabak Naderi, head of the General Directorate of Dramatic Arts, welcomed the Kyrgyz theater group, highlighting Iran's rich cultural

tapestry. "Iran is a country of cultural fusion," Naderi stated, referencing the diverse ethnicities that enrich the nation from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. Naderi pointed out Kyrgyzstan's notable participation in recent festivals, praising the Iranian government's commitment to cultural diplomacy even amidst political challenges. "The festival is one of the largest in the region, and we take pride in hosting theater figures from various countries," he remarked. Kyrgyz representatives expressed gratitude for their invitation to the festival, noting their positive reception among Iranian audiences and their interest in future collaborations.



They highlighted the significance of their 24-year-old state theater and expressed hopes of inviting Iranian artists to their own biennial international festival.

The exchange underscores a growing cultural dialogue between Iran and Kyrgyzstan, reflecting a shared commitment to the arts and fostering mutual understanding through theater.

## Iranian animation 'In the Shadow of the Cypress' receives Oscar nomination

The nominations for the 2025 Oscars were unveiled, showcasing a diverse array of films, among which the animated short film 'In the Shadow of the Cypress' by Iranian filmmakers Hossein Mollayemi and Shirin Sohani stands out with its nomination for Best Animated Short Film. The lineup includes six that were presented at the Venice International Film Festival, which collectively garnered 17 nominations, IRNA reported. In addition to 'In the Shadow of the Cypress', the animated short 'Wander to Wonder' by Nina Gantz was also nominated in the Best Animated Short Film

category. Both films were part of the Orizzonti Short Film section at the 80th Venice International Film Festival 2023. In a notable achievement, 'Emilia Perez', a musical drama by Jacques Audiard about a Mexican drug lord, has garnered 13 nominations, setting a record for a non-English-language film. It is nominated for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best International Feature Film, among others, with leading actress Karla Sofia Gascon up for Best Actress in a Leading Role. 'The Brutalist', directed by Brady Corbet, also received ten nods, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor

for Adrien Brody. This film, which won the Silver Lion for Best Director at the 81st Venice International Film Festival, has also been recognized for its writing, supporting performances, and technical achievements. Walter Salles's 'I'm Still Here', which secured the award for Best Screenplay at the same festival, received three nominations: Best Picture, Best Actress for Fernanda Torres, and Best International Feature Film. Meanwhile, Pablo Larraín's 'Maria' garnered a nomination for Best Cinematography, and Tim Fehlbaum's 'September 5', which opened the Orizzonti Extra section at the festival, was nomi-

nated for Best International Feature Film. In addition, Gints Zilbalodis's 'Flow', which participated in the Venice Gap Financing Market at the 79th festival in 2022, has received nominations for both Best Animated Feature Film and Best International Feature Film. La Biennale di Venezia has extended its congratulations to all nominees and particularly to Isabella Rossellini, who is nominated for Best Actress in a Supporting Role for her performance in the film 'Conclave'. From the Middle East, the Palestinian-Israeli documentary 'No Other Land', which chronicles journalist Basel Adra's efforts

to safeguard his village from encroaching Israeli settlers, is nominated for Best Documentary Feature Film. This film has received significant acclaim since its premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival last year. The Oscar nominations, initially scheduled for announcement on January 17, were postponed due to the impact of the Los Angeles wildfires, prompting the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences to extend its voting period. The 97th Academy Awards are slated for March 2 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, with comedian Conan O'Brien set to host the event.

## Envoy: Tourism begets peace, economic growth, and global understanding

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Ambassador to Spain, Reza Zabib, announced the launch of Iran's pavilion at the 45th International Tourism Fair (FITUR 2025) in Madrid, which showcases authentic Iranian architecture. This initiative, he noted, aims to promote tourism as a means of fostering peace, countering Iranophobia, and bolstering the nation's economy, as reported by dolat.ir. Zabib highlighted the significant efforts of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in designing and executing the pavilion, which has drawn considerable attention from visitors. He added, "This pavilion not only reflects the rich architectural heritage of Iran but also serves as a gateway for international audiences to engage with our culture." The ambassador underscored the role of tourism in enhancing international relations and combating negative stereotypes about Iran. He asserted, "Tourism can significantly contribute to economic

growth and job creation, showcasing the true face of Iran to the world and opening new avenues for international cooperation." Zabib further emphasized that participation in international exhibitions like FITUR presents a unique opportunity to introduce Iran's historical, cultural, and natural attractions to a global audience. In concluding his remarks, Zabib stated, "As a multifaceted industry, tourism can play a crucial role in sustainable development, creating jobs and increasing national income, thereby contributing significantly to economic progress." He expressed hope that active participation in such prestigious events would pave the way for showcasing Iran's tourism potential effectively. The event, which runs from January 22 to January 26, 2025, was launched in the presence of Spain's King and Prime Minister, marking it as one of the most significant gatherings in the global tourism industry, ILNA reported. Represented by the Touring and Automobile Club of Iran, under the auspices of the Ministry of

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, the Iranian pavilion aims to highlight the nation's tourism, cultural, and historical offerings. The pavilion features 16 booths designed with inspiration from Iranian-Islamic arts and architecture, showcasing Iran's potential in various tourism sectors, including cultural tourism, ecotourism, health tourism, and handicrafts. Mohammad Hossein Soofi, CEO of the Touring and Automobile Club of Iran, emphasized that the pavilion serves as a hub for interaction between Iranian tourism stakeholders and international investors. The club is set to conduct diverse meetings and programs aimed at fostering collaboration and presenting special tour packages that promote sustainable tourism practices. During his visit to the exhibition, Ahad Biouteh, a representative of Ardebil, Namin, and Sareyn at Iran's Parliament, highlighted the importance of such international platforms in combating negative stereotypes about Iran. He expressed gratitude to the organizers, acknowledging their

efforts in allowing the private sector to play a crucial role in advancing tourism objectives. "The design of the Iranian booths ensures that Iran has a significant presence among participating nations," he remarked. Biouteh noted the visible interest from visitors at the Iranian pavilion, stating, "The Iranian-Islamic civilization has adorned this exhibition, attracting numerous inquiries about travel to our beloved country," suggesting a positive trend in tourism. He emphasized the need for continued efforts to showcase Iran's tourist attractions, not only to enhance tourism goals but also to counteract misconceptions about the nation. He further asserted, "Tourism is a valuable opportunity that should not be overlooked. All tourism professionals must actively participate and not wait for directives." Biouteh concluded by stressing the importance of promoting Iranian culture and attracting tourists, which he believes is essential for revenue generation and cultural advancement.

## Diplomacy; pathway for ...

Trump has previously emphasized that his major concern about Iran is its potential pursuit of a nuclear bomb. However, contrary to some personal opinions in Iran, the Islamic Republic has not deviated from its nuclear doctrine and, within this framework, has no intention of obtaining nuclear weapons. Tehran's nuclear program has been under the watchful eye of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the past two decades. Given this backdrop, Trump's new stance can be seen as a step toward both sides' desire to manage or ease tensions between Tehran and Washington and, if possible, open up dialogue to forge a new deal. The specifics of such talks and a potential deal remain under wraps, but it seems that the noteworthy aspect is both sides' assessment of past experiences and the costs incurred due to the persistence and occasional flare-ups in tensions between Iran and the US. Iranian government officials have also signaled their readiness in recent months to engage in negotiations with the US in a dignified manner and based on mutual respect to safeguard their national interests. The back-channel messaging began well before

Trump's inauguration, with media outlets acting as intermediaries, publishing articles and opinions of Masoud Pezeshkian and his government's willingness to interact with the world, including the US. For instance, one can refer to the publication of an opinion by Iran's Vice President for Strategic Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif in the prestigious American magazine Foreign Affairs. Ali Larijani, an advisor to Iran's Leader, also expressed Iran's readiness to negotiate a new nuclear deal with the incoming US administration in an interview with Ayatollah Khamenei's website weeks before Trump's inauguration. Trump has stated that he will confer with his cabinet members on Iran, indicating that, contrary to headline Iran opponents' beliefs, he does not have a pre-determined action plan against Iran without consulting his advisors. Such a stance, likely drawn from past experiences, has now set both sides on a new course. A course that seems to have diplomacy as its cornerstone. These assessments leading to a diplomatic route for easing tensions should be embraced, and it is worth recalling that a confrontational approach, in any form, will prove costly for both sides.

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