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Deputy minister: Education key to developing modern tourism industry

Arts & Culture Desk

Education serves as the driving force behind national development and has the potential to be a game-changer in the evolution of modern tourism, according to Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey, Deputy of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. Speaking at the second annual celebration of International Day of Education on February 2—held under the theme Artificial Intelligence and Education in Tourism—Mohseni-Bandpey underscored the invaluable role of education in fostering innovation and dynamism in the tourism sector. He extended his appreciation to veteran educators, tourism professionals, and industry institutions present at the event before exploring the symbiotic relationship between education and tourism, ISNA reported. “The impact of tourism, as a

modern industry, extends far beyond economic growth—it plays a crucial role in shaping political, social, and cultural landscapes, while also contributing to the psychological well-being of societies,” he stated. Calling it an identity-forming industry, he emphasized that tourism can be a powerful tool in countering Iranophobia. Mohseni-Bandpey further stressed that soft diplomacy and the presence of international tourists could act as effective measures in mitigating negative narratives against Iran. Turning his attention to local tourism enterprises, he pointed to the significant contributions of ecotourism ventures in empowering communities, citing them as prime examples of how tourism can drive socio-economic development. Describing education as the catalyst for transformation, he noted, “When education aligns with the tourism industry through an in-

novation-driven and wealth-generating approach, it fosters the birth of ideas and creativity.” He also discussed the importance of knowledge-based and ethics-oriented training programs, which he believes are fundamental in enhancing the expertise of industry professionals. In a forward-looking perspective, the deputy minister underscored the game-changing role of artificial intelligence in tourism education, stating that AI-driven advancements could streamline services and significantly enhance the industry’s capacities and capabilities. Addressing the importance of setting higher standards in tourism services, Mohseni-Bandpey reiterated that effective education has always been the backbone of progress in standardization and quality enhancement, reaffirming the ministry’s commitment to this principle. Concluding his remarks, he



Deputy of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey speaks at the second annual celebration of International Day of Education on February 2, 2025. ● IRNA

called upon industry experts and educators, stating, “We rely on your invaluable knowledge and experiences to further elevate the capacities and potentials of this sector.”

Envoy: Rudaki, poet who restored Persian literary greatness

Arts & Culture Desk

The Ambassador of Tajikistan to Iran, Nizomiddin Zohidi, highlighted the key role of Rudaki in reestablishing Persian as the language of poetry after two centuries of Arabic dominance. Speaking at a literary symposium on Rudaki’s legacy, organized by the Association for Iranian Studies and the Institute for Iran-Eurasia Studies, commonly known as IRAS at the National Library and Archives of Iran, Zohidi emphasized that while Rudaki was not the first Persian-language poet, he was the one who firmly established its prestige in the realm of poetry, IRNA reported. Zohidi pointed out that poets in the Tahirid and Saffarid eras had

already composed Persian poetry, with some, even having their own divans. However, Rudaki’s distinction lies in the fact that he showcased the power of Persian as a poetic language in an era when Arabic dominated the literary and cultural landscape of the Islamic Caliphate. “Before Rudaki, Arabic was the language of literature and scholarship in the lands under the Caliphate’s rule, including Iran. But he boldly reasserted Persian’s literary sovereignty,” he stated. The envoy elaborated on Rudaki’s stylistic versatility, noting that he composed in various poetic forms, including ballad, sonnet, and quatrain. His mastery over poetic meters and literary embellishments paved the way for generations of Persian poets



to follow. Touching upon the broader revival of Persian heritage during the Islamic era, Zohidi explained that in the first and second centuries A.H., Middle Iranian languages such as Pahlavi, Khwarazmian, Sogdian, and Bactrian gradually faded into histo-

ry. However, Iranian scholars and scribes of the second and third centuries A.H. achieved literary excellence in Arabic while integrating pre-Islamic Iranian traditions into their works. This, he argued, ensured the continuation of Persian cultural identity within an Arabic framework. A parallel effort, he noted, was led by Ibn al-Muqaffa and his contemporaries, who translated classical Iranian texts directly into Arabic prose. Some poets, including Aban al-Lahiqi, went a step further by rendering legendary Persian works. Zohidi described the second and third centuries A.H. as a period of Persian intellectual resurgence in Arabic. However, he stressed that the full revival of Persian as a literary language began in the

fourth century A.H. under the Samanids, to whom Rudaki belonged. “During this era, Persian literature was no longer just an intellectual undercurrent within Arabic—it reclaimed its position as the language of Iranian identity,” he added. Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi, President of the Association for Iranian Studies, credited Rudaki with several crucial contributions to Persian poetry, including the invention of the quatrain, the integration of epic and mythological themes, and the development of the Khorasani style. Jaafari-Dehaghi, also underscored Rudaki’s role in refining Persian poetic meters, noting that while Pahlavi poetry followed a syllabic pattern, Arabic prosody later influenced Persian verse. However, Rudaki played a crucial role in adapting and

‘Persianizing’ these metrical structures, ensuring that Persian poetry maintained its unique rhythm and cadence. Philosopher and literary scholar Asghar Dadbeh argued that despite the Arab conquest, Iran’s cultural continuity remained unbroken. “Even in the first and second centuries A.H., texts were written in Pahlavi, demonstrating that Iran’s intellectual tradition persisted,” he noted. Rudaki, flourishing in the third century A.H., benefited from the accumulated knowledge of the preceding generations. Dadbeh likened cultural identity to a triangle, with national language and literature, history and mythology, and philosophical wisdom forming its three sides—of which language and literature hold the greatest significance.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran’s ‘sun is coming?’ at three international festivals

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran’s short screenplay ‘sun is coming?’, penned by Atefeh Salehi and Saeid Ghasemi, received an honorary distinction in the Southern California Screenplay Competition. Also, it has made its way to the semifinals of two other American festivals—the New York New Stories Screenplay Contest and the SF Indie Fest Screenplay Competition. The Southern California Screenplay Competition, established in 2017, aims to champion emerging writers by spotlighting innovative and impactful storytelling. Attracting numerous submissions from across the globe each year, the competition provides a platform for screenwriters who craft profound, human-centered narratives. The latest edition took place on December 23, 2024.

Meanwhile, the New York New Stories Screenplay Contest, founded in 2019, has rapidly gained credibility as a prominent platform for independent and creative screenplays. By bringing together writers, filmmakers, and producers, the festival fosters professional networking and collaboration. The final results were announced on January 1, 2025. On the West Coast, the SF Indie Fest Screenplay Competition, running since 2000, stands as one of America’s longest-standing festivals dedicated to independent films and screenplays. Known for recognizing groundbreaking works and giving a voice to unconventional storytellers, the festival will take place in San Francisco from February 6 to 16, 2025. Set in a refugee camp in Dubai, ‘sun is coming?’ follows an Afghan father’s relentless struggle to rescue his



children, who remain trapped under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Salehi, an accomplished filmmaker, has previously directed four short films and written multiple screenplays. Ghasemi, who has garnered international recognition with his debut short film, is currently preparing for his second directorial venture.