

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of restoring Iran's true place on the global stage and stressed the need for global peace and friendship to unlock the country's tourism potential. He made the statements at the opening of the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition on February 11. The event, which runs through February 14, brought together representatives from several countries, including the UAE, Turkey, Russia, and Brazil, to showcase Iran's vast potential in tourism, president.ir reported. Pezeshkian highlighted that despite the challenges, Iran's diverse culture, rich heritage, and human warmth provide a strong foundation for the country to thrive as a major player in global tourism. "Iran's pride is tied to our people and the land. We are committed to restoring Iran to its rightful place in the world," Pezeshkian stated, adding that tourism could play a vital role in this mission. Pezeshkian pointed out that for many visitors, experiencing Iran firsthand often dispels the misconceptions painted by international

media. "Those who visit Iran understand that the narratives against our country are not true. They see the hospitality, unity, and beauty that reside within this land," he said. The president also said that travel enriches individuals in various fields, including science, economics, industry, humanitarian efforts, politics, and culture. He referenced the United Nations' designation of 2025 as the Year of Peace and Security, asserting that such ideals cannot be achieved through violence and discrimination. Instead, he stressed the importance of creating conditions for co-existence. Pezeshkian affirmed that his administration is committed to supporting tourists as well as investors in the tourism sector, pledging to eliminate legal barriers that hinder the industry's growth. He also expressed Iran's

Friendship, peace key to boost tourism growth: Pezeshkian

Iran seeks to restore its real status in world



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at the inauguration of the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, held at the Tehran International Exhibition Center on February 11, 2025.

readiness to collaborate with foreign investors in cultural, industrial, and economic initiatives, emphasizing the need for expanded cooperation at both national and international levels. In his remarks, the president

made it clear that Iran seeks peace and tranquility with its neighbors in the West Asia region. However, he pointed out that certain global powers continue to violate human rights across various parts of the world.

The president asked: How can those who bomb thousands of innocent people claim to be defenders of human rights? Addressing the suffering of the people in Gaza, he argued that children and

women do not pose a threat to international security; rather, they are the true victims of wars fought under the pretext of combating terrorism. In conclusion, President Pezeshkian expressed his hope for peace and coexistence for all people, urging everyone to work towards building a better world where humanity can live together in harmony. Reza Selehi Amiri, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, also spoke at the event, underscoring the country's enormous potential in various tourism sectors. He noted that with Iran's rich historical, cultural, and natural attractions, the country has all the makings of a top-tier tourism destination. "We are fully committed to attracting 15 million tourists by next year. In fact, we've already seen an 18% increase in international visitors, reflecting the growing

global interest in Iran," the minister remarked. He added that the country's vast tourism infrastructure is rapidly expanding, with significant projects underway to accommodate both domestic and international visitors. "From historic sites to coastal resorts, Iran offers something for every traveler," he said. The minister also recognized the role of the private sector in driving tourism growth and noted that the government is working to remove barriers for investors in the sector. He called for greater cooperation between all stakeholders to ensure Iran can fully capitalize on its tourism potential. Both Pezeshkian and the tourism minister emphasized the importance of national unity in achieving the country's tourism goals. The president called for solidarity, stating, "Only through unity can we achieve the progress we seek for Iran and for our tourism industry." Pezeshkian's remarks were a clear call for collective effort, encouraging Iranians from all backgrounds to come together and share their country's rich cultural heritage with the world, while simultaneously building a more peaceful and interconnected global community.

Fajr Film Festival winners announced 'Call Me Ziba' triumphs

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The 43rd Fajr Film Festival, a major event in Iran's cinematic calendar, concluded with a memorable ceremony and awarding the winners at Tehran's Milad Tower on Monday. The festival, which began on January 31, celebrated the finest in Iranian film, drawing attention to both emerging talent and established icons of the industry, IRNA reported. The coveted Crystal Simorgh for Best Film was awarded to 'Call Me Ziba', directed by Rasoul Sadr Ameli and produced by Maziar Hashemi. The drama about identity and self-discovery captivated audiences and stood out amidst strong competition. "We are thrilled with this recognition, which reflects the hard work and dedication of the entire team," Sadr Ameli commented following the win. As anticipated, 'Prophet Moses', directed by Ebrahim Hatamikia, dominated the festival with an impressive five Crystal Simorgh awards. These included Best Supporting Actor, Costume Design, Art Direction, Makeup, and Visual Effects, underscoring the film's multifaceted excellence. In addition to the Best Film award, 'Prophet Moses' emerged as a clear frontrunner in the technical categories. Meanwhile, 'People's Child' by Mahmoud Karimi and 'North from Southwest' by Hamid Zarganejad were also among the standout films. Both productions secured



three awards each. 'People's Child' took home honours for Best New Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Editing, while 'North from Southwest' triumphed in the categories of Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Cinematography. The latter film's cinematographer, Hamid Ghaffari, was especially lauded for his breathtaking visuals. The Best First Film Award went to Saeed Khani, producer of 'Raha,' a film that explores the complexities of contemporary Iranian society. In the short film category, 'Kuti,' directed by Soheila Pourmohammadi, received the Honorary Diploma for Literary Adaptation, while Nadereh Sadat Serki's 'Claimant' won the Crystal Simorgh for Best Short Film. The documentary section was equally competitive, with Nima Mahdian's 'A Handful of Dust' clinching Best Director, and Jafar Sadeghi's 'The Apprentice' named Best Documentary Film. 'Dolphin Boy 2,' directed by Mohammad Amin Hamedani and Mohammad

Kheirandish, triumphed as the Best Animation. While the festival's awards were the highlight, the event was not without its controversies. A considerable amount of attention was given to the festival's poster, which featured a design inspired by Roghayeh Chehreh-Azad's portrayal in 'Mother' by Ali Hatami. The poster faced widespread criticism, leading the festival organizers to promise a redesign after acknowledging the feedback. Furthermore, the festival saw the return of prominent filmmakers such as Ebrahim Hatamikia and Rasoul Sadr Ameli, who brought their new works to the competition. The judging panel included familiar names such as director Kamal Tabrizi, critic Reza Dorostkar, and filmmaker Alireza Raeisian. However, the panel faced some disruption when actor Bahram Radan withdrew from his judging duties midway through the festival, leaving the panel to proceed with six members.

Kermanshah named Cultural Capital of Asian Cities for 2025

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Iran's Kermanshah was designated as the Cultural Capital of Asian Cities for the year 2025 by the Secretariat of the Asian Mayors' Council. This announcement was made by Kermanshah's Mayor Nader Noroozi during a press conference held on February 11 at the tourism exhibition in Tehran, IRNA reported. Noroozi explained that Kermanshah's selection was largely due to its active participation in various cultural events throughout 2021. He added that approximately 100 cities are part of the Asian Mayors' Council, with 11 members from Iran, while the remaining 89 cities hail from other Asian nations, including China and Turkey. "The aim of the Asian Cities Council is to facilitate the exchange of information among cities throughout Asia," Noroozi stated. He emphasized Kermanshah's rich historical heritage, diverse ecosystems, and ethnic variety as key factors in its recognition as a cultural hub. "We can showcase our city on the Asian continent," he added, highlighting the region's culinary diversity and its status as a creative city. Urban diplomacy, according to Noroozi, plays a crucial role in fostering social and economic development. He pointed out that Kermanshah has successfully positioned itself among cities known for their culinary creativity, boasting an impressive array of 100 traditional dishes. As the largest city in western Iran, Kermanshah is also a significant cultural center, with over 4,000 registered historical sites. Hassan Fartousi, Secretary-General of the National Commission for UNESCO in Iran, underlined the importance of global networks, including the Creative Cities initiative, which encompasses domains such as film, tourism, and cuisine. He highlighted that Iran is home to two creative food cities: Rasht and Kermanshah. "Kermanshah is now not only active among



UNESCO cities regionally and internationally but has also emerged as a cultural focal point among Asian cities," Fartousi added, commending the city for effectively presenting itself on global platforms. He expressed gratitude for the efforts of the municipal authorities in promoting cultural initiatives, stating that the commitment of Kermanshah's leaders and the concerns of its cultural advocates have culminated in this prestigious recognition. Before the press conference, attendees enjoyed a traditional Kurdish program accompanied by local music. Following this, both the UNESCO Secretary-General and the Kermanshah Mayor unveiled various cultural initiatives, including a certification for restaurants that offer at least 50% traditional Iranian dishes, and a promotional video on local cuisine. Hashem Darvishi, the head of Kermanshah's City Council, also praised the media for their role in promoting the region's tourist attractions. He attributed Kermanshah's selection to its historical caves, the presence of the ancient Kurdish ethnic group, and the growing cultural ties with Kurdish, Lur, and Lor communities abroad. Darvishi elaborated on Kermanshah's rich artistic heritage, music, and linguistic diversity. "When viewed through a social and anthropological lens, both Shia and Sunni communities coexist harmoniously here," he noted, referencing the city's historical significance as a connector between Asia and Europe along the Silk Road.