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Vol. 7771 ● Sunday, Feb. 16, 2025 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

## Global narratives unbound for youths

# 26th Int'l Storytelling Festival kicks off in Yazd

### Arts & Culture Desk

The 26th International Storytelling Festival began on February 15 in Yazd, welcoming local and international storytellers at the city's central hall. This event, which runs until February 18, features 98 storytellers from various provinces and several foreign countries, sharing their tales with children, teenagers, and families, IRNA reported. During the opening ceremony, Yazd Governor General Mohammad Reza Babaei praised the establishment of the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

He recalled the venue's development from a children's library to its current role as a nurturing hub for young minds. Babaei remarked, "I remember when this place was a children's library. Now, it fosters creativity and growth." The provincial official also reflected on the impacts of the institute on his own family. "My child, now a surgeon, was a member of this institution during school. He learned many arts here, becoming an accomplished calligrapher. These achievements are part of his development through the institute." Babaei stressed the significance of storytelling, describing it as "a great

blessing." He noted that storytelling has been integral to human history, adding, "From the dawn of time, people have lived through stories. Even today, no one can escape their influence. Stories encapsulate complexities and hardships in a simple, relatable manner." In closing, he expressed gratitude for the festival, highlighting its role in introducing storytelling to young audiences. He thanked all those involved in organizing this cultural event. Plus, winners of the festival's online categories, including environmental, podcast, and 90-second storytelling parts, were announced.



## Int'l Resistance Film Festival rails against global cinematic silence on Gaza war



### Arts & Culture Desk

The International Resistance Film Festival sharply criticized the lack of response from prominent global film festivals regarding the ongoing violence in Gaza. Secretary Jalal Ghaffari voiced concerns over the silence surrounding the tragic loss of life, stating that over 50,000 innocent women, children, and civilians have been killed in the region over the past year, according to the official website of the event. With 500 cinematic works centered on resistance submitted to this year's festival, Ghaffari said that "Resistance cinema will be the voice of the oppressed worldwide." During a recent meeting with

media activists from Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, and Armenia, Ghaffari reflected on the festival's 40-year legacy in promoting cinema as a tool for resistance. He pointed out that the festival stands out as the only international event dedicated to "supporting the oppressed." He added that cinema serves as a crucial cultural instrument for sharing powerful messages with the world, yet lamented that colonial powers have exploited it for their own inhumane agendas. Ghaffari condemned the indifference of major film festivals to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. He noted, "No international cinematic institution has addressed these atrocities." The festival aims to provide a platform for

those silenced by oppression, offering an alternative narrative to the mainstream portrayal of victims in the film industry. He criticized the manipulation of cinematic narratives by governments that seek to distort reality, emphasizing the festival's commitment to amplifying marginalized voices. Ghaffari expressed his vision for a future rooted in humanity, asserting, "The world of tomorrow will be built on kindness and justice." Following Ghaffari's remarks, Esrafil Kaliji, head of the festival's International Committee, acknowledged the valuable contributions of media activists at Cinema Museum of Iran. He stressed that the concept of resistance embodies one of the highest human values, which must be upheld within the film industry. Kaliji articulated a clear stance against the prevailing global hegemonic order, asserting that "Resistance Cinema is determined to break this barrier." Kaliji urged international media professionals to embrace their role as truth-seeking journalists. He expressed confidence that they would align with the cause of resistance, helping to disseminate its humanitarian message across the globe.

## Minister urges digital innovation in tourism at Tehran exhibit

### Arts & Culture Desk

The 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition served as a platform for Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri to explore the integration of advanced technologies in the tourism sector. During his visit, he urged stakeholders to adopt artificial intelligence, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) to enhance the country's tourism offerings, IRNA reported. The minister engaged with various exhibitors, emphasizing the critical role of digital solutions in showcasing Iran's diverse attractions. He inspected an AI-powered avatar capable of answering tourism-related inquiries, as well as smart registration systems using NFC technology. These innovations, he noted, are vital for modernizing the industry. Salehi Amiri began his tour by visiting booths representing free trade zones, including Kish, Qeshm, Aras, Arvand, Anzali, and Makou. He met with leaders of these regions, stressing the importance of fostering collaboration and enhancing tourism interactions. His itinerary also included a stop at the booth of university and student associations, where he listened to the concerns of young activists and explored handicrafts developed by students. This engagement underlined the need for educational institutions to contribute to the tourism landscape. He conversed with the head of the tourism products department, discussing the importance of leveraging local and rural



capacities for sustainable tourism development. An agreement was also signed between the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Ardebil Province and the Kish Free Zone. The objective of the memorandum is to establish direct flights between Kish and Ardebil, facilitate tourist exchanges, and share best practices in tourism. His visit also took him to the booths of medical universities such as Tehran, Iran, Shahid Beheshti, Isfahan, and Jundishapur Ahvaz, where he learned about the potential for health tourism. He emphasized the necessity of developing a comprehensive health tourism strategy to attract two million health tourists and generate \$6 billion in foreign revenue. At the Khuzestan cultural booth, the minister immersed himself in the region's traditions, enjoying local hospitality with bitter coffee and sweet tea. He reviewed investment opportunities in water tourism, presented by the Khuzestan Water and Power Organization. These included various tourist complexes and public-private partnership projects aimed at enhancing the region's tourism infrastructure.

## Iranian Film Day celebrates cultural ties in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Iranian Film Day took place on February 12 in the city of Konjic, Bosnia and Herzegovina to enhance cultural exchange and introduce local audiences to the rich tapestry of Iranian cinema. This event, organized in collaboration with various cultural and cinematic institutions, aimed to enhance cultural exchange and introduce local audiences to the rich tapestry of Iranian cinema, ILNA reported. The Iranian Film Day unfolded as part of the Winter Cultural Festival in Konjic, showcasing a selection of four cinematic works suitable for all ages. The event featured the screening of the acclaimed film 'Romanticism of

Emad and Tuba,' alongside animated films 'A Passenger from Ganora' and 'Dolphin Boy.' The director of the Konjic Cultural Center praised Iranian cinema as a leading force on the global stage, producing captivating films and animations. He described the event as a unique opportunity for the people of Konjic to deepen their understanding of Iranian culture. Mohammad Hossein Ansari, the cultural attaché, expressed gratitude to the hosts for their efforts in strengthening the friendly relations between Iran and Bosnia. The event drew a warm reception from cultural enthu-

siasts, with the screenings complemented by clips showcasing Iran's achievements across various fields. In conjunction with the film day, a grand celebration was held at the Iranian embassy in Sarajevo to commemorate the Islamic Revolution's anniversary. Guests received a warm welcome from Ambassador Abuzar Ebrahimi Torkaman, who conveyed greetings from the Iranian government and people. During his address, Ebrahimi Torkaman emphasized the commitment of Iran to fostering peace and stability worldwide. He noted, "Today, the world needs lasting peace more than ever, which

has unfortunately been misused by some powerful entities." He reiterated Iran's readiness to extend friendship to all who uphold ethical and humanitarian principles across the globe. The cultural attaché also enriched the event with a bilingual infographic exhibition showcasing the achievements of the Islamic Revolution, alongside displays of Iranian handicrafts and arts. The exhibition, located at the cultural attaché's office in Sarajevo, included the release of a booklet titled 'Iran: A Magnificent Land' in Bosnian, further promoting Iranian culture during this significant occasion.

