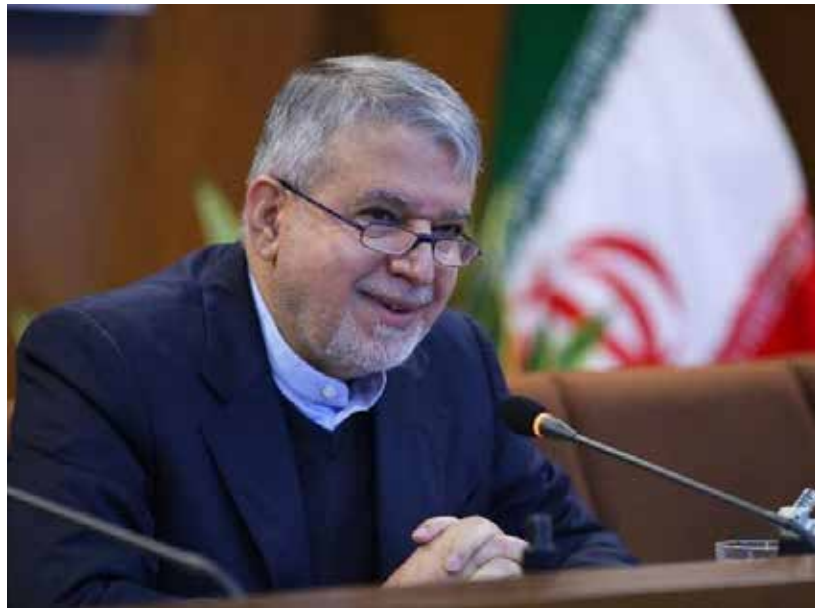




# Iran to deploy tourism, handicraft attachés in embassies: *Minister*



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri announced a plan to deploy tourism and handicraft attachés in select embassies worldwide. This initiative, which is set to be executed in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is expected to target key countries to promote exports and support the labor force in the sector. Salehi Amiri elaborated on this plan in an interview with ILNA, revealing that discussions had already been held with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "We have had multiple meetings with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, where we

presented both written and oral proposals to establish specialized efforts in promoting handicraft exports in several countries," Salehi Amiri said. "These countries include those in the Nowruz region, the Persian Gulf, as well as India, China, Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Russia." One of the key issues the minister raised was the lack of job security for workers in Iran's handicraft sector, particularly women. "Among the 573,000 individuals working in this field, 80 percent are women," he explained. "In addition, around one million housewives are producing handicrafts from their homes, contributing to the sector." The minister also pointed to

the challenges in marketing and exporting Iranian handicrafts. "Producers lack the necessary resources for marketing, and it is essential that the government steps in to support them," he said. "We must help these artisans develop products that meet modern tastes. For example, some modern Iranian garments now feature traditional embroidery, a great example of the blend of tradition with current fashion." Salehi Amiri highlighted the issue of foreign exchange constraints, which is preventing many artisans from obtaining the raw materials needed for production. "We need to address the bottleneck caused by currency restrictions. Our

handicraft sector is looking for solutions to make the export process more efficient," he stated. In addition to addressing these internal challenges, Salehi Amiri noted the importance of promoting the Persian rug industry, which, although not under the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts at the moment, may eventually fall under its jurisdiction. "We are currently in discussions with the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade to bring the National Carpet Organization under our ministry," he revealed. "There are technical issues that still need to be resolved, but we are hopeful for a positive outcome."

## Fajr festival unites Armenia, Iran through shared musical heritage



### Arts & Culture Desk

The 40th International Fajr Music Festival has provided a platform for deepening cultural ties between Armenia and Iran, with a memorable performance by Armenian musicians Levon Tevanyan and Aram Asatryan. Armenia's Ambassador to Iran, Grigor Hakobyan, who attended the concert alongside Ahmad Sadri, the head of the Music Office at the Iranian Ministry of Culture, praised the event as a vital step toward

enhancing bilateral cultural and artistic relations. Speaking to IRNA, Hakobyan stressed that there are no limitations on developing cultural and artistic collaborations between the two nations. "Such joint events allow both countries to appreciate each other's arts and culture, and I believe they bring us closer," he added. He noted that the performance, which blended Iranian and Armenian music, offered a beautiful opportunity for Armenian musicians to showcase

national and folk music alongside the rich musical traditions of Iran. "It was a wonderful fusion," Hakobyan said, "and the similarities between Iranian and Armenian melodies were striking." The ambassador expressed hope that similar programs will be held more frequently in the future, as there are no barriers to further artistic cooperation. "We're already working on laying the groundwork for more cultural initiatives, and soon you will see these ideas come to life," Hakobyan added. Meanwhile, Sadri discussed the importance of musical dialogue between the two nations, citing the shared presence of the duduk, a traditional Armenian woodwind instrument, as an example of the common musical ground between Iran and Armenia. "The presence of duduk in

both countries makes for an interesting exchange of musical dialogue, especially with Iran's western regions, where such instruments are also popular," Sadri explained. Sadri, who is also working closely with Hakobyan, revealed plans to organize future musical festivals and joint performances. "Our initial talks have been promising, and we hope to collaborate on festivals that bring together musicians from both cultures," he said. "This is just the beginning." During the concert, Tevanyan and Asatryan showcased works by famed Armenian composer Komitas, along with traditional Armenian folk pieces and medieval Armenian music. Tevanyan expressed his admiration for the Fajr Festival, noting the significance of being invited to perform at such a well-regarded event.

## Iranian short film 'Ant' sweeps three awards at India's Paridrishya festival

### Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'Ant' triumphed at the Paridrishya Film Festival, in India, winning all three major awards in the main competition. Directed, written, and produced by Farhad Shantiaei, the film earned widespread recognition at the festival, which took place on February 1-2, 2025, in Karnataka, India, ILNA reported. 'Ant', Shantiaei's directorial debut, was nominated for three major awards in the festival's primary categories. The film went on to win Best Actor for Mehdi Ghorbani, Best Screenplay for Shantiaei himself, and

Best Sound Design, awarded to Sadegh Nikfarman, Omid Mohammadi-Pour, and Hossein Mashal. The 30-minute film, which portrays the emotional journey of a deaf young man who regains his hearing only to retreat into silence after hearing the secrets of his closest relatives, has earned praise for its poignant storytelling and powerful performances. Ghorbani's role as the protagonist, struggling with the newfound burden of his hearing, played a key part in the film's success. Following its international debut and a string of accolades at both domestic and international festivals, Ant



is set to be screened soon in the Art and Experience section of Iranian theaters. This win at Paridrishya Film Festival comes after 'Ant' also clinched two awards at the 8th Human Cinema Festival held in Chelyabinsk, Russia, in April 2024. At the Russian festival, the film won the Best Foreign Film award in the main competition and was also honored with the Best Feature Film award by the student jury.

## Iran's health official warns of polio threat from neighboring countries

### Social Desk

Iran's Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raisi expressed concerns over the growing risk of polio entering Iran from neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the disease remains a significant challenge. Raisi highlighted the rapid increase in polio cases in these countries, signaling an urgent need for enhanced vaccination efforts across Iran, especially in high-risk areas. Raisi explained that the proximity of Iran to two polio-endemic nations—Afghanistan and Pakistan—places the country at constant risk. The ongoing flow of both legal and illegal migrants between these countries

and Iran contributes to the danger, with frequent border crossings raising the likelihood of the virus spreading into Iran. "Given the political upheavals in Afghanistan in recent years and the persistent circulation of the virus in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, the threat of polio entering Iran has escalated," Raisi said. He pointed to a dramatic 12-fold increase in polio cases in Pakistan and a fourfold rise in Afghanistan in 2024, compared to the previous year. The deputy minister also emphasized the importance of Iran's long-standing polio eradication strategy, noting that supplementary immunization campaigns, carried out since 1994,

have been crucial in maintaining Iran's status as a polio-free country since 2000. He confirmed that these year's vaccination efforts will continue in the form of active, house-to-house campaigns aimed at children under five in high-risk areas. These efforts will employ oral polio vaccine (OPV) drops, and both Iranian and non-Iranian children in the targeted regions will be vaccinated. "The first phase of this year's campaign took place between January 4 and 6 in 22 medical universities across provinces such as Sistan and Baluchestan, Hormozgan, South Kerman, and Khuzestan," Raisi added. "The second phase is underway from February 15 to 17."



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