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# Minister: Cultural weeks invaluable opportunity to strengthen bilateral ties

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, said that holding cultural weeks is an invaluable opportunity to strengthen bilateral interactions. He made the remarks during the opening of the Qatar Cultural Week initiative, where he stressed the potential of mutual cultural events to enhance understanding and collaboration between the two nations, IRNA reported. The Qatar Cultural Week, runs from February 26 to 28. "The cultural relations between our two countries are rooted in brotherhood and friendship," Salehi stated, expressing

hope that this event would serve as a turning point for cultural cooperation. The Qatar Cultural Week, featuring over 100 Iranian artists and athletes, is showcasing Iranian culture, art, and traditions across more than 30 disciplines, further enriching the cultural landscape of the region. Salehi underscored the importance of reciprocal cultural weeks, particularly in light of the significant cultural activities held in Doha in the past year. Such events, he argued, play a crucial role in the context of Islamic countries and the broader region. He called for the signing of a memorandum for the sister-city relationship

between museums in Iran and Qatar, emphasizing the need for a practical program to advance various aspects of cultural collaboration, including cinematic partnerships, artist exchanges, and shared exhibitions. Moreover, Salehi expressed his desire for the Qatar Cultural Week to be held in Iran soon, hoping it would mirror the success of the previous Iranian cultural showcase in Doha. He extended an invitation to the Qatari cultural leaders to visit Iran and explore its rich cultural offerings, advocating for research initiatives alongside operational activities to better understand the cultural capacities of both nations.

As a focal point of this cultural dialogue, Salehi spotlighted the Iranian film industry, noting the high caliber of its directors, producers, and actors who have made a significant impact both regionally and globally. This acknowledgment underscores the importance of cinema as a pivotal aspect of Iran's cultural identity. During his visit to Qatar, Salehi also toured the Sheikh Faisal Museum, where he reiterated the necessity of enhancing cultural interactions between the two countries. He noted that developing museum collaborations and organizing joint exhibitions are vital for fostering deeper cultural connections.



## Russian conductor: Iranian musicians exemplify extraordinary skill, dedication



## Arts & Culture Desk

Russian conductor Yaroslav Zaboyarkin praised Iranian musicians for their adaptability and dedication to excellence. He added that "they demonstrated remarkable adaptability and commitment to refinement," IRNA reported. The recent joint concert between Russia and Iran showcased the high caliber of Iranian musicians, underscoring their dedication to artistic excellence and cultural exchange. The concert, performed

by the New Chamber St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, took place on Monday at Tehran's Vahdat Hall. Conducted by Zaboyarkin, the event featured solo performances by cellist Dmitry Ganenko and was part of the 'Musical Bridge: Tehran-St. Petersburg' project. This initiative, supported by the Russian Presidential Foundation for Cultural Initiatives, seeks to deepen cultural relations between the two nations through music. Dmitry Ganenko, who also managed the project, described the event as the second installment of a broader cultural exchange, following an initial concert in Russia last year. He said that while preparations for the concert were intensive, "the success of the performance proves that both Russian and Iranian musicians were well-prepared for this collaboration." Ganenko emphasized that the very

name of the initiative, 'Musical Bridge: Tehran-St. Petersburg,' encapsulates its essence—fostering artistic integration between the two cultures. He further underlined that in light of the current geopolitical climate, "strengthening cultural ties between our countries is of utmost importance, and music serves as a powerful unifying force." The concert featured 52 musicians, with equal representation from Iran and Russia. Ganenko, who took on the role of cello soloist, commended Iranian performers for their responsiveness. "When the conductor gives an instruction, Iranian musicians immediately implement it," he observed, describing the collaboration as an enriching experience. Beyond the concert itself, the Russian musicians expressed a keen interest in Iranian composers. Ganenko cited his admiration for contemporary Iranian composer Behzad Abdi and his familiarity with Iranian maestro Ali Rahbari,

whose contributions to classical music have been well-recognized in Russia. Zaboyarkin provided insights into the background of the New Chamber St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, a relatively young ensemble formed to broaden the scope of orchestral performances in Russia. While the orchestra is only five years old, its members are seasoned musicians drawn from prominent Russian symphony orchestras, with extensive experience in international collaborations. Reflecting on the significance of this partnership, Zaboyarkin noted that joint rehearsals underscored the potential for a "shared musical language" between Russian and Iranian artists. He expressed optimism about future engagements, stating, "We are eager to continue collaborating, exploring both classical and contemporary compositions from our respective traditions." The performance program featured

a distinguished repertoire, including Mikhail Glinka's 'Kamarinskaya' and 'Valse-fantaisie,' Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's 'Nocturne' and 'Variations on a Rococo Theme' for cello, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 'Symphony No. 40,' and Behzad Abdi's 'Elegy' for cello. The event drew distinguished attendees, including ambassadors from Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan, as well as key figures from Iran's Ministry of Culture and the Rudaki Foundation. Ardavan Jafarian, International Affairs Adviser at the Rudaki Foundation, highlighted the strategic role of cultural diplomacy. "Artistic exchanges serve as a catalyst for strengthening international relations," he added, noting that such initiatives elevate Iranian musicians' exposure to global audiences while fostering a deeper appreciation of Russian classical traditions in Iran.

## AI; new tool in service of resistance cinema



Mohammad Ali Shojaei Fard

## Arts & Culture Desk

The 2025 International Resistance Film Festival has made history by marking the first official presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in cinematic productions, with a dedicated section showcasing the potential of this emerging technology. Mohammad Ali Shojaei Fard, Assistant Secretary of the festival, highlighted AI's growing role in enhancing resistance-themed cinema and emphasized the importance of overcoming

external sanctions and strengthening local infrastructure to fully harness its capabilities, according to the festival's official website. Speaking on the topic of "Artificial Intelligence in the Service of Resistance Cinema: An Opportunity or a Challenge?," Shojaei Fard called AI a "great opportunity" for producing films focused on themes of resistance. He explained that AI has already begun to play a role in shaping the future of cinematic production within the resistance genre, which spans documentaries, short films, and feature films. "This year, for the first time, we are proud to have a section of the festival dedicated entirely to artificial intelligence," Shojaei Fard noted. "The Resistance Film Festival has always provided a platform for films with powerful resistance narratives, and now, this new technological tool will further support and amplify these messages." Shojaei Fard revealed that the use of AI in resistance cinema has been underway for several years, but it has now reached a stage where it can significantly contribute to the produc-

tion of feature films. Looking forward, he expressed confidence that AI will be central to future cinematic projects, predicting that it would soon be involved in the creation of high-quality, feature-length films. However, the Assistant Secretary also emphasized the need for local development to support this technological evolution. "To maximize the benefits of AI, two key steps must be taken," Shojaei Fard added. "First, officials must prioritize the development of the necessary technical infrastructure. Second, professionals in the field need to actively work on localizing the technology to reduce reliance on foreign tools." By doing so, he argued, AI can be turned into a strategic asset for what he referred to as "soft warfare," using the power of film to challenge global narratives and promote resistance movements. This year's festival serves as a significant step in the intersection of cinema and cutting-edge technology, setting the stage for a new era in resistance media production.

## Iranian film awarded at UAE festival

## Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian film 'Bruise-Lips Tulip', directed and produced by Mehrshad Karkhani, has clinched the top prize at the 9th Exposure Festival in the United Arab Emirates, winning the Best Cinematic Arts Award and a cash prize of 3,000 dirhams. The festival, which celebrates cultural and artistic achievements, is set to take place from February 20 to 26, 2025, in Sharjah, Mehr News Agency reported. Karkhani's film competed in the Best Cinematic Arts category, emerging victorious among numerous entries. The film, which premiered in the summer of this year under the "Art and Experience" cinema group, features performances by a talented ensemble cast, including Mohsen Ghafari, Mahtab Navidi, Shakila Samavati, Sougal Khaleghi, Hossein Zeynali, Saba Fadaei, Hamid Rahimi, Amir Navidi, Bashir Edrisi, Roya Mohammadi, and Mehdi Bigdelia. International distribution for the film is managed by Bahar Film's international department, led by Maryam Bahraloloumi.

