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Minister: Cultural diplomacy to be strengthened through cultural weeks

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, said that cultural weeks and similar events represent a renewed effort to strengthen cultural diplomacy and foster meaningful connections among artists, intellectuals, and scholars across nations. During a meeting with Iranian expatriates in Qatar, Salehi emphasized the importance of these initiatives for enhancing cultural ties, IRNA reported. He added that the Qatar Cultural Week, running from February 26 to 28, serves as a key opportunity for activating various cultural capacities. He pointed out that growth in cultural, media, and economic sectors requires innovation, creativity, and active participation from the youth, which can play a crucial role in advancing the cultural economy. Salehi outlined his discussions around

three main areas: Cultural diplomacy, cultural economy, and the role of Iranians abroad. He underscored the cultural week in Qatar as a significant opportunity to showcase Iran's rich heritage and artistic spirit to the world. He called for a concerted effort to present the country's valuable capacities while stressing the necessity of preserving national identity for all Iranians. The minister also highlighted the importance of international communications, particularly with neighboring countries, expressing optimism that enhanced collaboration in cultural, artistic, and media diplomacy could effectively portray Iran's true image on the global stage. In a bid to deepen cultural ties, Salehi proposed the formation of a joint working group, comprising representatives from the Iranian embassy, cultural cen-

ters, and Qatar's Ministry of Culture, to streamline cooperation in literary and artistic sectors. During the visit, Salehi met with Qatar's Culture Minister to discuss expanding cultural exchanges between the two nations. They both acknowledged the shared deep cultural ties and recognized the friendly relations as a valuable opportunity for collaboration. The discussions also touched on the importance of social media in cultural interactions, with proposals to strengthen online engagement between Iranian and Qatari users during significant cultural events, enhancing mutual cultural understanding. Salehi reiterated the significance of the Persian language in cultural exchanges and proposed joint efforts in Persian language education as a valuable opportunity to boost interactions between the two countries.



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi (c), looks at carpets on the sidelines of the Qatar Cultural Week in Doha on February 28, 2025.

● IRNA

He expressed Iran's readiness to collaborate in areas that resonate with the people of Qatar or meet the needs of its

government, indicating a willingness to deepen cultural and economic ties moving forward.

Iran, Iraq forge cultural ties to promote non-violence, counter Western influences on youth



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Arts & Culture Desk

Iraqi officials visited Iran's Institute for the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IID-

CYA), signaling a commitment to collaborate on initiatives aimed at fostering creativity and non-violent messages among youth. During the visit, Tamir Muhammad Mukhlis, Deputy of the Iraqi Children's Institute, expressed readiness to deepen cultural and artistic cooperation with Iran. He was joined by a delegation that included notable figures such as Amir Alireza, head of the Theater and Music Department, and Bassam, a children's book translator, among others, Mehr News Agency reported.

The group toured various facilities, including the reference library and cinematographic workshops at the Iranian institute. Mohammad Reza Karimi Saremi, the Deputy for Production at the Iranian institute, outlined its long-standing mission to promote reading among children. Established over six decades ago, the institute now operates 1,040 cultural centers across the country, offering around 60 activities such as storytelling, painting, and filmmaking. To date, it has produced more than 3,000 titles of children's literature and boasts a collection

of 12 million books. He further elaborated on the institute's cinematic achievements, revealing that it has created over 600 films—including shorts, features, and animations—garnering more than 3,000 awards in both domestic and international arenas. "Our theater division has produced over 500 plays, winning numerous accolades," he said. Highlighting the institute's unique position, Karimi Saremi noted the absence of a similar organization in Iran. He mentioned the Language Institute,

which offers courses in nine languages and serves over 400,000 students each academic year. Revenue is generated through this center, film sales, and government support. The cultural exchange also included discussions on potential joint productions, leveraging the shared heritage between Iran and Iraq. "We believe that children across the globe, due to their innocence, deserve access to joyful stories," Karimi Saremi added, emphasizing the importance of making their stories available to Iraqi children.

Israel's growing footprint ...

Baku from Tel Aviv's perspective

In addition to the above, the prominent role of the Zionist regime in the developments of the South Caucasus, particularly in Azerbaijan, has become a decisive factor in shaping new power dynamics in the region. Through extensive investments in Azerbaijan's military, economic, and intelligence sectors, and backed by widespread lobbying in the United States, especially by Zionist lobbies and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Israel has increased its influence in this country and uses it as a platform to advance its regional goals. The recent BESA report, authored by Captain (res.) Alexander Grinberg, a former intelligence officer in the Israeli army, explicitly identifies Azerbaijan as one of the "pillars of Israel's regional security" and cites several reasons for the country's strategic importance. He emphasizes that Azerbaijan's proximity to Iran and Russia makes it a potential base for intelligence and military operations against these two countries. The BESA report, citing various sources, including Foreign Policy, points to the widespread presence of Israeli intelligence agents in Azerbaijan. For instance, it notes: "In February 2012, the Associated Press noted that Azerbaijan has become an important base for Israeli intelligence services!" Beyond its proximity, Alexander Grinberg claims that the presence of a large

Azeri-speaking population in Iran is another attractive factor for Israel. He explicitly claims that Israel can use this leverage to incite ethnic discontent and destabilize Iran. Furthermore, a significant portion of the regime's oil consumption is supplied by Azerbaijan, and this is vitally important to the Zionist regime, especially in times of crisis. He emphasizes, citing Israeli officials, that Azerbaijan is the largest supplier of energy resources to the Zionist regime and, during the Gaza war, increased its oil exports to Israel by 155%. The BESA report notes that Azerbaijan is one of the largest importers of Israeli military products, stating that 60-69% of Azerbaijan's military imports in the 2010s came from Israel, and new contracts have also been signed. The noteworthy point is that the BESA Center explicitly acknowledges the presence of Israeli intelligence agents on Azerbaijani soil and claims that the "Iranian threat" is the unifying factor between Baku and Tel Aviv. In addition to the above, the BESA report addresses Azerbaijan's role in mediating between Turkey and Israel, citing Israeli and Azerbaijani sources to emphasize that the President of Azerbaijan is trying to improve Turkish-Israeli relations. In the second report, published shortly after the first one at the BESA Center, suggestions were made for Azerbaijan's participation in the reconstruction of

Gaza and the revival of shared religious sites, indicating the Zionist regime's efforts to utilize Azerbaijan's capacity as a cultural and economic tool in Islamic societies. For this reason, the recent report specifically states: "Azerbaijan should be included in the 'Abraham Accords club.'" As is evident, what has been published in this think tank reveals the Zionists' special view of the South Caucasus. Furthermore, the simultaneous publication of this report with the start of the Trump administration's regional activities and the possibility of adopting new policies towards Russia reinforces the proposition that we may soon witness new intrigues in the region. It should be noted that Trump could pave the way for a new chapter of geopolitical developments in the South Caucasus, because given Trump's history of supporting Israel, an increase in Israel's influence in the Caucasus region, especially in Azerbaijan, is not unexpected. This could lead to increased competition, renewed agitation regarding the Zangezur corridor, and increased security threats against Iran. Notably, the second BESA report mentions the need to repeal "Section 907," which is an obstacle to the development of US-Azerbaijani relations. This legal provision was enacted under the Freedom Support Act of 1992 due to the military conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region

and has been renewed annually to this day, preventing extensive US economic and military support for Baku. Under such circumstances, Iran, to safeguard its national interests and prevent future enemy machinations, should not stand idly by as the regime consolidates its position on our northern borders. Therefore, all political groups in the country, with a deep understanding of the potential threats, must prioritize national interests and adopt a comprehensive approach to counter these threats. This approach should include strengthening active diplomacy with regional countries, especially Armenia and Russia. The country's intelligence and security agencies must closely monitor developments and identify any suspicious activity. Strengthening the country's defense capabilities on the northwestern borders, particularly in air and missile defense, and developing drone and electronic warfare capabilities can create the necessary deterrence. But most importantly, maintaining national unity and cohesion, which the enemy has a particular interest in undermining, is crucial.

Strategy of 'cooperation and vigilance'

Iranian decision-makers, from all spectra and factions, must pursue national interests in the long term, understanding the geopolitical realities of the region. These interests are not secured

through confrontation with neighbors, but through cooperation and constructive engagement with them. Iran must help resolve conflicts peacefully and create a stable security system in the South Caucasus by strengthening economic, cultural, and political relations with regional countries, especially Armenia, and by using its diplomatic capabilities. This cooperation could include joint economic projects, development of transportation infrastructure, cultural cooperation, and information exchange. At the same time, Iran must vigilantly monitor the movements of the Zionist regime and its allies and take necessary measures to prevent the infiltration and expansion of this regime's presence on our borders. The report discussed shows that Israel views Azerbaijan as a pawn in its geopolitical great game. Given this reality, Iran must review its policies towards the South Caucasus and adopt a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that both helps protect our national interests and contributes to regional stability. This approach must be based on active diplomacy, economic cooperation, strengthening defense capabilities, and security vigilance, because the future of the South Caucasus depends on cooperation and constructive engagement among the countries of the region, and Iran can play an active role in creating a stable security system based on common interests.