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Society without art meaningless: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Interior, Eskandar Momeni, emphasized the vital role of arts in society during a recent gathering with personalities of various artistic guilds and prominent artists. Speaking candidly at the meeting, Momeni said, "A society without art is meaningless. For example, we read about history in books and writings, but when it is turned into a film or series, the life of that historical figure or national hero becomes immortal." Momeni outlined the ministry's commitment to supporting the continuity of artistic activities, saying, "We are working to ensure that the Ministry of Interior continues to aid and stand by you in the field of the arts." The minister also stressed the ongoing efforts to expand the ministry's focus beyond its traditionally known political and security roles. "The Ministry of Interior is typically recognized more for its political and secu-

rity aspects, with its economic and social dimensions often overlooked. Our new approach is to focus more on the social and economic aspects of the ministry." Addressing the importance of handling social issues effectively, Momeni said that social phenomena should not be treated as security issues. "We should address social issues through the appropriate mechanisms," he said. The senior official also pointed to the country's Social Affairs Organization, which operates under the Ministry of Interior, as having adopted a new approach to support artists. "This year, the organization supported two films at the Fajr Film Festival," he noted. Momeni acknowledged the significant impact of collaborative efforts between the media and artists. "Targeted and joint actions with the media and artists have the most influence on changing behavior. We will continue these meetings with you,



Iran's Minister of Interior, Eskandar Momeni (c), addresses cultural figures and artists during a meeting in Tehran on March 10, 2025.
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the artists," he added. Mohammad Bathaei, Deputy Minister of Interior and Head of the Social Affairs Organization, also spoke at the gathering. He highlighted a recent meeting with sociologists where various pressing societal issues were openly discussed. Bathaei affirmed that these discussions would continue in the future, adding, "In the social realm, to increase joy and hope, your art is needed." Bathaei underscored the crucial role of arts, emphasizing that "the entry of art and the prioritization of artistic productions can help solve the problems we are currently facing in society." Topics of discussion during the meeting included mutual understanding between artists



and officials, defining common national interests and security, the value of critical and

constructive perspectives in cinema, the status of artistic guilds, and the necessity of co-

operation between provincial governments and the House of Cinema.



Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art to reopen in mid-March

Arts & Culture Desk

Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art, one of Iran's most significant artistic and historical treasures, will reopen on March 15. The museum, after undergoing extensive renovation, will welcome artists and art enthusiasts, along with seasonal tourists, marking its return after four years of restoration and reflection. Saeed Mohammadi-Panah, the director of the museum, confirmed the reopening and said, "This museum, also operating as the Isfahan Visual Arts Center, has completed a four-year phase of restoration and revitalization. Just in time for the New Year and on the occasion of its 30th anniversary, it is once again ready to host artists, art lovers,

and of course, the visitors arriving for the Nowruz holiday." In conjunction with the reopening, two exhibitions will be inaugurated with the presence of the mayor of Isfahan. The exhibitions, titled 'Thirty Years of Museum Posters' and 'Thirty Years of Museum Images,' will provide an in-depth look at the institution's rich history, inviting audiences to explore its legacy through visual representation. Mohammadi-Panah also highlighted the historical significance of the museum's building. "The construction of this building dates back to the Qajar era and is one of the valuable architectural complexes in the historical heart of Isfahan, located near the Chel Sotoun Palace. Over the years, it has undergone various changes in its

function. Originally, it was the personal residence of Zill al-Sultan, the ruler of Isfahan during the Qajar period. Subsequently, it served as the site for various administrative purposes, including housing the Rakibkhaneh (stable), Jobekhaneh (armory), and the Isfahan governorship, before officially becoming the Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art in 1994." According to him, the museum has always played a pivotal role in shaping the art scene in Isfahan and Iran. "For exactly 30 years, this has been a home for both national and international artists, students in the visual arts field, and art researchers. The geographical proximity and close collaboration with the Isfahan University of Art, which nurtures a new generation of artists,

has further increased the significance of this institution." The museum, known for its unique architectural design, boasts four large galleries. Over the past three decades, it has hosted works by renowned local and international artists, including the celebrated Iranian artist Farshchian and the renowned German artist Günther Uecker. He concluded that the museum holds a rich collection of more than 700 invaluable visual art pieces, which will soon be displayed for public viewing in Gallery 4. The museum operates under the supervision of the Isfahan Municipality's Cultural, Social, and Sports Organization, continuing its vital role in the city's art and cultural landscape.

Tjeknavorian's 'Rostam and Sohrab' to be performed in Armenia

Arts & Culture Desk

The opera 'Rostam and Sohrab,' composed by maestro Loris Tjeknavorian, will be staged in Armenia in April 2025. The full, two-act performance will be conducted and composed by Tjeknavorian himself, with set design, costume, and direction by Yarta Yaran. The event will take place from March 31 to April 2, at the Yerevan Opera House, IRNA reported. In a video released on his personal social media account, Tjeknavorian shared the news with his followers: "Hello, dear friends. Today, I must say that one of my works is being born, the opera 'Rostam and Sohrab,' the masterpiece of Ferdowsi, which I have worked on for many years to transform this beautiful story into an opera." Tjeknavorian further expressed his excitement about the project, saying, "It is a great honor for me, and I am happy that my dear friend Yaran, who is a great actor, director, and poet, will be directing and designing this opera. He has done an incredible job, and I hope you, dear friends, will come and witness this literary masterpiece, 'Rostam and Sohrab' by

Ferdowsi with my music. See you soon. Goodbye." 'Rostam and Sohrab' is an opera by Loris Tjeknavorian based on the tragic tale from Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh'. The opera, initially premiered in 2004, was first performed in a puppet opera format, directed and dramaturged by Behrooz Gharibpour. The composition was conceived after Tjeknavorian received a grant from the Carl Orff Foundation in Salzburg, Austria. The opera took 25 years to complete, and its first public performance was held in 2002, conducted by Tjeknavorian at the Milad Hall in Tehran. According to Tjeknavorian, two key influences in the creation of 'Rostam and Sohrab' music were the sounds of traditional Iranian zurkhaneh music and the mournful music performed during Muharram mourning rituals in Iran. Over 25 years, Tjeknavorian composed eight different versions of the opera, including one entirely with Iranian instruments. The final version, written for a full orchestra, is set to be performed in Yerevan. In addition to his opera works, Tjeknavorian has composed over 75 works, including symphonies, chamber music, concertos, ballet scores, and



choral music. His notable works include operas such as 'Persepolis' and 'Parisa,' 'Rostam and Sohrab,' 'Shams and Molana,' and 'Rostam and Esfandiar.' He also authored a humorous book titled 'Kharestan' (The Land of Donkeys), a collection of short stories. His recent work 'Harmonizing Notes on the Scale of Numbers,' was unveiled last year in tribute to the late Maryam Mirzakhani.

Iraq to be special guest at 36th Tehran Int'l Book Fair

Arts & Culture Desk

Iraq will be the special guest at the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, set to take place from May 7 to 17, 2025, at Imam Khomeini Mosalla in Tehran. The agreement for Iraq's special guest status was confirmed in a meeting on March 10 between Mohsen Javadi, the head of the Cultural Affairs Department of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran, and The Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani, IRNA reported. The meeting also included key cultural figures such as Ayoub Dehghan Kar, the cultural and scientific advisor to Iran's Cultural Affairs Department; Gholam Reza Abazari, Iran's cultural attaché in Iraq; and other cultural officials from both countries. During the meeting, both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening cultural interactions



and expanding bilateral cooperation in publishing and literature. The participants acknowledged that Iraq's participation as a special guest could foster deeper cultural ties between the two nations. The Tehran International Book Fair is Iran's largest cultural event, annually attracting publishers, writers, and book enthusiasts from around the globe. This year's event, the 36th edition, is expected to strengthen the cultural bond between Iran and Iraq further, showcasing a range of literary works from both countries.