

Iran seeks stronger regional presence for handicrafts industry

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Maryam Jalali, emphasized the economic, social, and cultural significance of the country's handicrafts sector, saying that regional markets are eager for Iranian handmade products.

Speaking on Thursday at a meeting between President Masoud Pezeshkian and artisans from Tehran Province, Jalali stressed the role of handicrafts in fostering cultural identity and entrepreneurship, IRNA reported.

"Handicrafts not only generate wealth and create jobs but also cultivate ethics and law-abiding generations with a deep love for Iran," she said.

During his visit to southeastern Tehran counties, President Pezeshkian met with local artists and industry stakeholders, engaged with regional officials, and participated in a virtual inauguration of several development projects. The visit aimed to address local concerns and strengthen government support for the handicrafts sector.

Jalali stressed the necessity of inter-agency collaboration between the

Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts to bolster social and economic cohesion through the handicrafts industry.

She relayed a message from Tourism Minister Reza Salehi Amiri, who was unable to attend the session, extending his regards and appreciation to the attendees.

Highlighting the sector's potential, Jalali noted, "Regional countries are thirsty for Iranian handicraft products, yet we remain overlooked in the discourse of development and trade."

She urged greater emphasis on traditional crafts alongside heavy and high-tech industries, warning that "handicrafts should not be overshadowed by technological advancements, as they narrate Iran's story and serve as a source of soft power."

Concluding her remarks, Jalali called



for comprehensive government and institutional support to safeguard the

nation's cultural heritage. "The handicrafts community needs full-fledged

backing to preserve Iran's identity for future generations," she added.

'The Legend of Sepehr' wins two international accolades

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The Iranian animated film 'The Legend of Sepehr' directed by Emad Rahmani and Mehrdad Mehrabi and produced by Mehdi Jafari Jozani, won two international awards.

Following its debut at the 43rd Fajr Film Festival, the film embarked on an international festival tour, securing the Best Animated Feature award at the 2025 Kaya Film Festival in Turkey, IRNA reported.

The animated feature, which follows the heroic journey of Sepehr and Babu, also claimed the Best Animation award at the 2025 New York International Film Awards

(NYIFA), reinforcing its strong presence among global productions.

In the Persian-language version of 'The Legend of Sepehr,' voice acting was performed by Kazem Sayahi, Akbar Manani, Shayan Shambiati, Saeed Moghadam Manesh, Azam Delbari, Mohammad Loghmanian, Parsa Kajouri, and Hasti Salah.

The New York International Film Awards (NYIFA) is a recognized IMDb-qualifying festival that provides a platform for independent filmmakers worldwide. Similarly, the Kaya International Film Festival (KAIFF) is a prominent, government-supported event that showcases and promotes emerging talent in global independent cinema.



Filmmaker Salehi Nezhad joins jury of US festival

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Iranian documentary filmmaker and producer Mostafa Salehi Nezhad was selected as a jury member for the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, a prominent Oscar-qualifying event in California, US.

The festival, known for its focus on socially and culturally significant documentaries, provides a crucial platform for films vying for Academy Award recognition. Winners of the festival become eligible for Oscar consideration, IRNA reported.

Salehi Nezhad, whose works have been showcased at Oscar-accredited festivals and recognized by Canadian film institutions, will judge entries alongside two acclaimed jury members from the US and Spain, both of whom have received awards such as the Emmy and the Oscar.

His documentary 'Meeting with the Undertaker' was recently honored at India's IFFC



cultural and tourism short film festival, while his English-language documentary 'Cold Wind Blows' was selected for the Pune International Short Film Festival in India. Also, one of his films was featured at Canada's 29th Rendezvous with Madness festival. Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival draws international submissions from countries including the US, Japan, Russia, Finland, Canada, Iran, and Scotland, with many competing for a path to the Academy Awards.

Parviz, Iran's oldest chimpanzee, dies at 70



Parviz, Iran's oldest chimpanzee and one of the world's longest-living members of the species, died at over 70 years old due to age-related complications, officials at Tehran's Eram Zoo announced on March 13.

According to the zoo's public relations office, Parviz passed away peacefully while resting in his enclosure. The chimpanzee had

been a symbol of the zoo since its establishment and was widely known among visitors, ILNA reported.

Zoo veterinarian Ali Taheri said Parviz had exhibited signs of illness over the past ten days, including weakness and loss of appetite. Medical examinations revealed a severe arrhythmia, an extremely weak pulse, and pale

mucous membranes, indicative of significant age-related health deterioration.

Qassem Mohammadi, director of Eram Zoo, previously stated that around 60 percent of the zoo's animals are elderly. Efforts had been made to transfer the aging chimpanzee group to a specialized sanctuary in Kenya and bring in a younger troop, but negotiations remain unresolved.

Parviz, a well-recognized figure at the zoo, also had a brief stint in cinema, having appeared in a feature film during his lifetime. Chimpanzees share approximately 98.6 percent of their genetic makeup with humans, making them our closest living relatives in the animal kingdom. Known for their intelligence, complex social behaviors, and ability to use tools, chimpanzees are considered one of the most remarkable species.

Iran's environment chief calls for better policies amid growing ecological crises

Social Desk

Iran's environment chief, Shina Ansari, warned that the country is facing severe environmental challenges, largely due to past neglect in policymaking, particularly in water resources and energy management.

In a statement marking 200 days in office, Ansari stressed the urgency of integrating environmental concerns into national development strategies, ILNA reported.

"We have prioritized strengthening environmental discourse at the governance level," she said, highlighting her agency's efforts in presenting key reports on waste management, air pollution, land subsidence, and marine-focused development to the government.

The Department of Environment (DoE) has also been pushing for international support in wetland conservation and air pollution control, while a national task force on air quality has intensified focus on fuel standards, vehicle scrapping, and electrifying public transport. Despite challenges, Ansari pointed to progress,



including regulatory changes to accelerate renewable energy projects, enhanced environmental monitoring through inter-agency cooperation, and a 47% budget increase for the organization in the coming year.

She acknowledged the complexity of Iran's ecological crisis, exacerbated by economic and political factors, but stressed the need for stronger inter-agency collaboration and public engagement to drive meaningful reforms.