



Tehran offers comprehensive roadmap to enhance ties at D-8 summit

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran presented a sweeping roadmap for transforming tourism into a pillar of Islamic cooperation and economic diplomacy at the D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Cairo, describing the sector as a “strategic lever” for shaping a new global order, according to the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage. Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri introduced an initiative to boost intra-Islamic tourism, tighten economic ties, and position Iran as a hub for innovation-led governance and investment. The proposal includes annual tourism expos, visa waivers between member states, a joint investment fund, and the creation of a regional tourism database. Calling for a break from outdated approaches, Salehi Amiri said the Islamic world must “redefine tourism” as a driver of sustainable development and social capital. He stressed the need to bridge the digital divide without sacrificing cultural identity, noting that “we cannot develop at the cost of authenticity.” He urged D-8 nations—including Turkey, Malaysia, Egypt, Pakistan, and Nigeria—to embrace soft-power tools like tourism to “tell their own stories”

amid intensifying global competition over narratives and civilizational influence. The summit concluded with the Cairo Declaration, a 15-point agenda focused on digital transformation, cultural branding, AI integration, and infrastructure growth. The declaration endorsed Iran’s proposals and emphasized coordinated efforts to brand Islamic heritage, share knowledge, and empower local communities. Iran also reiterated its commitment to the D-8 Comprehensive Tourism Strategy, calling for cross-border tours, more direct flights, and joint training in digital marketing and destination management. In a bilateral context, Salehi Amiri told Russia’s Sputnik on the sidelines of the summit that Iran is ready to “open a new chapter” in tourism cooperation with Moscow. While calling Russia a “strategic partner,” he acknowledged that current figures—roughly 60,000 Russian tourists annually—“don’t reflect the potential.” He outlined Iran’s unique tourism offerings, from health and desert tours to cultural and culinary packages, and said Tehran is ready to host Russian visitors “in a more professional and targeted manner.” Salehi Amiri called for improved infrastructure and reciprocal incentives



Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri attends the D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Cairo, Egypt on May 6, 2025.
● IRNA

to unlock what he described as “new horizons” in tourism diplomacy. Both Iran and Russia, he noted, are politically aligned to revive disrupted tourism flows and build a model part-

nership that could inspire broader regional engagement. The D-8 group, or Developing Eight, was established in 1997 to foster economic cooperation among major

Muslim countries. Its fourth tourism summit in Cairo gathered ministers from all member states and signaled a growing focus on culture-led integration.

Podcasting seen as ‘key tool’ for media's future, says ABU official



Programs Festival known as “Pazhvak” in Tehran, Davies highlighted podcasting’s growing reach, noting that more than 450 million people worldwide now tune in.

Citing global trends, he said 47% of individuals aged 12 and older listen to at least one podcast a month. “Indonesia is one of the leading countries in this field,” Davies remarked, underlining Southeast Asia’s rapid digital media expansion. Davies also pointed to the economic momentum behind the format. “Global podcast

ad spending is expected to hit \$4 billion by 2024,” he said. He flagged the rise of video podcasts, stating that 30% of US podcast listeners now watch them as well. Drawing a line between traditional radio and on-demand audio, Davies explained that podcasts require the listener to make a deliberate choice. “Radio is bound by schedule,” he said, “while podcasts are free from fixed timing and offer archival access.” He emphasized the versatility of podcasting technology, stressing that it’s not limited to a single platform. “It appears across Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube and beyond,” he said. Davies distinguished podcasts from audiobooks, saying that while both are on-demand formats, podcasts focus on interviews,

storytelling, and informal conversations. “Audiobooks are often adapted from published works, whereas podcasts are episodic and more regularly produced,” he noted. He listed learning, entertainment, and up-to-date information as major draws for podcast listeners. Radio, in contrast, still offers a sense of companionship and a way to “pass the time.” Artificial intelligence and personalized technology, Davies added, are poised to shape a “new future” for the medium. The professional forum was held online as part of the international section of the Pazhvak festival, in Tehran. The festival, which opened on May 5, also honored winners in categories such as digital platforms, on-air programs, and media

professions, according to the official IRIB news agency. The closing ceremony is scheduled for May 12. Ali Bakhshizadeh, deputy head of Iran’s state radio, praised the event for fostering creativity and announced structural changes for future editions. “We won’t produce content just for the festival anymore. We’ll draw from our main broadcast schedule,” he said. Festival secretary Hamidreza Eftekhari said 1,250 submissions were received this year, with 701 entries in the documentary category alone. He noted a “significant leap” in radio quality and paid tribute to colleagues lost over the past year.

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Podcasting is fast becoming a “key tool” in the global media industry, Andrew Davies, head of radio at the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), told a professional gathering on Tuesday. Speaking at the 4th International Radio

Iranian doc ‘Legacy of the Wind’ heads to Oscar-qualifying Mountainfilm festival



Arts & Culture Desk

The short documentary ‘Legacy of the Wind’ by Iranian director Nasim Soheili was officially selected for the 47th edition of the Mountainfilm Festival in the United States, a key Oscar-qualifying event, according to ISNA. Founded in 1979, Mountain-

film is known for spotlighting stories that champion “adventure, activism, social justice, environment, and indomitable spirit.” The 2025 edition will take place from May 22 to 26 in Telluride, Colorado. ‘Legacy of the Wind’ tells the story of Mohammad Vali Gandomi, the last living artisan who knows how to build and restore the ancient windmills—known locally as Asbads—of Nashtifan, Iran. The documentary also features Mount Sinai, the only mountain where the specific stone used in these mills can be sourced. Gandomi has kept the knowledge alive through hands-on

experience, carving the stones by memory and skill alone. The film has already picked up several international awards, including Best Indigenous Documentary at Serbia’s 33rd Ethnological Film Festival and Best International Documentary at the 40th Tehran International Short Film Festival. It also won Best Short Documentary in the Teachers-as-Filmmakers category at the 54th Roshd festival. Soheili’s work has traveled widely, making appearances at documentary and animation festivals in the US, Portugal, Uruguay, Italy, Russia, China, and Turkey.

Iran sees 63% drop in maternal mortality rate: *UNFPA*

Social Desk

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) representative in Iran reported a 63% reduction in maternal mortality rates in the country. The maternal death rate dropped from 43 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 16 per 100,000 in 2023, marking a remarkable decline. Speaking at an event on International Day of the Midwife (May 5), Ayna Seyitliyeva credited the achievement largely to Iran’s primary healthcare system, which integrates prenatal and postnatal care, IRNA reported. She emphasized the critical role of health workers, including mid-

wives and health experts, in delivering essential services. “Without a doubt, this progress is largely due to the effective structure of Iran’s health network,” Seyitliyeva said. However, she cautioned that challenges remain, particularly in certain regions. “While some areas are thriving, disparities persist, especially in provinces like Sistan and Baluchestan, where maternal mortality rates are among the highest.” In contrast, provinces such as Tehran and Zanjan report the lowest rates. Seyitliyeva noted that inadequate care accounts for half of maternal deaths worldwide. She also highlighted the global shortage of es-

sential medicines, medical equipment, and skilled personnel. The UNFPA has been working to improve maternal health since 2008, supporting midwives in over 120 countries. Seyitliyeva reaffirmed the agency’s commitment to supporting Iran in enhancing its reproductive health services and further reducing maternal deaths. “Midwives are the backbone of safe childbirth,” Seyitliyeva said, underscoring their pivotal role in improving the health of mothers and infants. She stressed their significant contribution to the decline in preventable deaths and complications during pregnancy and childbirth.