



# Salehi: Tehran Int'l Book Fair platform for expanding cultural diplomacy

## Saudi Arabia invited as guest of honor next year

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture, Abbas Salehi, highlighted the role of the 36th Tehran International Book Fair as a platform for cultural diplomacy and the promotion of reading. During his visit to the international section of the fair on May 8, Salehi engaged with publishers and cultural representatives from various countries, exploring the latest trends in publishing and cultural exchanges, IRNA reported. In his remarks, Salehi underlined the importance of the fair in fostering closer cultural ties. He pointed to Iraq's prominent participation as a guest of honor this year, emphasizing the deep historical, religious, and cultural connections between the two na-

tions. "Iraq's presence is a milestone in our bilateral relations, offering a valuable opportunity for cooperation in publishing, translation, and cultural exchange," he said. Salehi also visited the Russian, Omani, Turkish, Yemeni, and other international booths, where he discussed mutual cultural interests and the potential for joint projects. Particularly, he commended Russia's ongoing engagement, praising their active role in the fair over the years. "Russia's participation fosters increased cultural dialogue, with both countries showcasing contemporary works in translation," he noted. The minister's visit to Oman was equally significant, where he reaffirmed the longstanding cultural ties between Iran and Oman.

"Our book fair is a key avenue to strengthen this bond," he said. The fair also witnessed discussions on the growing presence of African countries, with Kenya positioned as a gateway to East Africa's cultural sector. Salehi expressed interest in translating African literature into Persian, emphasizing the role of books in building bridges across continents. Also, the Russian Book Union is hosting over 80 cultural events in conjunction with the fair, marking its tenth consecutive participation. "This year, we are presenting 550 titles and organizing diverse activities to foster deeper ties between Russian and Iranian writers, publishers, and translators," said Arezoo Ashtijoo, a representative of the Russian Book Union.

These events span across Tehran and several other Iranian cities, aiming to promote the Russian language and culture. In a related development, the head of the Tehran International Book Fair, Mohammad Javadi, met with the Saudi Ambassador to Iran, Abdullah bin Saud Al-Anzi, on May 8. Javadi extended an invitation for Saudi Arabia to be the guest of honor at next year's fair, a move aimed at strengthening cultural relations between the two nations. During the meeting, both sides agreed on the importance of focusing on shared cultural aspects, noting that literature could be a powerful tool in fostering mutual understanding. "Cultural ties are strengthening between our countries, and we hope to build on this momentum in future fairs," Javadi added.



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi (c) speaks with visitors and media representatives during a tour of the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, on May 8, 2025.

● TIBF

The 36th Tehran International Book Fair runs from May 7 to 17, 2025, under the theme "Read for Iran," providing a digital platform for non-attendees to purchase books online.

## Int'l 100-Second Film Festival shaping future of Iranian cinema, cultural equity



### Arts & Culture Desk

The 14th International 100-Second Film Festival, running from May 6 to 9, plays a key role in promoting cultural justice, particularly by supporting filmmakers from underrepresented areas, says Habib Ilbeigi, CEO of the Shahr Cinema Institute. Ilbeigi highlighted how the festival

provides an opportunity for creativity to flourish, especially with the accessibility of smartphones that enable filmmakers to produce high-quality short films. "In the past, such access was not possible," he remarked, emphasizing that the 100-second films, while not requiring heavy budgets, allow for powerful ideas and innovative concepts to come forward,

inn.ir reported. "Unlike the common misconception that short films are always low-budget, the cost can vary significantly based on production resources," Ilbeigi added. He also pointed out that while these films might not achieve the technical polish of feature-length films, it is the ideas and concepts that matter most. The festival, according to Ilbeigi, serves as an excellent venue for discovering emerging talents. With many students and young enthusiasts across the country, such festivals give filmmakers the chance to be recognized and introduced to the broader cinema community. "Many successful filmmakers who were discovered

at these festivals are now continuing their work in Iranian cinema," he said. Ilbeigi also touched upon the ongoing challenges in supporting young filmmakers after their initial success. "Holding festivals is just the beginning," he said. "Continuous support is crucial for their professional development." Emphasizing the importance of guiding filmmakers after they complete their first film, Ilbeigi stated that these individuals should not be left to navigate the industry on their own. "They need support in areas like technical skills and training," he added. "It is vital that after their first film, they continue to receive attention and resources to help them grow."

Drawing from his experience at the Farabi Cinema Foundation in 2017, Ilbeigi recalled how he advocated for the identification and support of emerging filmmakers. "These filmmakers should be offered scholarships to enhance their technical abilities and gain more experience in areas like screenwriting and co-production," he noted. Ilbeigi stressed the need for film festivals to go beyond simply showcasing films. "Festivals should act as platforms for identifying and selecting new talent. Producers and investors need to attend these events to find the best works for future projects," he said. He also pointed to a gap in the

current festival system, where many festivals only focus on awards ceremonies. "To ensure filmmakers continue to grow, they must receive ongoing support and training after their festival appearances," he added. Ilbeigi concluded by underlining the importance of talent-scouting events, where producers and investors should actively participate to identify new talent. He further reflected on the role of the Cinema Organization of Iran in promoting Iranian films at international festivals. While the direct involvement of the organization may have diminished in recent years, it still provides critical support, particularly in terms of distribution and international marketing.

## Leo XIV elected as new pope Pontiff laments 'technology, money, success, power or pleasure' valued over religion

Cardinal Robert Prevost has taken the name Leo XIV. The Chicago-born missionary who spent his career ministering in Peru and took over the Vatican's powerful office of bishops was elected the first pope from the United States in the 2,000-year history of the Catholic Church.

In his first words as Pope Francis' successor, uttered from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica, Leo, 69, said, "Peace be with you," and emphasized a message of peace, dialogue and missionary evangelization.

He wore the traditional red cape of the papacy — a cape that Francis had eschewed on his election in 2013. He spoke to the crowd in Italian and Spanish, but not English, AP reported.

During the Italian language section of his homily, Pope Leo XIV has lamented that there are many



Newly elected Pope Leo XIV, Cardinal Robert Prevost of the United States appears on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican, May 8, 2025.

● REUTERS

places where "technology, money, success, power or pleasure" are valued over Christian faith, which he warned, in many places, was "considered absurd, meant for the weak and unintelligent." The new pope said "believers are mocked, opposed, despised or at best tolerated and pitied." He said that often the figure of Jesus is "reduced only to a kind of charismatic leader or superman," and warned that this was not just among non-believers, but even among the baptised, who he said ended up living their lives in "de facto atheism." Pope Leo XIV's formal inaugura-



tion Mass to mark his appointment will take place in St. Peter's Square on Sunday May 18, the Vatican said in a statement on

Friday. The new pope, elected on Thursday, will hold his first general audience on May 21.

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