

Three Iranian shorts head to London's Rainbow International Film Festival

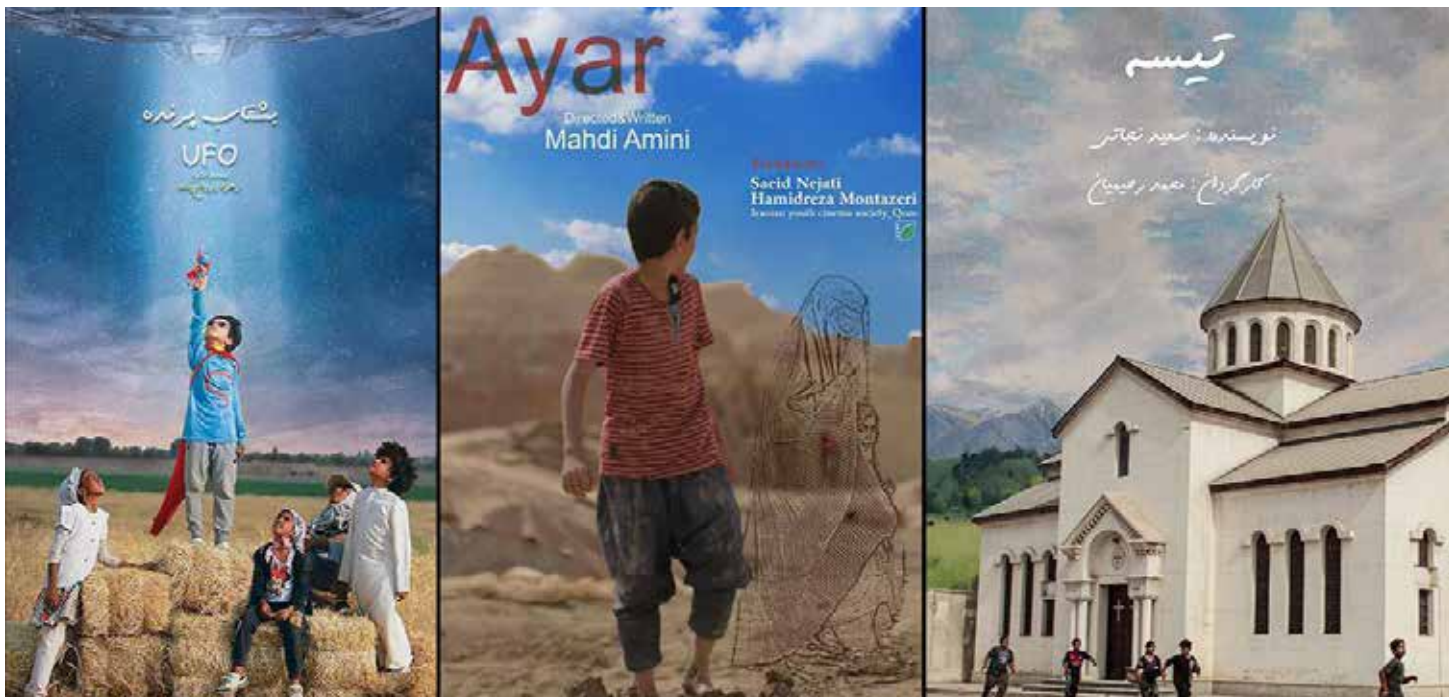
Arts & Culture Desk

Three Iranian short films will compete at the 26th Rainbow International Film Festival in London, organizers said. The films 'Ayar', 'UFO', and 'Tiseh' are all focused on children and young audiences and will be shown in the short film section of the festival, which runs from May 25 to June 1, IRNA reported.

'Ayar', written and directed by Mehdi Amini and produced by Hamidreza Montazeri and Saeid Nejati, has already picked up international attention. The film previously won a special award at the 35th International Children's Film Festival in Iran. 'UFO', directed by Zahra Yazdanpanah and also produced by Montazeri and Nejati, is a co-production between Iran's Sacred Defense Cinema Association and the Foundation of Cultural Narratives. The project involved regional backing from the Kerman Province department of veterans' affairs.

'Tiseh', directed by Mohammad Rahimian and co-produced by the Abadan Youth Cinema Association and Nejati, rounds out the trio. Like the others, it also screened at the 53rd Roshd International Film Festival earlier this year.

The Rainbow International Film Festival is closely affiliated with the Dhaka International Film Festival and is known for showcasing emerging voices and independent films. This year's edition features 14 shorts and 22 features from across the globe.



ECO Cultural Institute to open Iranian art show on environment

Arts & Culture Desk

Self-taught Iranian artists will open a major cultural event at the ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran on June 1, launching the Ninth National Exhibition that merges art with a call for environmental awareness. "This is more than just a display—it's a celebration of raw talent and responsibility," said Saad S. Khan, President of the ECO Cultural Institute, during a press conference on May 25, Mehr News Agency reported. The show, featuring works by 31 artists

in sculpture, carpet weaving, and painting, highlights the creativity of individuals with no formal training. But its broader mission is to use art as a tool for cultural exchange and ecological advocacy.

"We want this exhibition to travel across ECO member states," ECI head said. "It's a platform to share values and strengthen artistic bonds between our nations." Ali Ezzati, founder of the Iranian Self-Taught Artists Association, called the event a milestone. "This ninth edition uncovers hidden layers of innovation in self-taught art," he said. "It's a new narrative in our art history."

Psychologist Shiva Dolatabadi praised the inner drive of these artists. "True art springs from within,"

she said. "Their passion carries the power to inspire and endure." Ecologist Hayedeh Shirzadi, who founded an environmental NGO in 1998, underlined the show's ecological focus. "We ignored social ecology—and now we're facing a crisis," she said. "Artists can help restore that balance."

Shirzadi emphasized the importance of environmental education and stronger laws. "Waste is one of Iran's biggest pollutants," she said. "Without a national waste management law, we can't move forward." Behnam Zangi, head of the Saba Cultural Institute, said the exhibition reflects shared duty. "Art has a social role. These voices matter," he said. The exhibit runs June 1 to 6 at the ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran.



President of the ECO Cultural Institute Saad S. Khan (2nd L) attends a press conference in Tehran, Iran on May 25, 2025.

● MEHR NEWS AGENCY

Iran launches national plan to protect endangered Caspian seals

Social Desk

Iran has rolled out a national action plan to protect the endangered Caspian seal, following the discovery of 18 dead seals along the country's northern coastline over the past two months, local environmental authorities said.

Mohammadreza Kanani, acting head of the Mazandaran Department of Environment, told Iran's state-run IRNA on May 25 that the plan was being implemented in partnership with Tarbiat Modares University's Noor campus and the Caspian Seal Rescue Center.

The Caspian seal, *Pusa caspica*, is the only marine mammal native to the world's largest enclosed inland body of water and is now listed as "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Once found in the tens of thousands, the population has dropped drastically in recent decades.

"The discovery of 18 carcasses since

late March is alarming," Kanani said. "We are taking this seriously. The species faces threats from habitat loss, pollution, climate change, and viral infections."

He said many of the bodies had washed ashore days after death, making autopsy difficult due to decomposition. Daily shoreline monitoring, veterinary coordination for sampling, and joint marine patrols are now underway.

The national plan includes the establishment of a permanent secretariat at Tarbiat Modares University in Noor and the upgrade of three regional rescue centers in the coastal cities of Behshahr, Babolsar, and Tonekabon.

Ruhollah Esmaeili, deputy head of biodiversity and wildlife in the Mazandaran environment office, said the latest seal carcasses were found along the shores of Miankaleh, Juybar, and Abbasabad. "All were badly decomposed," he said, "and it was not possible to determine exact causes of death."

He urged the public — especially fish-

ers and beachgoers — to report sightings of seals or carcasses to local environment offices or via the national hotline.

Caspian seals, which have no external ears, migrate seasonally, often coming to Iran's southern Caspian waters in warmer months and breeding on the ice-covered northern shores in winter. They are considered a key indicator of the Caspian Sea's ecological health.

Iran's only seal rescue center was established in 2010 on Ashuradeh Island near Bandar Torkaman. Between its founding and early 2018, the facility treated and released more than 80 seals. Its mission also includes training, public awareness, and cross-border conservation work.

"The Caspian Sea doesn't belong to one nation," Kanani said. "We need coordinated action with Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan to safeguard this species."

The Caspian Sea is highly vulnerable to environmental pressures due to its



closed nature. Pollution from oil, agriculture, and industry has intensified in recent years, impacting fish stocks and wildlife.

Iranian officials stressed that the effort to save the Caspian seal is not just a provincial duty, but a national and international commitment.

● IRNA