



# Iran to open health tourism offices in five Persian Gulf states

## Social Desk

Iran will launch health tourism offices in five Persian Gulf countries later this month, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey said on Monday, touting the country's growing medical tourism appeal. Speaking on the sidelines of the 3rd ECO International Health Tourism Conference in Hamedan, Bandpey confirmed that "reception offices" will soon be operational in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. The move follows a specialized diplomatic panel hosted in Shiraz two weeks ago, attended by ambassadors from the five Persian Gulf states. Bandpey noted that Iran is among the "top 18 destinations" for medical tourism globally. He said the country has made significant strides in fields such as cosmetic surgery, dentistry, liver transplants, infertility treatment, chemotherapy, and orthopedics. Official figures from the Ministry of Intelligence and the Health Ministry show Iran received 1 million health tourists

in 2022, generating €2 billion in revenue. Despite the rise in demand, Bandpey stressed that medical tourism must not "delay or disrupt" services for Iranian citizens. "We've agreed that domestic patients should not be kept waiting," he said, adding that Iran currently has extra capacity to accommodate foreign patients. Bandpey said Iran's dormant Health Strategy Council resumed activity six months ago after a two-year pause. Three sessions have been held, and a new directive has been drafted to clarify policy and include all stakeholders. He emphasized the need for a clear national brand to tackle middlemen, standardize treatment costs, and promote the country's capabilities. An open call for branding proposals in the health tourism sector will be issued on June 9, with a cash prize awarded to the best idea. A pilot program for registering and admitting international patients is underway in South Khorasan. According to Bandpey, the Tourism Ministry handles

logistics "up to the hospital gate," while the Health Ministry manages medical services. Discharge times and treatments will be logged in a new digital system. He also said the system would later roll out in Isfahan, Qom, Mazandaran, and Tehran. The initiative involves both the private sector and government, including the Medical Council, Chambers of Commerce, and the Ministry of Intelligence. Meanwhile, a new flight route linking Oman, Shiraz, and Nowshahr will support the plan. "Health tourists will discover Iran's history and culture, and that brings them back," Bandpey noted. Iran's failure to "win trust" remains a hurdle, he admitted, despite having highly skilled physicians. A new framework is being designed to clarify who provides services, where, and at what cost — "in a scientific and standardized way." Hamedan Governor Hamid Molanouri Shamsi said the province had upgraded its infrastructure for the ECO event. "We're brand-building in health



tourism," he said, adding that AI and knowledge-based panels were part of the event agenda. He said demand for investment is rising along with tourism. With rail and air projects underway, and regional proximity to four provinces, Hamedan aims

to become a key player in Iran's health tourism push. Flights to Mecca, Mashhad, and other domestic destinations have resumed after a three-year pause. "Our airport now ranks among the best in infrastructure," he said.

## Iran, Jakarta ink cultural agreement



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Cultural Center in Indonesia and Jakarta Arts Council signed a cooperation agreement at the Iranian Embassy in Jakarta, aiming to deepen "practical" cultural and artistic exchanges between the two countries. The memorandum of understanding was signed in the presence of senior cultural officials from both sides. It sets out plans for joint exhibitions, artist exchanges, and shared literary and cinematic programs. Bambang Prihadi, head of the Jakarta Arts Council, welcomed the deal but stressed that it must "go beyond ceremony" and lead to action.



Head of Jakarta Arts Council Bambang Prihadi (2nd L) and Iran's Cultural Attaché Mohammadreza Ebrahimi hold the signed agreement in Jakarta, Indonesia.

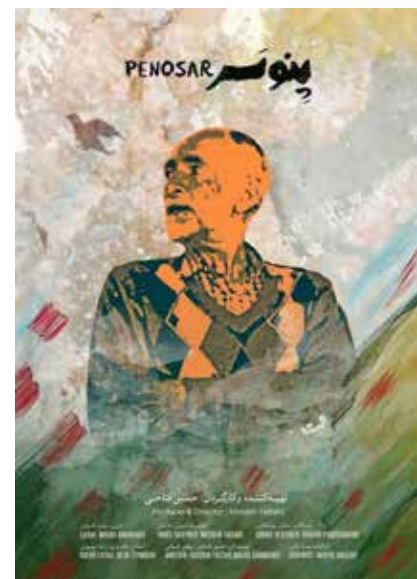
● ILNA

"We know Iran not only as an Islamic country, but as a nation with a deep legacy in civilization, literature, and the arts," Prihadi said. He called Iranian cinema "a major player" in the region and globally, and said he hoped the deal would provide a "solid foundation" for broader collaboration. Iran's cultural attaché, Mohammadreza Ebrahimi, highlighted the role of his office as a "bridge" for connecting Indonesian and Iranian institutions. He proposed holding an online forum for poets, writers, and artists from both countries to "lay the groundwork" for future projects. Prihadi welcomed the idea and said his council stood "fully ready" to help make it happen. Ebrahimi pointed to past successes, noting that several Persian works have already been translated into Indonesian. One example was Man-e-Ou by Reza Amirkhani, released in 2022, which he said was "well received." The agreement outlines regular reporting every six months and the formation of a joint working group to ensure follow-through. Both sides voiced hope that the deal would mark the beginning of "deep and lasting" cultural ties between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Indonesia.

## Iranian documentary 'Penosar' awarded at Hungarian festival

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Hossein Fattahi took home the top documentary prize at Hungary's 9th Zsigmond Vilmos International Film Festival for his visually striking film 'Penosar,' organizers said. The festival was held from May 27 to 31, ILNA reported. The award was announced at the closing ceremony of the festival, held annually in Szeged since 2017 in memory of Hungarian-American cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond. The event celebrates achievements in cinematography and visual storytelling. 'Penosar,' produced and directed by Fattahi, tells the story of an elderly shepherd who paints scenes from nature directly onto rocks and boulders in the mountains of northern Iran. The film, shot across several seasons in the Savadkuh region of Mazandaran Province, captures both the rugged beauty of the landscape and the artist's intimate bond with it.



The documentary previously earned an honorary diploma at the 5th Uvality Festival in France.

## Iran's 'The West Sky' wins top prize at Golden Knight in Crimea



Iranian feature film 'The West Sky,' directed by Mohammad Asgari and produced by Habib Vali-Nejad, took home the top prize for Best Fiction Film at the 35th Golden Knight festival, organizers said. The festival ran from May 22 to May 29, in the city of Novy Kherson in the Russian-controlled Sevastopol region of Crimea.

Produced by Iran's Soureh Cinema Organization and Farabi Cinema Foundation, 'The West Sky' tells the story of Iranian Army helicopter pilots in the early days of the Iran-Iraq war, highlighting their role in pushing back enemy forces. The Golden Knight festival, launched in 1992 under the motto "For moral ideals, for the exaltation of the human spirit," is one of the most prominent cultural events in the Russian-speaking world. This year's edition featured more than 200 screenings from 20 countries, including Russia, Iran, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, India, China and Serbia. The event focuses on films with ethical, spiritual, and cultural themes. Organizers say its independent approach has earned the trust of socially conscious filmmakers across the globe.



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