



Minister: Russia's Cultural Week chance to 'strengthen historic ties'

'Living Traditions of Russia' on display in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

Russian Culture Minister Olga Borisovna Lyubimova on Tuesday kicked off Russia's Cultural Week in Tehran with Iranian Culture and Islamic Minister Abbas Salehi, stressing a shared "broad historical relationship" and pledging closer artistic and cinematic cooperation between the two countries.

The joint press conference, held at Tehran's iconic Vahdat Hall, marked the start of a six-day cultural program under the recently signed

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership treaty between Moscow and Tehran. The event, which includes concerts, film screenings, and exhibitions in Tehran and Isfahan, features more than 130 Russian artists, musicians, and officials, IRNA reported.

The week officially opened in Iran with a rich program of events taking place in Tehran and Isfahan from June 10 to 15.

The opening ceremony of the week in Isfahan was held with performances by the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra and the

Lezginka State Dance Ensemble from Dagestan. In turn, Tehran hosts an exhibition titled 'Living Traditions of Russia', featuring Russian handicrafts and traditional arts.

Salehi described Russia as "more than a neighbor," saying the two countries have long-standing literary and artistic ties, invoking names like Chekhov and Dostoevsky.

"Tolstoy's work was among the top five best-sellers at Tehran International Book Fair," he said, citing this as proof of Iranians' deep engagement with Russian culture.

Standing alongside him, Lyubimova expressed gratitude for Iran's hospitality, calling the opening a "bridge for future cooperation."

She said her delegation includes musicians, and artisans from regions as diverse as Dagestan and Kamchatka.

"We're a nation made of many ethnicities," she noted, adding that Russian traditional dance, music, and crafts are "living symbols" of this cultural mosaic.

The Russian minister emphasized cinema and animation as key areas for joint ventures. She confirmed that her team would tour a Tehran film production village, where a Russian film is currently in production. "Iran's capabilities in animation are impressive—we are ready to collaborate," she said.

Salehi, addressing potential cooperation in the fashion industry, said Iran's diverse clothing design could be a "serious avenue" for deeper cultural exchange. "It's a sector ripe for attention," he noted.

At a separate ceremony the same day, Mohammad-Mehdi Imanipour, head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, and Lyubimova inaugurated the Russian folk art exhibition 'Living Traditions of Russia' at Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran.



Russian Culture Minister Olga Borisovna Lyubimova (L) and Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi stand at the podium during the opening of Russia's Cultural Week at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on June 10, 2025.

● IRNA



Russian Culture Minister Olga Borisovna Lyubimova (3rd R) tours the exhibition titled 'Living Traditions of Russia', featuring Russian handicrafts and traditional arts in Tehran on June 11, 2025.

● ICRO



Imanipour described the show as a cultural anchor supporting the two countries' strategic plans. "Despite being neighbors, we still don't know each other well," he noted, blaming what he called a "fabricated fear" driven by the West. "We need events like today's to change that."

Lyubimova highlighted several standout exhibitions, including ivory sculptures from Kamchatka, ceramic pieces from Pskov, and works from the Caucasus and central Russia. "These pieces speak for themselves," she said. "They carry our artistic tradition across borders."

ECO chief backs Iran as 'pioneer' in health tourism

Social Desk

Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Asad Majeed Khan on Wednesday called Iran a "symbolic leader" in regional health tourism, spotlighting the western city of Hamedan as a standout destination.

Speaking at the third ECO Health Tourism Confobition in Hamedan, Khan said the city—with its "valuable historical and medical assets"—embodies the potential of cross-border health services across member states, IRNA reported.

The three-day conference and exhibition, running through June 13, brings together officials, industry leaders, and health experts from ECO's 10 member states. With

10 licensed international patient departments (IPDs), Hamedan is pushing to the forefront of Iran's broader push to attract foreign medical tourists—part of a national plan to hit \$6 billion in revenue by drawing 2 million health travelers by 2030.

"This is more than travel. Health tourism means knowledge sharing, cultural exchange, and sustainable development," said Khan.

He praised Iran's role in founding ECO, calling its health sector "a pillar" in advancing regional cooperation. Referring to Hamedan as the home of Avicenna, the father of modern medicine, he said the city offers a rare mix of medical history and clinical infrastructure.

The exhibition features forums on



Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Asad Majeed Khan addresses the audience at the third ECO Health Tourism Confobition in Hamedan on June 11, 2025.

● IRNA

topics like artificial intelligence in health tourism, regional development strategies, and medical system integration across member

countries. Events are held at Bu-Ali Sina University, the International Exhibition Center, and Hamedan's Chamber of Commerce.

Deputy Health Minister Sajad Razavi underlined Iran's leadership in the field, crediting its "geostrategic position and expert personnel."

He said Iran acts as "a vanguard in regional health" and urged ECO nations to prioritize public health as a cornerstone of development.

"Without a health appendix, no regional growth plan is complete," Razavi told participants. Drawing from Avicenna's philosophy, he stressed the emotional element of healing: "Half the pain is illusion; the other half is hope."

Iran is not just competing, it's collaborating. Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri, who announced the imminent ratification of a comprehensive national tourism road-

map, said, "This is not a race. This is a pact for empathy, coexistence, and shared resilience."

More than 1.2 million medical tourists visited Iran in 2023, a figure expected to nearly double in the next five years. With 28 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and cutting-edge clinics offering competitive prices, the country is leaning into its soft power to stake its claim in the health tourism market.

According to Salehi Amiri, "Health is not just an economy—it's a language of shared humanity."

The confobition concludes on June 13 with site visits to historical landmarks and medical centers in Hamedan, giving international delegates a closer look at the facilities licensed to treat foreign patients.

Iran honors veteran filmmaker Sirus Alvand with top artistic title

Arts & Culture Desk

Sirus Alvand, one of Iran's most enduring filmmakers, received the nation's top artistic honor on Wednesday at a ceremony in Tehran, formally recognizing over five decades of influential work in cinema.

The first-degree art certificate was presented to Alvand, 72, during a June 10 gathering hosted by Cinema Organization of Iran, IRNA reported.

The event drew senior officials including Raed Faridzadeh, head of the organization, and cultural critics who praised Alvand's ethical grounding and creative consistency as a "rare thread" in the country's shifting cinematic landscape.

The honor places Alvand among a short list of

Iranian artists whose work has shaped both public sentiment and the trajectory of the national film industry. Known for acclaimed titles such as 'Once and For All' and 'Corrupted Hands', Alvand's films have long bridged Iran's commercial and intellectual cinema—what one official described as the "missing link" between mass appeal and cultural weight.

"His name gives meaning to the title, not the other way around," said Faridzadeh, praising the director's lifelong adherence to ethical storytelling and social roots.

Alvand began directing in the early 1970s and was quickly noted for his strong narrative voice and nuanced focus on the Iranian family unit. Critics at the event emphasized his resistance to politicization, with veteran reviewer Javad Tou-

si calling Alvand's moral compass "a vanishing quality" in the country's increasingly fragmented society.

Despite moments of sharp societal critique, Alvand has remained firmly grounded in Iran. "He never reached for opposition labels," said Tousei, arguing that the director's loyalty to his homeland helped preserve both his career and voice through decades of political change.

Fellow filmmaker and screenwriter Farhad Tohidi, also in attendance, recalled Alvand's pivotal role in shaping Iran's modern screenwriting tradition. "He was the one people came to," Tohidi said, noting that even in eras when "screenwriting barely had a name," Alvand's pen and presence offered a benchmark for the craft.

Beyond directing, Alvand was credited with



defending civil and professional institutions in Iranian cinema, including his contributions to preserving the integrity of the House of Cinema.