



# Iran pushes to globalize traditional crafts as engines of identity, resilience

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts, Maryam Jalali, said that the country's centuries-old craft skills can "shine globally" if integrated with international standards. Speaking in Tehran during National Skills Week, Jalali emphasized that handicrafts serve not only as market products but also as "pillars of social resilience, cultural diplomacy, and development-focused investment," according to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, IRNA reported. In her remarks, Jalali positioned Iran's traditional craftsmanship as a distinct national asset in a globalized world. "We are not here to copy-paste global models," she said. "Cultural globalization today means telling the unique stories of each region." She called Iran's rich intangible heritage a "reservoir" of local skills capable of offering an alternative global narrative.

Crafts, she noted, should no longer be seen as tools of mere subsistence or ritual. "We live in a customer-centered era," she said. "Contemporary skills must be rooted in tradition but operate with the logic of global competitiveness." Jalali warned against overlooking local craftsmanship in development policies, calling for a smart blend of "creative policymaking, flexible planning, and field-based action" to unlock their full potential. Jalali dismissed top-down approaches to development, urging instead an ecosystem built on consensus across government, industry, and families. The real meaning of a "Skilled Iran," she said, lies in merging technique with cultural depth and a civilizational vision. "Skill becomes convergence when it touches daily life and production," she added, asserting that crafts can foster both economic durability and national cohesion. Jalali also argued that the values now

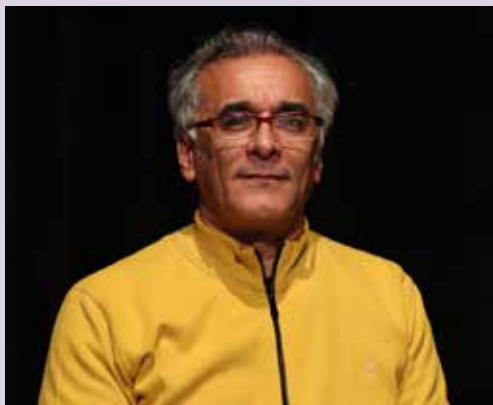
hailed by modern development—resilience, sustainability, and cultural inclusion—have long been woven into Iran's craft heritage. "Handicrafts are the embodiment of local ecology, cultural self-reliance, and community-based economy," she said. She underlined that indigenous materials and nature-bound techniques used in crafts foster an "endogenous and wisdom-driven" model of development. "This is an art-industry rooted in history that has always served human and societal needs," she said, contrasting it with Western-centric views of progress. Referring to weaving, pottery, metalwork, and vernacular architecture, Jalali said these were not just art forms but "expressions of a balanced, people-powered Iranian development model." A systemic approach to the crafts value chain, she argued, could reinforce rural economies while safeguarding cultural identity. "Investment in crafts is more than



capital injection," she said. "It carries a civilizational weight." For development-minded investors, she added, handicrafts offer a rare triad—"economic return, social impact, and cultural value." Jalali said each handmade object tells

a story, and the ministry's mission is to "introduce this potential in a complete, professional, and globally understandable way." The globalization of Iranian crafts, she said, must present the country through "wisdom, art, and civilization."

## Iranian mime artist Ghajar awarded 2025 'Golden Hands'



## Arts & Culture Desk

The World Mime Organization awarded its 2025 Golden Hands special prize to Iranian performer and educator Sasan Ghajar for what it called his "outstanding contribution" to the art of mime, according to an official letter signed by the group's president Marco Stojanović. Founded in 2011 and headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia, the organization grants the Golden Hands award annually to honor individuals who have made a lasting mark

on non-verbal physical theater. Ghajar joins a list of international recipients including France's Corinne Soum, Spain's Carlos Martínez, and Sweden's Stanislaw Brosowski, IRNA reported. Ghajar, a veteran stage and screen actor from Zanjan, began his mime career in the 1990s, inspired by silent film legends Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Over the years, he has played a central role in popularizing the craft in Iran, where mime had little institutional presence. "He has done something ex-

tremely rare in the world," the Organization wrote, praising Ghajar for turning mime into a "family art" that brings together people across generations. Trained under instructors affiliated with France's Jacques Lecoq school, Ghajar went on to found Iran's International Pantomime Festival, which has held three editions so far. The fourth is currently in the works. He also took part in professional workshops and performed in the Tehran Pantomime Festival with a piece titled 'The Musician'.

The World Mime Organization operates in collaboration with the International Theater Institute (ITI) and has built a network of mime professionals across four continents, including Iran. Since 2017, the group has hosted specialized and hybrid global conferences and regularly conducts masterclasses and training sessions for emerging artists. In welcoming Ghajar to its growing circle of laureates, the organization said, "You are both a leader and a follower, a student and a teacher."

## Iran reinstates standalone Fajr Int'l Film Festival after two-year pause

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Cinema Organization appointed Rouhollah Hosseini as director of the revived Fajr International Film Festival, set to take place in early December, the Farabi Cinema Foundation said. The decision marks the formal return of the international section as a separate event after a two-year merger with the national festival. The change reverses a 2021 move by the then-management to consolidate both segments, a shift that risked the festival's standing with FIAPF, the International Federation of Film Producers Associations, ISNA wrote. The upcoming edition—likely the 39th—faces a tight deadline. With fewer than four months to go, organizers are racing against the clock. No venue has been finalized. Although Charsou Cineplex previously hosted the event, its role remains unclear due to recent renovations. Mellat Cineplex is under consideration, but no official decision has been announced. Hosseini, currently the deputy for

supervision and evaluation at the Cinema Organization of Iran, replaces speculation around a well-known actor being tapped for the post. His appointment aims to steady the ship after months of ambiguity surrounding the event's timeline and leadership. The Fajr International Film Festival ran separately for five years from 2015, under directors Alireza Rezadad, Reza Mirkarimi, and Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour. It was known for high-caliber foreign selections, restored classics, and professional workshops that drew widespread attention from domestic and international filmmakers. Critics, however, have questioned the timing of the newly scheduled festival, which will fall in early December—an off-peak slot following the closure of most major international film festivals. The cinema organization has defended the shift, calling it a "strategic repositioning" to draw greater focus to Iranian cinema. Several films had already registered under the original call for entries issued earlier this year, and more



are expected to apply once the updated call is published "within days." The Farabi Foundation is reportedly in contact with foreign filmmakers and distributors. Still, uncertainties linger. Industry insiders have raised concerns over the compressed planning window, limited budget, and the broader regional climate. The lack of clarity over the festival's name and structure also fuels debate, with questions over whether two separate events under the "Fajr" banner within the same year might confuse audiences and stakeholders. Despite the hurdles, organizers say the aim is to deliver a festival that lives up to the brand's legacy and Iran's cultural ambitions. Whether they can pull it off in time remains to be seen.

## Iran tapped for Ramsar leadership role in global wetland governance

## Social Desk

Iran was elected as the representative for South and West Asia on the Ramsar Convention's Standing Committee during the COP15 summit in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, according to the country's Department of Environment. The committee, the executive body of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, comprises 18 elected countries, along with international observers. It holds annual meetings in Switzerland to steer global wetland policy between triennial conferences, IRNA reported. Iran's new seat gives it a formal voice in shaping strategy, overseeing secretariat operations, and managing international funding streams such as the Wetlands for the Future Fund. As one of Asia's three voting members, Iran will be directly involved in drafting future resolutions and responding to wetland emergencies, such as droughts and biodiversity threats. The current committee is chaired by Zimbabwe, with the vice-chairmanship passing to the next COP host. Iran was also unanimously elected vice-president of the 173-member Ramsar COP during this year's summit, which runs from July 23 to 31. The appointment comes



as the convention welcomes Saudi Arabia as its newest signatory. The Ramsar Convention, signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, promotes the "wise use" of wetlands and now recognizes 25 Iranian sites. It also designates "wetland cities" committed to sustainable development. Three new Iranian cities—Babol, Kiashahr, and Gandoman—were officially certified at COP15, joining two earlier members, Bandar Khamir and Varzaneh. Iran has hosted the Ramsar Regional Center for Central and West Asia since 2005, following a 2002 decision by convention members. The center helps coordinate regional wetland conservation initiatives and facilitates access to global environmental support.