

# Iran, Armenia ink cinema cooperation deal

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Armenia signed a comprehensive cinema cooperation agreement on Tuesday during Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's official visit to Yerevan, marking a fresh push to strengthen cultural ties between the neighboring nations. The memorandum aims to bolster film industry collaboration between the two countries through joint productions, technical exchanges and commercial distribution networks, IRNA reported. Raed Faridzadeh, head of Cinema Organization of Iran, and David Banuchyan, his Armenian counterpart, signed the deal in the presence of Pezeshkian and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at a ceremony in the Armenian capital. The agreement encompasses several key areas including mutual film screen-

ings and commercial distribution, reciprocal invitations to cinema festivals, and facilitated participation of filmmakers and industry professionals in bilateral projects. Both nations committed to promoting joint productions spanning feature films, documentaries, shorts and animations focusing on their shared history, culture and traditions. The pact also covers technical knowledge exchange and student-teacher programs in cinema education. Under the terms, filmmakers will gain easier access to shooting locations and studio facilities in both countries. The deal includes provisions for joint film weeks, copyright protection for cinematic works, and establishment of an Iranian Young Cinema Association office in Yerevan. Industry insiders view the agreement as a "significant step" towards expand-



Cinema Organization of Iran's Head Raed Faridzadeh (L) and Armenian counterpart David Banuchyan hold a signed cinema cooperation agreement during a ceremony in Yerevan, August 19, 2025.

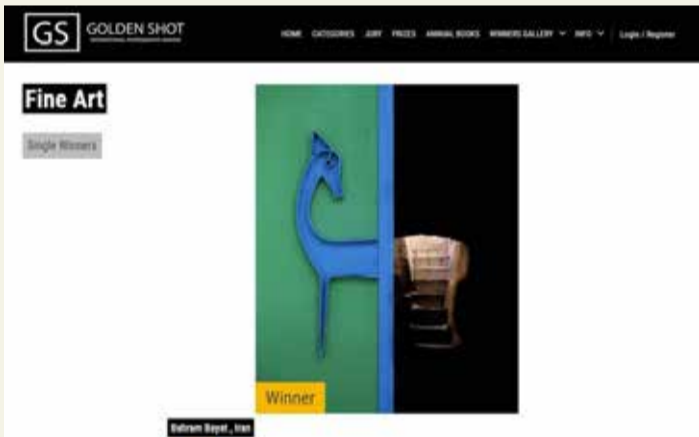
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ing Iran's regional cinema partnerships. Armenia's film sector, though smaller than Iran's established industry, has shown growing international recognition in recent years. The signing formed part of a broader diplomatic push during Pezeshkian's visit, which saw multiple bilateral agreements inked between the two nations. Armenia's and Iran's foreign ministries also signed a memorandum on political consultations for 2025-2027. Previous cooperation between the countries had been limited to a Statement of Mutual Understanding between Armenia's National Cinema Center and



Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation, making table upgrade in bilateral film industry relations.

## Iranian photographer Bayat triumphs at Golden Shot in Sharjah



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian photographer Bahram Bayat won two accolades at the Golden Shot Photography Awards 2025 held in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. Bayat clinched first place in the Fine Art Single Image category and received an Honorable Mention in the Urban Life Single Image category, IRNA re-

ported. The Golden Shot Photography Awards, renowned for recognizing exceptional talent across various photographic genres, attracted entries from around the globe. Bayat's winning images were selected from thousands of submissions, highlighting his distinctive artistic vision. Bayat, based in Zanjan, Iran,



is celebrated for his compelling documentary and fine art photography. His work has been showcased in numerous exhibitions internationally and domestically, reflecting his dedication to visual storytelling. In addition to his photographic pursuits, Bayat contributes to the arts through teaching and collaborations with esteemed cultural publications.

## Armenian State Symphony to perform at Persepolis

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Armenian State Symphony will perform at Persepolis in southern Iran on September 22, in the presence of senior officials from both Iran and Armenia, Deputy Culture Minister Hojatollah Ayoubi said. He also revealed plans to streamline access for pilgrims travelling to the Armenian Church (Qara Kelisa) in north-western Iran. In the run-up to the concert, Ayoubi outlined how the Armenian ensemble's centenary celebration will "light up" Persepolis, symbolizing goodwill and cultural harmony. He explained that the concert forms part of deeper co-operation across tourism, culture and heritage sectors between the two countries. The performance marks a striking cultural milestone in Tehran-Yerevan relations. It follows recent agreements to ease vehicle-based pil-



grimage travel to Qara Kelisa, where "roughly 4,000" Armenian pilgrims visited Iran this year. Ayoubi said the Armenian Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports is expected in Iran soon, as both countries advance collaboration in heritage promotion and tourism infrastructure. Ayoubi described the visit of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian to Armenia as a "welcome step", saying it helped remove significant tourism barriers. "This journey is extremely timely," he said, adding the government delegation in-

cludes several senior cultural and tourism figures. He added that key cultural and tourism documents were reviewed during the visit to pave the way for smoother travel and enhanced cultural exchange. The minister said that vehicle access will be simplified especially for pilgrims to Qara Kelisa near Khoy, a route used annually by Armenian worshippers. "We intend to provide special measures," he noted, referencing the recent 4,000-strong arrival of pilgrims, and emphasizing the importance of safe, easy travel.

## 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit' to compete at 30th Busan Int'l Film Festival

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Shahram Mokri's latest feature, 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit,' will have its world premiere in the Vision section of the 30th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF), which runs from October 3 to 12, in Busan, South Korea. The film marks Mokri's return to the festival, following the screening of his short film Ando-C at the 14th BIFF. 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit' is a co-production between Tajikistan and the United Arab Emirates, and features performances in Persian, Tajik, and Russian. The narrative follows a woman who, after a car accident, begins to perceive her surroundings in increasingly surreal ways, blurring the lines between reality and illusion. The film's international distribution is managed by DreamLab Films, led by Nasrin Mirshab. The Vision section at BIFF is renowned for showcasing innovative works by emerging and established Asian filmmakers. This year's lineup includes films from countries such as Japan, India, Indonesia, and Kazakh-



stan, reflecting the festival's commitment to presenting diverse cinematic voices. Mokri's previous works, including 'Fish & Cat' and 'Careless Crime,' have garnered international acclaim for their inventive storytelling and cinematic techniques.

## Iran pressed to avert demographic decline with stronger social policies

## Social Desk

Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni on Tuesday warned that Iran's population could shrink to under 40mn within decades if present trends continue, urging officials and civil groups to take swift action to avert what he called a "major" threat to the nation's future. The minister said low birth rates and changing lifestyles had left the country in a precarious demographic position, IRNA reported. He argued that social issues should be tackled with "social" rather than security-driven approaches and pressed for stronger grassroots involvement to strengthen cohesion. Officials say the government must throw its weight behind family support measures and economic relief to encourage higher birth rates. Momeni insisted that the state's role should be to "clear obstacles" and create space for civic organizations rather than subsume them. The warning comes as Iran faces other



pressing social challenges. Rapid ageing means that by mid-century almost one in three Iranians will be over 60. At the same time, drought and water scarcity are driving people from rural areas into already strained cities, a trend that risks leaving swathes of villages abandoned. Economic pressures remain at the forefront. Inflation, youth unemployment and the rising cost of housing and education weigh heavily on households, while many young couples delay or avoid having children.