



Pezeshkian praises emergency medics, vows broader healthcare access

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday hailed emergency workers as the “frontline” of the nation’s health system and promised to expand access for low-income and elderly citizens, as the country marked 50 years of pre-hospital emergency care. Speaking at a ceremony in Tehran, Pezeshkian praised the “round-the-clock” efforts of medics and said their service without regard to race, belief or status embodied a deeply human approach, president.ir reported. “When you rush to the side of a patient, you do not ask who they are,” he said. “You simply try to ease their pain.” He called on institutions to adopt the same outlook, arguing that such an approach could ease divisions and strengthen national unity. Emergency personnel, he added, showed what it meant to put “the best service in the

shortest time” before citizens. Pezeshkian stressed that the government’s “justice-based” health policy placed the most vulnerable at the top of the agenda. He warned that poverty, aging and lack of knowledge left many unable to protect themselves and required targeted programs. “We are obliged to give priority to those who face the greatest risks,” he said. The president also turned to the wider health network, urging hospitals to improve productivity and reduce costs for patients. Later in the day, he inaugurated a new 550-bed wing of Fayaz Bakhsh Hospital in southern Tehran, operated by the state-run Social Security Organization. Built over 12 years, the facility has 21 operating rooms and one of the largest emergency departments in the country. “These hospitals are built with public insurance contributions,” Pezeshkian



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of Iran’s pre-hospital emergency care in Tehran, September 16, 2025.
● president.ir

said. “They must deliver the highest efficiency.” He pointed to unused space that could house outpatient clinics and suggested installing solar panels to cut energy bills. The president also urged managers to address chronic congestion in crowded neighborhoods where major hospitals are located. He recommended working with private investors to build parking structures to ease traffic and improve access for patients. At both events, Pezeshkian returned to the theme of equity. He said citizens in every province should be able to count on timely, quality treatment regardless of geography or income. Raising effi-



ciency in public hospitals, he argued, would help contain costs and ensure that pensioners and the poor received proper care.

VP urges expatriate artists to return, pledges revival of cinema



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran’s First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref on Tuesday urged expatriate artists to return home and told the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to ease their way back, as the government seeks to revive the country’s struggling film industry. Speaking at a meeting of the Supreme Council of Iranian Cinema, Aref said filmmakers should act as “narrators” of national power, IRNA reported. He voiced concern over reports of Iranian performers living in hardship



Iran’s First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (2nd R) attends the meeting of the Supreme Council of Iranian Cinema on September 16, 2025.
● fvpresident.ir

abroad, including one in Los Angeles who had been forced into minor roles to make ends meet. “Some reports about the living conditions of Iranians abroad are concerning,” he said. “Disputes should remain with brothers at home, not in a foreign land.” Aref instructed the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to prioritize policies that encourage expatriate artists to return. He said the initiative is part of a broader government strategy to bring Iranians back from overseas. During the session, two memorandums of understanding were signed – one on housing for cinema professionals and another on expanding their insurance coverage. Aref said Iranian cinema has been on a “downward trajectory” despite the

country’s cultural heritage. He urged the culture minister to quickly draft a plan to raise cinema’s standing and warned that filmmakers must address social issues without resorting to pessimism. He contrasted the unity shown during a recent 12-day war with the 50 percent turnout in last year’s presidential election, saying cinema could help strengthen national cohesion. The council agreed to fund documentaries, short films and animations about the conflict. The vice president also called for deeper cultural cooperation with regional neighbors and international artists drawn to Iran’s civilization. He outlined a 10-year development plan that includes new movie theaters in cities with more than 100,000 residents and simplified tax procedures for filmmakers.

Iran picks ‘Cause of Death: Unknown’ as official Oscar entry for 2026

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran selected ‘Cause of Death: Unknown’ as its official submission for the 2026 Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, the Farabi Cinema Foundation announced Tuesday following a unanimous vote by a nine-member selection committee. The decision came from a shortlist of five films, including ‘The Old Bachelor,’ ‘Woman and Child,’ ‘Raha,’ and ‘Call Me Ziba.’ The committee, which reviewed 84 eligible entries, determined that Ali Zarnegar’s ‘Cause of Death: Unknown’ best represents contemporary Iranian cinema on the global stage. The film follows seven passengers traveling from Shahdad to Kerman in Iran’s Lut Desert before sunrise. When one passenger dies unexpectedly, the group discovers a hidden sum of money on the body. With no doctor available to issue a death cer-

tificate, emergency services refuse to intervene. Facing a moral dilemma, the passengers decide to take the matter to the local police, grappling with ethical choices amid extraordinary circumstances. The selection highlights the depth and diversity of Iranian filmmaking. “The film captures raw human emotion under pressure,” said one member of the committee, which includes prominent figures such as filmmaker Abolhassan Davoodi, actress Pantea Panahiha, cinematographer Hooman Behmanesh, and Oscar Academy member Mohammad Reza Delpak. ‘Cause of Death: Unknown’ has earned acclaim on the festival circuit. At the 2023 Shanghai International Film Festival, it received nominations for Best Film, Best Director, and Best Actor, while Davood Malek Hosseini won Best Cinematography. The ensemble cast features Banipal Shoosmoon, Alireza Sanifar, Neda Jebraeili, Ali Mohammad Radmanesh,



and Zakiyeh Behbahani, among others. Produced by Majid Barzegar, the film has been praised for its tension-driven storytelling and striking visuals. The Farabi Cinema Foundation, which oversees Iran’s submissions to international awards, emphasized that the choice reflects the country’s commitment to promoting its cinematic achievements abroad. The foundation said the film “stands out for its narrative originality and artistic execution,” continuing Iran’s tradition of presenting compelling stories to the global film community.

Snapback not to ...

Over time, the country has become hardened and experienced under such pressure, having learned and mastered ways to circumvent the restrictions. One of the most recent measures against Iran has been the “snapback” mechanism of the 2015 nuclear deal which was triggered by the France, Germany and the UK to return all UN sanctions on Tehran. The mechanism was wielded by the West as a fresh tool of pressure and intimidation. Yet, given that Iran has already endured the toughest sanctions imposed by Washington since its withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018, snapback is unlikely to prove decisive. There is hardly a type of sanction the nation has not faced. Even in sectors that, by Washington’s own admission, should not fall under sanctions — such as food and medicine — the Iranian people have been subjected to severe restrictions. In practice, patients with special medical conditions have often been left in life-threatening circumstances due to these constraints. It was only thanks to the ingenuity of Iranian researchers and

domestic producers that the situation was kept under control. For this reason, snapback does not amount to an extraordinary threat. What will determine the country’s ability to navigate the current pressures is disciplined, well-planned management at home. Today’s leaders must act in a resolute, almost campaign-like spirit to tackle economic bottlenecks and other challenges head-on. At the same time, exaggerating the impact of the mechanism or other sanctions — thereby playing into the enemy’s hands — would only bolster hostile psychological warfare. While snapback, like any other sanction, may bring negative consequences, its fallout can be managed through unity and national solidarity, just as before. Active diplomacy remains a critical pillar of this strategy. Iran must strengthen ties not only with neighboring states but with the broader Islamic world and friendly nations across the globe. The more dynamic and assertive Tehran’s regional and international diplomacy becomes, the lighter the weight of sanctions will be on the national economy.