

Minister: Shahriar bridged 'lofty language', everyday speech in Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi paid tribute to Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar at an international congress in Tabriz on Thursday, calling the late poet a bridge between "lofty language" and the everyday speech of ordinary people. The two-day gathering, held Sept. 17-18 to mark Iran's National Day of Persian Poetry and Literature, drew officials, writers and scholars from inside and outside the country, farhang.gov.ir reported. The date coincides with the anniversary of Shahriar's death in 1988, a day officially designated to honor Iran's centuries-old literary tradition.

Salehi told the audience he was attending on behalf of President Masoud Pezeshkian, who sent a written message describing Iran as "the land of poetry and thought, mysticism and epic." The president praised Shahriar as a poet who kept the "flame of the Persian ghazal" alive during turbulent times, while also uplifting his native Azarbaijani language with works such as the celebrated 'Heydar Babaya Salam'. Shahriar, who wrote in both Persian and Turkish, remains a rare figure in Iran's modern canon. Salehi noted that the poet's work combined high literary style with the language of the street, making him accessible to intellectuals and ordinary readers alike.



Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi speaks at an international congress in Tabriz, Iran, on September 18, 2025, commemorating the Persian poet Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar.
● IRNA

"He managed to link classical diction with the people's voice — something many tried but few achieved," the minister said. He also highlighted Shahriar's dual heritage, describing him as both a devout writer inspired by the Qur'an and a patriot deeply attached to his hometown of Tabriz. "For him, Iran and Azerbaijan walked hand in hand," Salehi said, adding that the poet treated both allegiances as equal parts of his identity.



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'Alone Together' triumphs at Algerian festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Omid Mirzaei's short film 'Alone Together' clinched two major awards at the 5th Imedghassen International Film Festival in Batna, Algeria. The festival, held from September 10 to 16 at the historic Imedghassen monument, showcased 53 films from 27 countries, Mehr News Agency reported. Mirzaei's narrative earned the Best Director Award, while Iranian actor Alireza Sani Far received the Best Actor accolade for his compelling performance. The film delves into the complexities of human connection, resonating deeply with audiences and jurors alike. Also, the festival honored child actor Parham Gholamloo with a special mention for his role in the film. Previously, 'Alone Together' garnered an honorary award at the 47th Lucas Film Festival in Germany and a special jury prize at the Zoom Film Festival in Poland. It has also been featured in numerous domestic festivals, includ-



ing the Tehran International Short Film Festival, and was a finalist at the Fajr Film Festival and the Iranian Short Film Association (ISFA) awards. 'Alone Together' is set to participate in the 20th Batumi Art Festival in Georgia and the 10th Dalmatia Film Festival, further cementing its status on the global film circuit.

Iran courts foreign investment in health tourism

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is stepping up efforts to attract foreign investment in health tourism, Head of Investment and Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ali-Asghar Shalbafian said during the Tourism Investments Forum in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The forum, which was held with the participation of the UN Tourism, Shalbafian highlighted Iran's strategic roadmap for developing international partnerships in wellness tourism, IRNA reported. He outlined investment incentives designed to encourage overseas firms to tap into the country's growing health travel sector. The event drew tourism ministers, senior officials, and ambassadors from Russia, China, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, India, Pakistan, Czech Republic, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Austria, Montenegro and Australia. Shalbafian participated in a special-

ized panel on 'Investment Session: Healing Highlands: Investment Opportunities in Mountain, Health and Wellness Tourism,' sharing Iran's vision for regional cooperation and experience exchange. Describing Iran's health tourism potential as "outstanding," Shalbafian emphasized the country's readiness to leverage natural and regional assets, including highland therapeutic destinations, to attract international capital. He also presented recent incentives and policy measures aimed at facilitating foreign investment and streamlining partnerships in the sector. Iran's tourism industry has been gaining momentum, with 167 new projects worth \$166 million launched across 31 provinces in September, reflecting government efforts to expand infrastructure and diversify the economy beyond traditional energy exports. Authorities aim to double hospitality capacity under the country's Sev-



Ali-Asghar Shalbafian (2nd L, also seen C on the screen), head of investment and economic affairs at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, attends the Tourism Investments Forum in Dushanbe, September 17, 2025.
● IRNA

enth Development Plan, increasing accommodations from 1,843 to over 3,600 units and beds from 455,000 to 900,000 to host up to 15 million tourists. Shalbafian said Iran stands ready to roll out the "red carpet" for foreign investors seeking to capitalize on the sector's long-term growth potential.

BRICS sets up literary network in Brazil to boost cultural clout, Iran among participants

Arts & Culture Desk

Delegates from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Iran signed a declaration at the second BRICS Traditional Values Forum in Brazil to set up the BRICS Literature Network, an international platform for writers, scholars and publishers. The initiative, first proposed by China during talks with the China Writers Association in June 2025, is intended to broaden multilateral cultural exchange, IRNA reported. The new network underscores BRICS' effort to widen cooperation beyond trade and politics, creating space for cultural diplomacy and literary dialogue. Iran, which became a full member of BRICS in January 2024, is taking part

alongside Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia as newer voices in the grouping's cultural outreach. Russian Union of Writers co-chair Vadim Terekhin and Brazilian Academy of Letters president Marcos Freitas will head the network, joined by representatives from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia. The launch coincided with a round table on the BRICS Literary Award, first established in November 2024. Terekhin presented the longlist of nominees, which includes authors from Iran as well as other BRICS and partner states. Indian parliamentarian Hemang Joshi, a member of the award's orga-

nizing committee, called the prize "a new chapter in the world of literature." He added, "Art and literature know no boundaries. This platform unites communities and celebrates literature at an international level." Ethiopian lawmaker Zelalem Melak Bogale said the award offered a chance for nations to "get to know each other better through the prism of their culture and traditions." The award will move forward in three stages, beginning with a longlist in September in Brazil, followed by a shortlist in October in Shanghai, and ending with the winner's announcement in Moscow in November. The top prize, financed by the Eurasian Book Agency, is one million rubles (\$11,000).

Iranian rheumatologist Farhad Shahram wins APLAR Master Award in Japan

Social Desk

Iranian professor Farhad Shahram of Tehran University of Medical Sciences received the Master Award at the 27th Asia-Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology (APLAR) Congress in Fukuoka, Japan, the university said on Friday. The award is given annually to senior specialists across the Asia-Pacific region who have left a lasting mark on the field. Shahram, a leading figure in rheumatology research and training, was recognized for his decades of teaching and scientific



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work. The "Master Award," one of APLAR's highest honors, underlines his standing among regional pioneers of the discipline. Shahram has built a career combining rigorous research with mentoring younger doctors. His work at the university's Rheumatology Research Center has shaped both clinical prac-

tice and policy. Colleagues describe him as a scholar who "opened doors" for the next generation while raising the profile of Iranian medicine abroad. The accolade places him among a select circle of regional specialists, including Iranian rheumatologists Fereydoon Davatchi, Mahmoud.