



Iran's scholar Tarhandeh to judge 2025 Bratislava Illustration Biennial

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian children's literature scholar Sahar Tarhandeh was appointed to the international jury of the 30th Bratislava Illustration Biennial, scheduled to open in Slovakia in October 2025, the Children's Book Council of Iran announced on Saturday. The biennial, known by its initials BIB, is regarded as one of the world's most influential showcases of children's book illustration. Since its launch in 1967, it has been held every two years in the Slovak capital with backing from UNESCO, the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), and Slovakia's culture ministry, IBNA reported. Tarhandeh, a board member of the Children's Book Council of

Iran, has built her reputation through more than two decades of work in criticism, promotion and research on children's literature. She previously served as a judge for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, often called the "Nobel Prize for children's literature." Her nomination to the Bratislava jury was put forward jointly by the Children's Book Council of Iran, the Iranian Illustrators Society and the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, which serve as IBBY's national body in Iran. The three institutions oversaw the selection and endorsement process. Alongside Tarhandeh's appointment, two young Iranians will take part in BIB's side programs. Illustrator Melika Jamali has been



selected for the Albin Brunovský workshop, while researcher Parisa Beabadi will join a symposium on how the biennial has shaped trends in illustration. Both were chosen through an open call process. The 2025 edition, which runs through January 2026, will be staged at Bratislava Castle, featuring exhibitions, workshops and conferences for artists and scholars from around the globe.



Eight Persian plays head to Yerevan's HIGH FEST

Arts & Culture Desk

Eight Iranian theater productions will be staged at the 23rd HIGH FEST International Performing Arts Festival in the Armenian capital from October 1 to 8, Albert Beigjani, head of the festival's Iran section, announced. HIGH FEST, Armenia's largest theater gathering, is set to bring together companies from 12 countries, including France, the Netherlands, China, Hungary, Belgium, the United States, South Korea, Russia and Iran, inn.ir reported. The weeklong showcase has built a reputation as a meeting point for East and West, often drawing producers on the lookout for fresh talent and cross-border collaborations. The Iranian lineup features five stage plays, three street performances and two puppet shows, with productions from both Tehran and provincial cities such as Mashhad, Tabriz and Sari. Works include 'Antigone' by Amir Asani with Tehran's Negativ troupe, 'The Secret of the Conquerors' 'Defeat' by Navid Khoddam Abbasi, and 'Medea Will Not Perform' by Marjan Aqanouri. Street performances such as 'Hero' by Sahar



Mohseni and Ali RabiHAVIPour from Sari are also part of the program. Beigjani stressed that participation for Iranian groups runs through Dimak, the Tehran-based artistic company he directs. "This is the only channel," he said, underscoring the importance of coordination for access to the international stage. The festival will open with China's production 'Lightseeker: The Story of the Young Mao Zedong.' Organizers also said an Avignon Festival delegation, including the French city's mayor and senior festival executives, will attend under a cooperation agreement between the two events.

Iranian artists to showcase works in Oman

Arts & Culture Desk

Thirty-one Iranian painters and craftspeople will present 34 works in an online group exhibition titled 'Without Date' on Sunday, September 21, in partnership with Omani cultural firm Pioneers of Global Trade and Production. Curated by Iranian painter and director Aynaz Zarei, the show brings together artists from across Iran, including Amid Rajabi, Arshida Jahanpour, Ava Moarefi, Fatemeh Firouzi and Sonia Azizi. Their works range from contemporary painting to handicrafts. Zarei said the project aims to break down barriers and let Omani and international audiences "connect directly"



with Iranian art. She called the show a chance to keep cultural exchanges alive despite borders.

The event, which goes live on Sunday, will remain accessible until September 27.

Asiatic cheetah conservation plan revived after six-year pause

Social Desk

Iran's Department of Environment (DoE) has relaunched its flagship Asiatic cheetah conservation project after a six-year suspension, Hamid Zohrabi, Deputy Head of Natural Environment and Biodiversity of DoE said, citing fresh sightings of the endangered species in North and South Khorasan provinces. The program, which once drew international partners, is being rolled out with new funding, local community involvement and foreign expertise, ISNA reported. Officials say recent evidence of cheetahs roaming beyond their traditional range is a sign of a "dynamic" population that may be expanding into fresh habitats. Zohrabi said a "special plan" for South Khorasan had already pushed spending above \$830,000 last year, with funds topping \$1.66 million once vehicles and equipment were added. Nationwide, nearly \$8.3 million was spent in 2024 to shore up protection efforts, he said, with more



earmarked for this year. "The cheetahs seen in South Khorasan may not be the same as those in Touran," Zohrabi noted. "If confirmed, that would sharply raise the odds of survival for the species." He added that game guards are being recruited and trained to cover the six million hectares of cheetah habitat. The department is also working to bring back foreign cooperation. Past funding and expertise from groups in Africa, Asia and Europe dried up after policy shifts under previous administrations. "Winning them back is no easy task," Zohrabi admitted, but said talks are underway with India and South

Africa. Pretoria-based veterinarian Peter Caldwell is advising Iran's semi-captive breeding center at Touran, where officials hope to see cubs born in coming seasons. The facility has expanded tenfold, with upgraded enclosures, veterinary care and reduced human contact to meet global standards. "We are close to a fully international-level site," Zohrabi said. New financing has been released to complete clinical sections ahead of the next breeding cycle. On infrastructure, the ministry has resumed fencing along the Abbasabad-Miami road, known locally as the "death highway," where 13 cheetahs were killed in car collisions over the past decade. Iran Ministry of Roads and Urban Development has now pledged resources to accelerate the work, following a visit this month by environment chief Shina Ansari. Zohrabi said securing that corridor is "critical" to avoid further losses. "If both agencies push ahead in tandem, we can make it safe much faster," he said.

Iran stages dual art shows in Yerevan to honor peace, Armenia's independence

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Embassy in Armenia opened a group art exhibition titled 'Color and Narrative' at Yerevan's Blue Mosque on Friday, bringing together works by 86 Iranian artists to mark International Peace Day and Armenia's Independence Day. The showcase, organized by the cultural section of the Iranian Embassy along with Daya Cultural and Artistic Center and Avaye Nasr Iranians Institute, highlights paintings, sculptures and handcrafted dolls described as "storytellers of peace." The pieces explore themes of inner calm, harmony with nature and the scars of war. The exhibition will run through September 21, ILNA reported. The opening ceremony began with the national anthems of Armenia and Iran, followed by remarks from Iranian cultural attaché Mohammad Asadi Movahed. He thanked Armenia for its steady support of joint cultural work and underlined the "deep historical and civilizational ties" binding the two neighbors. "Such programs are a bridge for strengthening friendship



between the two nations," he said. Asadi Movahed added that art "knows no borders" and could serve as a vehicle to promote peace and mutual understanding worldwide. He also used the occasion to condemn what he called global indifference to violence against civilians in Gaza, stressing that "nations rooted in culture and civilization are peace-seeking and aspire to calm for humanity." A day earlier, another Iranian exhibition titled 'Friendship Through Art' opened at the Artists' Union of Armenia, drawing local and foreign visitors. Together, the two shows mark the second set of joint cultural events staged by Tehran and Yerevan this year, underscoring a push to deepen people-to-people links through artistic exchange.