



Persian play wins three top prizes at Italy's Sele Teatero Fest

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian playwright and director Jafar Mahyari took home three major prizes at the 27th Sele Teatero Fest in southern Italy, with his performance piece 'The Love' sweeping best play, best direction and best stage design. The festival, part of the larger 41st Sele d'Oro cultural gathering in Campania, draws international theater troupes each September, ILNA reported.

Mahyari's Tehran-based company represented Iran this year with a work described by the jury as a daring mix of body movement, live music and narrative form. The international jury – Joeke Albers of the Netherlands, Quinto Romagnoli of Italy, Jonas Bucevicius of Lithuania and Slovakia's Silvia Bartáková Komaromiová – awarded the production.

The organizers hailed the piece's "transformative" treatment of routine, taboo and love. 'The Love' tells the story of a man worn down by the emptiness of his daily routine, caught in the grip of hidden taboos, until an unexpected encounter with love steers him toward transformation. The play, carried by Mahyari's own performance, unfolds through physical movement rather than dialogue, accompanied by live Santur (hammered dulcimer) and Daf (Persian frame drum). Other contributors included assistant and international coordinator Hamideh Barmakshad, poster designer Mehdi Raygani and media adviser Mahmoud Nouraei. The project was staged under the patronage of Barmak Cultural and Artistic Institute, directed by Mahshid Barmakshad. 'The Love' has previously been



staged in Europe, including Würzburg Neunerplatz Theater in 2017 and Lyon's Théâtre Les Carbones in 2019, before a run in Tehran in mid-2022.



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Iran sets out heritage tourism strategy at Ankara COMCEC meeting



IRNA

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Iran outlined a series of proposals on sustainable heritage tourism at the 25th meeting of the COMCEC Tourism Working Group in the Turkish capital on Sunday, officials from Tehran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said.

The Ankara gathering, convened under the Organization of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), drew representatives from more than a dozen member states including Iraq, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Burkina Faso, Azerbaijan, Mozambique, Malaysia, Egypt, Albania, Oman, Uganda and Sri Lanka, IRNA reported.

It focused on "improving the sustainability of heritage tourism", according to participants.

Moslem Shojaei, head of foreign tourism marketing at the ministry, said Iran used the forum to table strategies centered on responsible use of historic sites, legal frameworks for private sector engagement in restoration projects, and regional co-operation across OIC members.

"Iran, with its deep-rooted and diverse cultural heritage, has secured its place as a leading destination in the region," he noted, pointing to rising international demand for heritage-based experiences.

The Iranian delegation, led by Bita Sa-

deghzadeh from the ministry's foreign tourism office, presented a detailed report highlighting opportunities to draw international travelers through cultural festivals, intangible heritage events and local traditions.

Delegates were urged to register indigenous ceremonies in national tourism calendars to strengthen visibility and ensure long-term protection.

Other proposals included investment in rural tourism infrastructure while preserving vernacular architecture, promotion of UNESCO-linked heritage networks for knowledge-sharing, and expanded training to empower local communities in site management.

The report also recommended digital tools such as virtual reality, interactive mapping and online platforms to market heritage globally.

Shojaei stressed that economic spin-offs from heritage tourism – both direct and indirect – could play a significant role in development.

He argued that "strategic revision" of tourism policies, anchored in sustainability, was now essential for OIC countries that share cultural and civilizational bonds.

VP urges transparency, safeguards for national data

Social Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref on Sunday called for greater transparency and strict safeguards in handling the country's official data, stressing that the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) must operate independently and without political interference as preparations for the 2026 national census advance.

The remarks, delivered at the Supreme Statistical Council and the first steering meeting for the 2026 Population and Housing Census, underscored the government's attempt to shift from costly household surveys to a modern, registry-based model, fvpresident.ir reported.

Officials say the change, aligned with global practice, will cut costs, improve timeliness and provide a more accurate picture of Iran's social and economic landscape. Aref insisted that access to information for students and researchers would not be curtailed. But he argued strict protocols must regulate how sensitive material is stored and shared to block "rivals and adversaries" from exploiting economic data.

Aref stressed that the government would not "instruct" the SCI to massage figures for political convenience. "Any manipulation of data is treachery against science, the people and the nation's



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (C) attends the Supreme Statistical Council and the first steering meeting for the 2026 Population and Housing Census on September 21, 2025.

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planning," he said, praising the center's "efficiency" and its corps of precise, "dedicated" experts. He warned against what he described as "unwarranted interference" by officials, arguing it alienates young people from national values. The SCI, he said, must release information in a "transparent" manner while guarding confidentiality. "Data are no trivial matter," Aref told the gathering. "Combined, they form the basis for strategic decisions, and must be safeguarded as the very honor of governance."

The registry-based approach, to be launched in 2026, will draw on 13 government databases, from civil registration and taxation to insurance and education records, while still employing limited fieldwork to fill gaps. Similar systems have long been adopted in Nordic countries, South Korea and Estonia.

Gholamreza Goudarzi, head of the SCI, said the overhaul is driven by le-

gal obligations, market demands for real-time data and global shifts towards digital governance. "The time has come to replace fragmented and ad hoc statistics with a coordinated, networked system," he noted.

Officials also highlighted the need for "statistical literacy" among managers and urged media to help build public trust in official figures, after years of skepticism caused by multiple competing data sources.

The meeting approved measures to reinforce the Supreme Statistical Council and endorsed the transition to a hybrid census model.

Hamid Pourmohammadi, head of the state planning and budget organization, compared sound statistics to "governing in daylight" and said all ministries would be compelled to feed into the SCI's secure systems. Before the session, Aref toured the SCI's quality-control room, where staff demonstrated how datasets are checked before publication.

Eight years of...

Pilots flew under extremely difficult conditions and braved intense enemy air defenses in numerous missions, including the downing of Iraqi Mirage fighters. Prominent commanders and heroes such as Martyr Abbas Babaei guided and advanced operations, introducing innovations that tipped the balance in Iran's favor.

Despite the hardships and the loss of comrades, the war ultimately strengthened the nation. It taught vital lessons: The necessity of long-term defense planning, the importance of continuous training, and the imperative of advancing military technology. Today, Iran's Armed Forces, bolstered by the rich experience of the eight-year war and steady improvements in equipment and capabilities, are positioned with the readiness to face any military threat. The lessons of the Sacred Defense remain a cornerstone in Iran's defense and military

planning.

In recent years, Iran has made significant strides in developing missile technology, building drones, and enhancing radar systems. Despite challenges such as international sanctions and restrictions on access to advanced technologies, reliance on domestic expertise has enabled Iran to steadily upgrade its defense technologies.

The Air Force, which demonstrated ingenuity during the Iran-Iraq war by carrying out complex operations and securing the nation's skies, continues today to maintain an active and ready presence. With a diversified fleet, domestic aircraft engineering projects, expanding drone development, upgraded defense systems, and the establishment of underground bases and missile facilities, Iran has strengthened its defensive posture and built a deterrent shield for times of crisis.

In sum, by drawing on the experiences

of the war with Iraq, continually modernizing equipment, and training new generations of personnel, Iran has built substantial readiness against external threats. This preparedness now spans not only combat power but also intelligence, electronic warfare, and cyber tools.

On the anniversary of September 22, the Day of the Sacred Defense, tribute is due to all those who, in the most challenging of circumstances, defended their homeland with resolve and solidarity, sacrificing their lives for the independence and territorial integrity of the country. More than a commemoration, this day is a reminder of the enduring importance of safeguarding sovereignty, security, and national values against hostilities. Preserving and passing down the memory of the Sacred Defense to future generations is a historic and national duty, for the lessons of that war continue to shield the country against any aggression.