



37th Int'l Film Festival for Children and Youth

Minister: Future of nations rests on preserving childhood through cinema

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi said that "children's cinema must be recognized as a global language of empathy" as the country opened the 37th International Film Festival for Children and Youth in Isfahan.

The festival, running from October 4 to 8, has long served as Iran's flagship platform for young audiences, IRNA reported. Over four decades it has sought to showcase national identity while connecting cultures, a role that Salehi described as "a mission to remind us that the future of every society depends on preserving childhood and nurturing a creative, hopeful generation." Salehi said the timing of this year's edition carried deeper meaning. With Iran still mourning the victims of a recent 12-day war, including children and families, he said culture and cinema

now carry "a critical duty: to build a safer world and rekindle hope in a nation long tested." He called national unity Iran's "greatest asset for tomorrow" and argued it must be instilled from an early age through shared cultural experiences.

Raed Faridzadeh, deputy culture minister and head of the Cinema Organization of Iran, echoed the theme. He described children's cinema as "the clear mirror of dreams," both instructive and inspiring.

"This cinema is a window to the realm of imagination," he said. "It does not only entertain but educates, bonds hearts and sows hope."

Faridzadeh stressed that the festival honors the memory of children killed in recent attacks and seeks to "keep alight the lamp of hope in a world full of injustice." Festival director Hamed Ja'fari said this year's edition is marked by broad international partici-

pation. Guests and jurors from 20 countries — including Latin America, Europe and East Asia — are attending, making the international section "more prominent" than in past years.

According to Jafari, the festival received 393 submissions for the national competition, from which eight features, 19 shorts and 11 animations were selected.

In the international section, 183 films were reviewed, with nine features and nine shorts chosen for screening. He said the subjects reflect contemporary realities, including stories of children in Gaza and the 47 Iranian children killed in the recent conflict. The program also includes special awards for "12-Day War Children" and "Children of Gaza", alongside the Asian Film Award, signaling organizers' intention to tackle themes of war, loss and resilience through cinema.

In addition to professional juries,



the event features an unusually large youth jury of 1,556 children and teenagers, divided into boys' and girls' sections, who will vote on films and award two prizes directly to filmmakers. Organizers have also appointed

50 teenagers as a youth press corps, trained in reporting to cover screenings and panels. The initiative, Ja'fari said, ensures that young voices not only watch films but also take part in shaping the cultural conversation.

Salehi concluded by thanking artists, jurors, organizers and the young reporters, expressing hope that this edition would enrich Iran's cultural heritage and send abroad "a clear message of a united, hopeful Iran."

Grand Prix at Bratislava biennial 2025 goes to illustrator Sadeghian



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian illustrator Noshin Sadeghian has clinched the Grand Prix at the 30th Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB 2025) for her work in "The Roc Girl", announced on Friday at Bratislava Castle. "The Roc Girl", illustrated by Sadeghian and retold by Ahmad Akbarpour, was submitted as Iran's sole nominee and fought off international competition to

carry off the festival's top prize. This marks the third time an Iranian artist has been granted the Grand Prix of BIB, IRNA reported.

The book was put forward by Iran's Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (Kanoon) after a domestic selection process involving the Children's Book Council of Iran and the Iranian Illustrators Society.

Ten Iranian illustrators were initially shortlisted; ultimately, Sadeghian was chosen to represent the country.

Sadeghian is no stranger to global acclaim. In 2021, she won first prize in the Golden Pen contest at the 50th International Biennial of Illustration in Belgrade.

The following year, she was tapped to design the cover of the Belgrade biennial catalogue as the previous cycle's laureate. In 2022, she picked up the grand jury award at China's Ananas Illustration Festival, and that same

year she was named a winner at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in Italy.

The BIB biennial itself dates back to 1967, held every two years in Bratislava under the UNESCO and IBBY umbrella. The festival presents awards including the Grand Prix, Golden Apples, and Bronze Plaques.

Over the course of BIB 2025 — running from October 3, 2025 to January 11, 2026 — artists from Switzerland, China, Mexico, South Africa and South Korea received Golden Apples, while illustrators from Chile, Switzerland, Brazil, China and Slovakia won Bronze Plaques.

Previously, two Iranians—Alireza Goldouzian in 2005 and Hassan Moosavi in 2019—had received the Grand Prix. This latest victory thus revives Iran's standing on the BIB grand stage.

This year, Iranian-based children's literature scholar Sahar Tarhandeh also served as a juror for BIB 2025.

11th Baku International Book Fair hosts 400 Iranian titles

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened a 20-square-metre national pavilion at the 11th Baku International Book Fair on Wednesday, showcasing some 400 titles and hosting diplomatic and cultural dignitaries at the event in Azerbaijan's capital.

The pavilion is a key element of Iran's cultural diplomacy at the fair, designed to "bridge" Iranian and Azeri literary communities, IRNA reported. In the first hours, envoys from Qatar, Russia and Venezuela, the chair of Azerbaijan's parliamentary Culture Committee and the head of the Azerbaijani Writers' Union visited the booth. Their praised the "richness" and "diversity" of the volumes on display.

Iran is represented here by Iran Book and Literature House, voicing ambitions to expand its literary export and strengthen ties through the written word. The pavilion highlights not only poetry and fiction, but also children's literature, Persian language instruction, Iranology, scientific works, history, art and non-fiction.

On site, officials said the Iranian presence included publishers such as Nimaj and Seljuk Literary Agency. Panels will be held on translation, copyright, and the application of technology to reading.



The fair, running from October 1 to 7 at the Baku Expo Center under the theme "Techno-Human: Yesterday's Legend, Today's Event", features 123 local and 68 foreign exhibitors from 23 countries. Over 250 events are slated, from book signings to symposia.

In his opening address, Polad Bulbuloglu, chair of the Azerbaijani parliament's culture committee, said the fair "demonstrates Azerbaijan's cultural potential" and boosts its links to world literature.

Isa Habibbayli, president of Azerbaijan's Academy of Sciences, described it as a "pivotal event" in national cultural life.

No time for ...

Beyond the neighborhood, Russia and China are indispensable partners. Both countries opposed the instigation of the snap-back mechanism at the UN Security Council, and together they submitted a draft resolution calling for a six-month delay in its implementation to preserve space for diplomacy, though the measure failed to pass. Iran should now push for a joint high-level meeting with both countries to secure explicit commitments. A clear statement of opposition, backed by concrete trade and energy cooperation measures, would not only reassure markets but also signal to the West that Tehran

is not isolated. China, as Iran's largest oil buyer and leading trade partner, deserves special attention. Ensuring continuity of crude exports and joint projects in infrastructure and energy will be vital. Russia, for its part, can expand cooperation in defense, transport corridors and nuclear technology. Turning verbal opposition into practical support will require Iran's diplomats to work persistently, balancing short-term needs with long-term strategic alignment.

Iran should also carefully handle its relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Tehran has declared that its nuclear program will not be suspend-

ed and that enrichment activities will be resumed. Yet as a signatory to the NPT, Iran can protect its rights while simultaneously engaging with the agency to deny Western states any justification for escalatory measures. Active coordination with the IAEA can demonstrate transparency, ensure that Iran's peaceful nuclear ambitions are clearly communicated and block attempts by adversaries to portray Iran as a violator. Such engagement is not about compromise but about reinforcing Iran's position as a rational, rule-abiding actor — one that insists on its rights while leaving no room for fabricated accusations.

At the same time, Iran must send clear signals to Western governments. The message should be straightforward: maximum pressure, whether military or economic, will not force Iran into submission. Tehran is prepared to negotiate, but only within a framework that recognizes its rights, addresses its security concerns and offers tangible economic relief. This posture denies space to Israel and hardliners in Washington who aim to corner Iran diplomatically. It also underscores that negotiations are possible only when conducted on equal terms. Iran's readiness for talks, coupled with resilience against pressure, can shift the cost-ben-

efit calculus of its adversaries.

The reimposition of UN sanctions represents a major challenge, but it is not an existential crisis. What matters most is Iran's response. Passive diplomacy would allow external actors to frame the narrative and tighten pressure. Active, creative and multidimensional diplomacy, on the other hand, can buy time, preserve economic resilience and ultimately shift the balance toward dialogue on Iran's own terms. In this critical moment, Iran must act decisively to show that it is a rational player unwilling to be cornered — but ready to engage. Indeed, this is no time for diplomatic passivity.