



Fajr Int'l Film Festival serves as cultural beacon: Minister

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, underscored the significance of hosting the Fajr International Film Festival in the current national climate. During a signing ceremony for the festival's memorandum of understanding in Shiraz, Salehi emphasized that showcasing Iran's vibrancy to the world is crucial. "The more we can demonstrate that Iran remains lively and resilient despite challenges, the more we achieve our national interests," he stated, IRNA reported. Salehi highlighted the festival's role beyond cinema, viewing it as a national endeavor that fosters social confidence and normalizes the atmosphere. He noted that the presence of

numerous countries at the event contributes to this effect. "The Fajr International Film Festival is not merely a cinematic event; it is a national undertaking," he affirmed. The minister also acknowledged cinema's pivotal role in public diplomacy and cultural representation, describing it as a "recognized face" of Iranian culture. He expressed pride in the festival's esteemed status, attributing it to the collective efforts of the Iranian cinematic community. Regarding Shiraz as the festival's host city, Salehi praised its symbolic national significance. "Shiraz, the city of Sa'adi and Hafez, symbolizes Persian poetry and art," he remarked. He suggested that the festival offers an opportunity to redefine the relationship between poet-



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi (R) and Fars Governor General Hossein Ali Amiri exchange a memorandum of understanding on October 20, 2025, to host the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival in Shiraz, southwestern Iran.
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ry and cinema, aligning them as complementary wings of Iranian-Islamic civilization. The signing ceremony was attended by various dignitaries, including Fars Governor General Hossein Ali Amiri, who emphasized the province's rich cultural heritage. Amiri noted that the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has referred to Fars as "the land of religion, epic, and art," highlighting its embodiment of these values.



Tehran Int'l Short Film Festival turns lens on Iran's aging society



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The 42nd Tehran International Short Film Festival (TISFF) is underway at the Iran Mall Cinema Complex, spotlighting themes of aging, solitude, and the erosion of familial ties. The event, running from October 19 through October 23, is directed by Behrooz Shoaibi, and carries the theme "Rationality and Intellectualism." The festival's opening day featured a selection of films addressing Iran's growing elderly population and the social challenges they face, IRNA reported. Official statistics indicate that approximately 60% of elderly Irani-

ans, particularly women, live alone, a trend exacerbated by declining birth rates and shrinking household sizes. Among the notable films was "Tamaroz," directed and produced by Peyman and Pouya Inalouei. The social drama portrays an elderly man seeking companionship in his twilight years. Esmaeil Mehrabi's compelling performance as the isolated senior highlights the emotional depth of the narrative. The film subtly contrasts the dignity of old age with the profound need for human connection. Another standout was 'Goodbye Trash,' an allegorical film by Bahman and Bahram Ark, produced by Mehdi Badriou. The story centers on a solitary elderly Azerbaijani woman who forms an unusual bond with a garbage monster, symbolizing her emotional neglect. Mahrokh Rafizadeh's nuanced portrayal of the elderly woman captures the delicate balance between humor and pathos. Festival juror Mirona Radu from Romania praised Iranian cinema for its "great honesty" and its ability to authentically depict family dynamics. She emphasized the festival's role in fostering a fair platform for both established and emerging filmmakers.

Calls grow for a broader view of modern sculpture

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Iranian sculptor and academic Abbas Majidi urged critics to rethink narrow definitions of sculpture, saying the art form today extends "from abstract to conceptual" and should no longer be confined to traditional figurative carving. He referred to 'Peyvand-e Mehregan,' a recent work by fellow sculptor Mohammad Reza Yazdi, as an example that embodies this modern understanding. Majidi described as "completely wrong" the notion that Yazdi's piece is not a sculpture, arguing that such criticism stems from "outdated, historical" thinking that limits the field to conventional craftsmanship. "Unless one insists on viewing it through that lens," he said, "there's nothing in 'Peyvand-e Mehregan' that contradicts the essence of sculpture." He explained that contemporary sculpture, beyond aesthetic traditions and art-historical paradigms, embraces a wide spectrum — in-

cluding ready-mades and process-driven works — where ideas, form and spatial dialogue take precedence over material fidelity. "Volume is a tangible reality and carries meaning," he noted, emphasizing the interaction between form and space as central to any sculptural expression. Majidi said Yazdi's 'Peyvand-e Mehregan' establishes a strong connection with its surroundings. "You can walk around it, study it from every angle, and sense how the positive and negative spaces converse," he said, calling the work fully defensible both in form and concept. On whether the piece is interactive, Majidi drew a distinction between mechanical movement and natural engagement. "If interaction means mechanical motion or audience intervention, that's not the point," he said. "But if it means being in dialogue with nature, yes — that's valid." He compared this to Alexander Calder's kinetic works



in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, where even a breeze alters the composition, and also to the experimental sculptures of Iranian artist Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam. Praising Yazdi, Majidi said his mechanically inspired works "put technology at the service of artistic expression," calling it "a strength that enriches the field." Majidi added that artistic criticism remains open, but warned against judging new works by "mental clichés." "The artist creates based on his own vision," he said. "To deny that an artwork is a sculpture because it doesn't fit our fixed notions is simply wrong."

Golestan Palace to decode newly found Qajar-Era films using domestic expertise

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The director of Tehran's Golestan Palace said the recently identified 31 Qajar-era film reels are now being examined by specialists, and their content will be decoded and released through a domestic digital platform once analysis is complete. Afarin Emami, who heads the UNESCO-listed World Heritage site, told Iranian media that the reels, 28 in 35-mm format and three in 16-mm, were found during a recent inventory and preservation check at the palace's Album House, IRNA reported. "Our goal is to use internal capacities to extract and interpret the visual content," she said, stressing that expert evaluation is under way to determine the films' historical value. The discovery, made earlier this month by the Album House's chief custodian Reza Rezaei, revealed that what had long been classified as "raw film stock" actually contained moving images from the Qajar dynasty. Preliminary inspection suggests scenes of royal ceremonies, religious gatherings, and daily court life, though precise subjects remain unverified. Emami said the films are being handled under controlled conditions and will be analyzed with assistance from national institu-



tions such as the National Film Center and museum departments. "Specialists will decide how best to decode and preserve the material to ensure maximum accuracy and protection," she noted. Once authenticated, the restored footage will be publicly unveiled at Golestan Palace in a formal event featuring scholars and film historians. The content will also be made available to researchers through a dedicated domestic platform managed in coordination with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts' information-security office. The Qajar films add to a growing collection of rare cinematic material preserved at Golestan Palace. In previous projects led by the late historian Shahriar Adl, 59 minutes of Qajar footage were extracted from 38 reels restored

in France and Germany and later returned to Iran. Golestan's Album House, home to more than 61,000 historical items—including early cameras, photographs, glass negatives, and paintings—remains one of the world's most significant royal image archives, second only to Britain's Windsor collection. While the duration of the new decoding process is still unknown, Emami said it will continue "until the specialists reach full clarity about every reel." She emphasized that the project could yield valuable insights into early visual documentation of Iranian society and the origins of Persian cinema. "If these films bring new knowledge to what we already know about the Qajar period," Emami said. "We'll share them widely so that history can speak for itself."

Pezeshkian urges elites ...

"The enemy has its eyes on us, thinking Iran has weakened and it is time to strike," he said. "But if our elites step forward, the enemy can't do a thing." The president described the country's situation as "unacceptable," noting that Iran is blessed with vast natural and human resources but continues to face serious economic and environmental chal-

lenges. "It is neither proper nor dignified that we sit atop a mountain of blessings yet struggle with a mountain of problems," he said. Pezeshkian dismissed the culture of blame that, he said, has long characterized Iranian policymaking. "Looking for culprits won't solve anything. The real issue is that we have not made proper use of what God has given us," he said, urging a shift toward

pragmatic, evidence-based governance. He defined "righteous action" as work grounded in knowledge, ability and willpower, warning against policy decisions detached from scientific planning. "We have developed our cities without comprehensive studies and now face crises like subsidence, air pollution and congestion," he said.