



Breaking barriers through art at Tehran's Homam festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The 4th Homam International Festival for People with Disabilities is drawing to a close in Tehran after a week of exhibitions and performances that brought together more than 430 Iranian and foreign artists, celebrating creativity beyond limitation. Held at the Iran Academy of Arts since October 23, the festival has displayed works from all 31 Iranian provinces and 14 countries, including Spain, Japan, Russia, Belarus, Pakistan, India, Armenia, Nigeria and Kyrgyzstan, IRNA reported. "This year's Homam has moved beyond exhibition," said festival secretary Mohammad Reza Mashhadi. "We are building bridges between Iranian and global disabled artists so that the art of perseverance can be seen worldwide." Named after an ancient Persian term for vitality, the Homam festival began in 2018 as a domestic event and has since evolved into a regional platform for artists with physical, visual, and hearing impairments. The displays range from painting, sculp-

ture, calligraphy and ceramics to miniature, wood-carving, enamel, weaving and mixed media. Submissions arrived from more than 23 countries, according to organizers, underscoring a growing international presence that Mashhadi described as "a genuine dialogue of creativity." Among the most striking works is "The Qur'an on Shells" by Mahtab Ghanbari Rad, a deaf calligrapher who handwrote the entire Qur'an on 18 natural seashells collected from Qeshm Island in the Persian Gulf. "I saw myself writing it in a dream on the night of Ashura," she said. "It took me two years to complete. My wish is that the world sees this work." A member of the Iranian Calligraphers Association, Ghanbari Rad works in Nastaliq, Thuluth and Naskh scripts, often engraving verses on grains of rice or inscribing the word Allah on sugar crystals—miniature pieces that viewers examine with magnifying glasses. For the first time, the festival formally

included performing arts. Musicians and actors with disabilities took the stage daily, while theater performances explored inclusion and accessibility. Officials said the success of these programs could lead to a permanent "theater of ability" section next year. In the crafts pavilion, artisans showcased finely-carved wooden sculptures, embossed leather accessories, miniature carpets and metalwork that fused calligraphy with enameling and inlay. One panel featuring the name Allah in raised script drew particular attention for blending traditional craft with spiritual devotion. Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, who visited the exhibition with senior officials, praised the participants as "symbols of determination and creativity." "Our society reaches cultural maturity when all groups have equal opportunities to participate and influence," he said. "For these artists, art is not just a career—it is a means of empowerment and proof of capability."



"The energy is extraordinary," said one Tehran artist attending the show. "You feel a kind of joy that only comes from people who have turned limitation into expression." Organizers plan to display selected works

at Iranian embassies in 140 countries in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The initiative aims to introduce the achievements of Iranian artists with disabilities to global audiences and art markets.

Iran's 'Black Scarf' wins best film in Italy, lands Australian nomination



Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'Black Scarf', directed by Alireza Shah Hosseini and produced by his company, Shah Hosseini Film,

clinched the Best Film Award at the Pinerolo Film Festival in Pinerolo, Italy, which ran from October 18 to October 25. At the same time, the 15-minute production was nominated for the Best Short Film category at the 19th edition of the Byron Bay International Film Festival in Australia, scheduled for October 17 to October 26, ILNA reported. In its official synopsis, 'Black Scarf' unfolds "on the last work day of a teacher at a small deserted village ... when his students ask for something which changes everything." The film features actors Pasha Rostami, Tara Majidzadeh, Lotfollah

Seifi, Mohanna Seyedi and the late Hatam Mashmouli. With this international recognition, Shah Hosseini's work is gaining traction on the global festival circuit. By earning the Best Film accolade in Italy and a nomination in Australia, 'Black Scarf' has opened new doors for Iranian short-form cinema. The Italian festival has long sought to spotlight "creative, different cinematic works from around the world," giving the award added weight. Meanwhile, the Byron Bay festival, set against Australia's coastal backdrop, offers a broader platform for the film's global rollout.

Cultural renewal, civilizational resilience keep Iran alive through history



By Ali Akbar Salehi
Head of Iranology
Foundation

OPINION

At every turning point in its history, Iran has emerged transformed yet intact, a nation reborn through crisis, continuity, and creativity. This is not merely a matter of geography or politics; it is a story of cultural resilience and civilizational renewal. What has kept Iran alive through invasions, revolutions, and modern upheavals is its extraordinary capacity for cultural dynamism and civilizational refinement. The Iranian identity has never been static. Over centuries, it has absorbed shocks, from Mongol conquests to Western cultural incursions, and reconstituted them into something distinctly its own. Iran has not only survived these encounters but turned them into sources of intellectual and moral energy. This embodies what I describe as cultural alchemy where external challenges are transformed into internal growth. Throughout history, Iranians have shown that endurance does not mean rigidity. On the contrary, it is flexibility, the spirit of moderation and synthesis, that defines Iranian civilization. From the ethical humanism of Ferdowsi and Sa'adi to the spiritual universality of Hafez and Rumi, Iranian thought has long reflected a culture of coexistence and inner balance. I believe the Iranian temperament is one of tolerance and reflection, enduring differences while learning from them. When Islam entered Iran, it did so as a faith without a unified intellectual structure. It was the Iranian scholars who gave it philosophical coherence and global reach. Figures such as Avicenna, and Farabi, though diverse in belief and method, embodied a Persian tradition of intellectual organization and synthesis. Iran did not merely receive Islam; it systematized, refined, and universalized it. This civilizational contribution, often overlooked, remains one of the most profound in world history. But the dialogue between Iran and

the world has never been one-sided. To understand Iran's place today, we must listen to those who have interpreted its essence, both from within and beyond. Iranian cultural thinker Seyyed Mohammad Beheshti, in his work 'Where Is Iran, Who Is Iranian?', reminds us that Iran is not defined by uniformity but by its unity within diversity. Ethnic, linguistic, and religious pluralism have long coexisted here without annihilating one another. Iran is neither wholly Eastern nor Western; it is a middle world, a bridge where Eastern wisdom meets Western rationality. Beheshti urges us to rediscover this equilibrium at a time when we risk seeing ourselves through the distorted mirror of Western gaze. The late Palestinian scholar Edward Said also offers a critical lens. His seminal book 'Orientalism' revealed how the West's knowledge of the East was often a mechanism of control, a cultural prelude to political domination. Said demonstrated that representation itself is a form of power: by defining the "Other," the West defined itself. This insight matters deeply for Iran. In today's world of mass media and digital narratives, the struggle over meaning continues. Social networks and global news platforms now play the role that Orientalist scholarship once did, shaping perceptions and legitimizing influence. Iran, therefore, must move beyond defending its image toward shaping its own global narrative. To be meaningful in the 21st century, Iran must not merely be seen; it must speak, intelligently, confidently, and creatively. The real battle is over narrative, not territory. Here, the warning of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, the Iranian writer who coined the term Gharbzadegi (Westoxication), remains strikingly relevant. Al-e Ahmad saw Western domination not only in technology or politics but in thought, in the erosion of inner authenticity. He argued that when a nation begins to perceive itself only through Western categories, it loses the power to define its own destiny.

His call was not for isolation, but for rooted engagement: a dialogue with modernity that does not dissolve identity. Today, the same challenge persists. Globalization has intensified both communication and confusion. Iran must rediscover its cultural self-confidence, not through nostalgia, but through renewal. To "return to one-self," as Al-e Ahmad urged, is not to retreat from the world but to enter it from a place of strength. The Islamic Revolution of 1979, in this sense, represented more than a political upheaval; it was a civilizational statement. At a time when material ideologies, capitalism, communism, and secular nationalism, seemed to exhaust humanity's moral vocabulary, Iran's revolution reintroduced religion and spirituality into public discourse. Its reverberations were global: new academic centers for the study of religion and Islam emerged across Western universities, and the idea that faith could coexist with modern life gained renewed legitimacy. Forty-five years later, the task before Iran is not to repeat the past but to reinterpret it. The continuity of Iranian civilization depends not on the preservation of forms but on the renewal of meanings. Our challenge is to transform inherited wisdom into contemporary relevance, to turn tradition into a living resource rather than a museum relic. Cultural resilience, after all, is not the mere survival of heritage; it is the power to recreate heritage under new conditions. Iran's future, like its past, will be defined by this creative continuity. We must move from reaction to action, from defending our image to designing our message. Iran is not a relic of the past; it is a living civilization, a vessel that holds within it faith, art, and intellect. To preserve Iran is to preserve a space where meaning, moderation, and humanity can still coexist. In a fractured world hungry for identity and balance, Iran's enduring voice, if it speaks with wisdom, can once again illuminate the global conversation on civilization.

Iran, Saudi Arabia expand health, medical cooperation in Riyadh

Social Desk

Iranian Health Minister Mohammadreza Zafarqandi and his Saudi counterpart Fahad Abdulrahman al-Jalal met on Tuesday on the sidelines of the Global Health Exhibition in Riyadh to discuss expanding joint cooperation and investment in health, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment. The ministers praised the "growing" interactions between the two countries in the health sector and emphasized developing partnerships in scientific, academic, research, and educational fields, IRNA reported. Planned initiatives include exchanging university professors and students, holding joint congresses and specialized conferences, and strengthening links between Iranian and Saudi medical universities. Both officials also reviewed a draft memorandum of understanding on health cooperation, urging its expedited finalization. They highlighted the potential for joint investments in pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and health infrastructure, aiming to leverage each country's expertise and capabilities. Zafarqandi invited al-Jalal to pay an official visit



Iran's Health Minister Mohammadreza Zafarqandi (L) and his Saudi counterpart Fahad Abdulrahman al-Jalal meet in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on October 28, 2025.
● IRNA

to Tehran to continue bilateral discussions and deepen health-focused collaboration. The Iranian minister is leading a delegation of senior officials from the country's pharmaceutical and medical equipment sectors to attend the 8th Global Health Exhibition, held in Riyadh from October 27 to 30.