



ACHA General Assembly

Iran pushes China for new cultural, tourism, heritage pact



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri (L) meets with his Chinese counterpart Sun Yeli in Chongqing, China, on November 27, 2025.

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri pressed Beijing on Thursday in Chongqing to "push ahead" with a new phase of cultural, tourism and heritage cooperation as he delivered President Masoud Pezeshkian's message to China's head of state, using a meeting with Culture and Tourism Minister Sun Yeli on November 27 to table concrete proposals for a broader, project-driven partnership. Salehi-Amiri told his Chinese counterpart that Tehran wants the robust political and economic partnership to spill over

into heritage, tourism and handicrafts, IRNA reported. He framed the two countries as "civilization-states" with millennia of historic depth and argued that their ministries can "shape more serious and effective exchanges". He pointed to Iran's "stable security environment" and broad tourism potential as a springboard for Chinese engagement. He invited Sun to Tehran's international tourism fair in February and to the Nowruz gathering hosted by 13 countries, calling him "Iran's special guest". The invitation, he said, could "open new paths" for bilateral meetings and fresh

lines of cooperation. The Iranian minister also sketched out a set of cultural initiatives. He proposed an "Asian mechanism" for heritage cooperation as a joint soft-power platform and floated 2026, the 55th anniversary of formal ties, as the year for a branded, China-Iran cultural program spanning archaeology, performing arts and exhibitions. He praised Chinese archaeologists' role in several Iranian digs, including at Masuleh, which is heading for UNESCO inscription, and urged more joint work. Iran, he added, stands ready to collaborate with Chinese institutions on museum technologies and artificial intelligence to promote cultural attractions. Although he described Iran as "one of the safest countries in the region" with 20 recognized tourism genres, he noted that tourism flows from China remain far below the strategic weight of bilateral ties. Sun welcomed the proposals, calling them "valuable" and mutually beneficial. He said the 55th anniversary offered a timely platform for joint exhibitions, conferences and projects, provided both sides keep the agenda rooted in "practical measures".

Maldives as a 'reliable' cultural, tourism partner

Salehi-Amiri then turned to South Asia on Friday morning, meeting Adam Naseer Ibrahim, the Maldivian Minister for Dhivehi Language, Culture and Heritage,

again on the sidelines of the ACHA gathering. Both ministers agreed to open a fresh chapter in cultural, scholarly, heritage and tourism ties and to ramp up exchanges on climate-related threats to coastal and island heritage. Salehi-Amiri stressed Iran's deep civilizational imprint, noting more than a million identified heritage sites, thousands of them registered nationally, alongside 29 UNESCO-listed tangible sites and 26 intangible entries. Fifty-eight more sit on Iran's tentative list. He said Iran's pivot to "maritime tourism" has state backing, involving seven coastal provinces, and urged cooperation with the Maldives on research-driven and managerial frameworks. He offered Iran's academic and technical expertise in archaeology, conservation, Iranian studies and cultural research through joint courses and scientific projects. For people-to-people ties, he proposed an "Iran Cultural Week" in Malé and a corresponding Maldivian showcase in Tehran, alongside journalist exchanges so that media figures can "see and narrate" each other's tourism landscapes. He highlighted Iran's breadth in handicrafts, 299 of the world's 400 recognized forms, and suggested a Malé exhibition as a catalyst for further artistic and cultural ventures. Health tourism, he said, remains one of Iran's strongest assets. With more than

a thousand hospitals and a large pool of specialists, Iran attracts patients from the US, Europe, the Persian Gulf and Central Asia. Tehran, he added, is ready to integrate this sector into joint programs with the Maldives. He spoke of the "historic and profound" cultural links between the two nations, noting that Maldivian urban architecture and elements of its artistic vocabulary carry Iranian influence. With most Maldivian heritage rooted in oral traditions, he said his country needs Iran's scientific and educational support to document and protect these traditions. He also pushed for cooperation on coastal heritage, climate impacts, health tourism and handicrafts, and said he would welcome participation in Tehran's festivals.

Tehran unveils Asian heritage vision

Salehi-Amiri outlined Iran's plan to boost regional heritage cooperation, highlighting Asia's shared cultural and spiritual traditions. He proposed a four-point framework covering a regional heritage program, an observatory to track UNESCO nominations, a network of national heritage offices, and exhibition spaces at ACHA meetings. Iran also offered to host the General Assembly in 2027 to strengthen collaboration and showcase Asia's heritage capabilities.

Majidi wins special honor at Eurasia Int'l Film Festival in Moscow



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi stepped onto the stage of Moscow's Workshop "12" theater on Thursday evening to receive the first "Diamond Butterfly" Special Award at the First Eurasia International Film Festival, a prize the organizers created to recognize his decades-long contribution to world cinema. Nikita Mikhalkov, the veteran Russian director and founder of the Eurasia Film Academy, handed Majidi the crystal-cut

statuette in a packed hall that included Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova, presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky and Iran's ambassador Kazem Jalali, Fars News Agency reported. Before the award, the festival rolled a curated reel from Majidi's works, including his historical epic 'Muhammad (PBUH)', underscored by Iranian music. The audience rose to its feet for several minutes. Majidi, who built his international reputation on stories anchored in childhood and moral struggle, returned to that theme on stage. He spoke of his long commitment to portraying children with dignity and paused to honor the "innocent children of Gaza", saying he hoped war-hit youngsters everywhere would find a path to peace. China clinched the festival's top prize. Xu Zheng's drama 'Against the Current' took Best Film along with a \$1 million award, a sizeable purse for a debut festival but one Mikhalkov said was intended to "set the bar high" for future editions.

Winners in the other categories collected \$250,000 each. Seventeen countries submitted 34 films to the festival's first run, with organizers pitching the event as a new Eurasian platform for ethical storytelling and cultural exchange. Entries ranged from Russia and Serbia to South Africa and Pakistan, with some titles shooting for gritty realism and others leaning on spiritual or historical narratives. Iran entered three titles, 'Call Me Ziba', 'In the Arms of the Tree' and 'My Daughter's Hair', continuing the country's long-standing push to keep its art-house cinema visible on the international circuit. By the end of the night, Mikhalkov called the "Diamond Butterfly" a symbol of a broader cultural pact he hopes to forge among Eurasian filmmakers. Whether the festival grows into the "Eurasian Oscars" he envisions remains to be seen, but the debut edition closed with a flourish, and Majidi at its center.

Hamburg Kurdish festival crowns Iran's 'Khalil', 'The Plain Sings'

Arts & Culture Desk

Two Iranian films 'Khalil' and 'The Plain Sings' won the top honors at the 16th Hamburg Kurdish Film Festival Awards, where organizers in Germany's northern port city closed a five-day showcase of what they called cinema's "courage" and "diversity". Seyed Payam Hosseini clinched the best short-film award with 'Khalil', a tightly drawn drama he wrote, produced and directed. The film follows a 13-year-old boy who frets over whether his late father's soul reaches heaven or sinks into hell, pushing himself to "make sure" as he navigates grief. The short features Taha Cheraghi, Omid Cheraghi, Taha Mohammadi, Hossein Moradi, Mousa Hedayati and Shobo Soleimani. Daricheh Cinema Group and Panah Film Institute handle its international rollout. The jury granted a special commendation to 'The Plain Sings', Gita Feizi's pastoral tale of a young shepherdess forced to take a consequential decision after a wolf tears into her flock.



The cast includes Darya Kakayi, Afshin Khedri, Sara Ahmadnejad and Saman Saed Moucheshi, with Daricheh Cinema Group overseeing global distribution. HKFF, held from November 19 to 23 under the banner "Remembrance, Resistance, Insight: Cinema from the Heart of Diversity", aimed to bring disparate cultures, generations and viewpoints into the same room. Organizers said the program sought to keep memories alive and build bridges between "past and future".

Toxic air continues, shutting schools, offices

Social Desk

Several Iranian cities are grappling with hazardous air as pollution levels climb across the country, forcing authorities to impose temporary closures and issue health warnings. Officials said the situation is expected to persist through next days, IRNA reported. On Friday, Iran Meteorological Organization reported stable atmospheric conditions over much of the country, intensifying the accumulation of pollutants in urban and industrial areas. Kobra Rafiee, a senior meteorologist, said scat-

tered rain showers were expected only in the Caspian Sea provinces and North Khorasan, while the northwestern, western, and central Zagros regions could see rainfall and snow from Monday to Tuesday. Calm conditions elsewhere are trapping dust and smog, reducing visibility and worsening air quality. In Tehran, local authorities recorded dense smog with a maximum temperature of 16 °C on Friday and a minimum of 7 °C overnight. Jaafar Barzegar, head of the province's crisis management office, warned that orange-level pollution alerts could last from Friday after-

noon through Monday night or Tuesday morning if emission sources are not controlled. The rising pollution has prompted Tehran's municipal authorities and other provincial offices to consider schools and government offices closures on November 29. In addition to the capital, cities such as Karaj and Isfahan may suspend classes for the week. Health officials emphasized that children, the elderly, and people with chronic illnesses are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of the smog. Abbas Shakerinia of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences cautioned that respi-

ratory problems could escalate if exposure continues. Nationwide, air-quality monitoring data show a marked deterioration. Compared with the previous year, the pollution index in 2025 has increased by roughly 20 percent. Tehran alone has experienced 12 red-alert days, two days of very unhealthy "purple" air, and two days in dangerous "brown" conditions, with only six clean-air days since the start of the year. Citizens report frequent headaches, shortness of breath, and other symptoms as the haze blankets the capital. Persistent air stagnation, combined with traf-



fic emissions, industrial output, and heating fuel use, continues to burden major urban centers.