



30th Int'l Theater Festival for Children & Youth

Minister hails theater as 'unrivaled language' of youth



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi on Saturday praised children's theater as an "unrivaled" medium for shaping young minds, as the north-western city of Hamedan opened the 30th International Theater Festival for Children and Youth with six stage productions across its main venues.

Salehi, in his message to the festival, called the country's young generation a "bright mirror" of Iran's future.

Their curiosity, "brilliant imagination" and "creative spirit", he said, placed a "serious but hopeful responsibility" on cultural institutions.

Theater for children and teenagers, he added, served as the "unparalleled language of feelings and ideas" and carried a "bridge between dream and reality, learning and joy". The week-long festival, running from December 5 to 11, began with works from troupes based in Tehran, Hamedan, Khuz-

estan and other provinces.

Local organizers said the shows were spread across the city's principal halls to draw in families and school groups.

Avicenna Cultural Complex staged 'A Day for Arezou' written and directed by Morteza Sekhavat from Dezful. The 70-minute play was booked in for three performances.

Shahid Avini Cultural and Artistic Institute presented 'All Penguins or What?' directed by Sharareh Tayyar from Tehran, a 45-minute piece also scheduled for three rounds. Fajr Hall hosted 'The Tale of the Moon, the Sun and Leila' by Hamedan-based writer-director Saeed Pourshabanian, with the same performance times.

The festival debut of 'God's Enemy,' written by Emadeddin Rajablou and directed by Majid Araghi, a 50-minute production arriving from the capital was screened.

Two homegrown works, 'From Seed to Bread' and 'What Are You Afraid Of?', toured kindergartens and centers run by the state-run Institute for the Intellectual Develop-

ment of Children and Young Adults earlier in the morning.

Salehi, referring to the festival's slogan "Today's Child, A New Story, Tomorrow's Stage", said new forms of storytelling could "open the way to a hopeful future".

He expressed confidence that this year's edition would "bring to fruition the tireless efforts" of Iranian theater practitioners and offer "rare opportunities" for nurturing talent and strengthening children's emotional and intellectual development. He also said such work helped "consolidate national, religious and human identity".

Under the stewardship of artistic director Azadeh Ansari, the festival is hosting domestic and foreign companies, with organizers aiming to keep attendance high throughout the 7-day run.

Salehi closed his message with a wish for the festival's "successful and dignified" staging and commended the crews who have "carried the weight" of the country's children's theater scene.

'Taji' wins top prize at Ireland's Foyle Film Festival



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Iranian filmmaker Mahdi Borjian picked up the international prize at the 38th Foyle Film Festival in Northern Ireland after his short film 'Taji' was named best international title at the Oscar-qualifying event. The festival jury praised the

production as "engaging" with flashes of "humor", noting its steady build-up of tension and what it called a "rich and satisfying" close. The win sends 'Taji' forward as Iran's submission to the 99th Academy Awards in 2027, ILNA reported.

This year's Foyle festival ran

from November 19 to 30 in Derry. The Irish event is one of the long-standing European platforms for short films seeking entry to the Oscars' international categories.

Borjian wrote and directed 'Taji,' which follows a factory shift supervisor wrestling with a pivotal choice as her personal troubles pile up. The drama centers on a woman portrayed as tough, unyielding and forced to "take a stand" over the future of her life.

The cast includes Fatemeh Neyshabouri, Morteza Khanjani, Shamila Tabesh, Fatemeh Hassani, Rohiyeh Mahmoudi, Faezeh Vafaei, Elaheh Mouchani and Ali Bagheri. Ahad Shamloo also appears, with a special appearance by veteran filmmaker Gholamreza Ramezani. Child actor Janiar Eskandarian features in a key role.

Iran mounts strong presence at Islamabad's Global Destinations Expo

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Iran fielded one of the most active delegations at this year's Global Destinations Expo, a two-day tourism fair held on December 1-2 at Islamabad's Marriott Hotel, where more than 20 foreign missions and 30 Pakistani companies sought the new regional travel partnerships.

Ambassador Reza Amir-Moghaddam and Iran's Cultural Attaché, Majid Meshki, represented Tehran as Pakistan's Discover Pakistan network and the state-run Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation gathered diplomats, provincial tourism officials and private operators for what organizers described as an attempt to "reset" cross-border travel and widen commer-

cial ties, ISNA reported. The fair drew delegations from Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia and Europe, including teams from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

Exhibitors said Iran's stand ranked among the most visited, with the team showcasing medical-tourism packages, pilgrimage routes, heritage cities and leisure destinations aimed at drawing operators into fresh contracts.

The Islamabad expo was designed to bring unfamiliar destinations onto regional itineraries, strengthen shared tourism infrastructure and encourage investment in integrated travel corridors. They billed the event as



part of a broader drive to "open new routes" and build long-term cooperation between public agencies and private firms. Iran's private sector used the fair for tightly scheduled talks with Pakistani and foreign partners, discussing joint corridor plans, new marketing strategies for each other's destinations and ways to

improve visitor flows between the two neighbors. Delegates also explored investment prospects and employment opportunities tied to Iran-Pakistan tourism projects.

The expo closed on December 2 with Pakistan's National Tourism Awards, which recognized domestic contributors and foreign partners.

Rumi congress in northern Nicosia draws scholars from 12 countries

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Near East University in Northern Cyprus hosted the 10th International Rumi Congress



in northern Nicosia from December 3 to 5, bringing scholars from 12 countries to examine new readings of the Masnavi and the Divan-e Shams.

Academics from Iran, Turkey, Cyprus, Pakistan, India, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Australia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Uzbekistan gathered in the Turkish-run enclave to present recent work on Sufi literature and the wider field of Islamic mysticism, IRNA reported. Qadir Golkaryan, head of the university's Rumi Studies Centre and the congress's

executive secretary, said the secretariat had received 138 papers.

Only 43 were accepted for presentation over two days. He described the selection as "rigorous" and said the committee had been intent on keeping the program tight. Golkaryan said several leading papers would appear in international journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. He added that the full set of contributions would later be published in a four-language volume in Turkish, Persian, Russian and English. The presence of Esin Celebi

Bayru, a 22nd-generation descendant of Rumi, gave the gathering what organizers called an "intimate" link to the poet's lineage, drawing long queues of visitors during the three-day event.

The Iranian traditional ensemble Ham Avaz, led by Hamid Khazaei, staged a Sufi music performance that filled the campus hall and kept visitors in their seats well past closing time.

Several attendees called the concert "unforgettable," saying it rounded off the congress with a sense of communal warmth.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

