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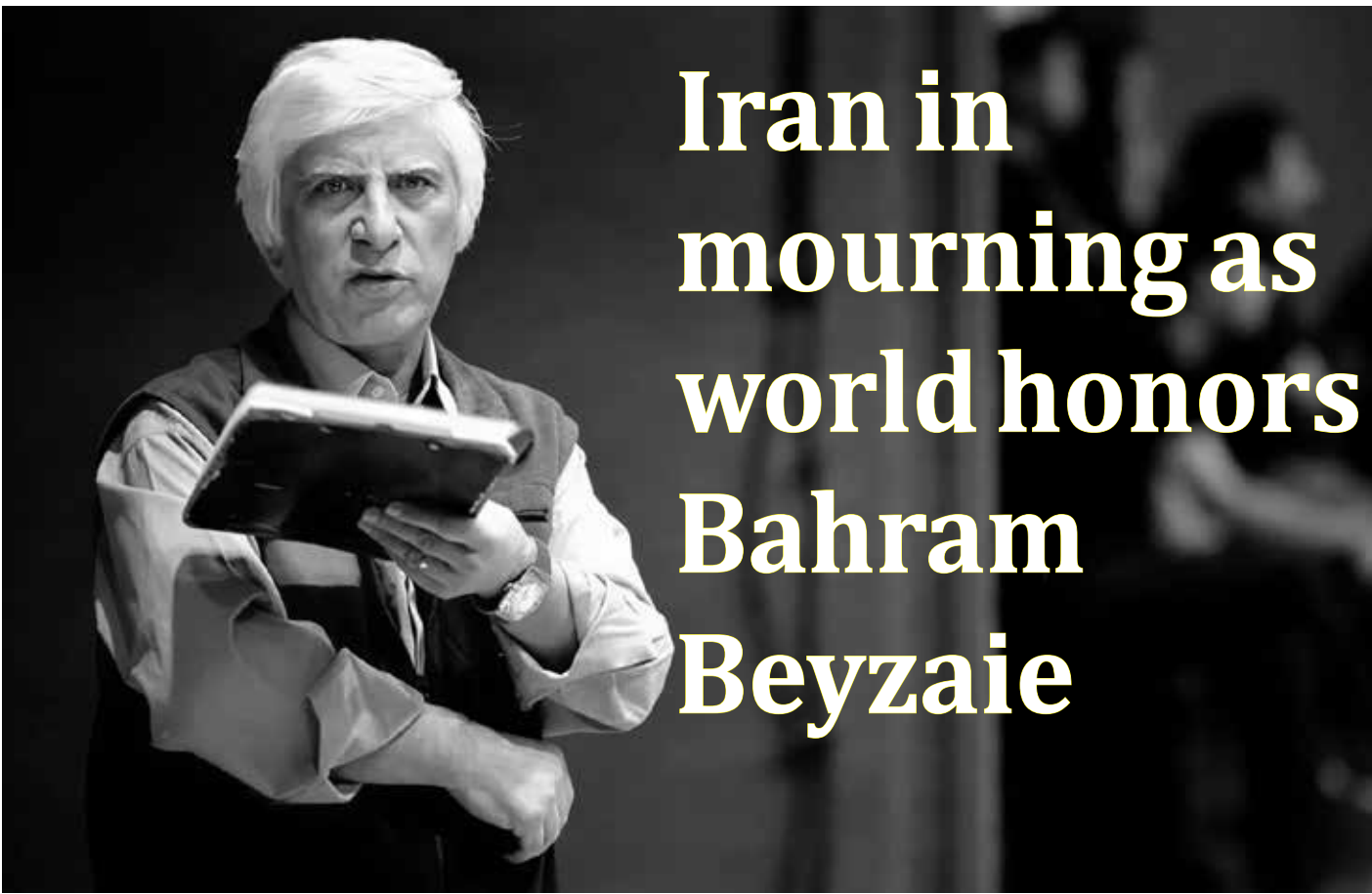
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Iran in mourning as world honors Bahram Beyzaie

Arts & Culture Desk

The death of Bahram Beyzaie, the towering Iranian filmmaker, playwright, scholar and theater director, has prompted an unprecedented wave of reactions from senior Iranian officials, cultural institutions, artists, academics and leading international media, emphasizing his singular stature in Iran's modern cultural history and his lasting global influence. President Masoud Pezeshkian, in an official message of condolence, described Beyzaie as a rare intellectual-artist who succeeded in fusing art with thought, history with myth, and performance with Iranian identity. "Undoubtedly, the enduring works of the creator of 'The Day of the Event' constitute a lasting asset for the culture of Iran and an invaluable part of the nation's intellectual and artistic heritage," the president said, adding that the depth and influence of Beyzaie's legacy would only grow over time. The president extended condolences to Beyzaie's family, the artistic and cultural community of Iran, and all admirers of his work, emphasizing that Beyzaie's contributions transcended cinema and theater to become embedded in Iran's collective cultural memory. Following the president's message, a series of high-level gov-

ernment officials issued separate statements paying tribute to Beyzaie. First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref described him as "a permanent benchmark in the history of Iranian art," stressing that Beyzaie's name and intellectual universe would endure not as a historical episode, but as a lasting standard in Iran's cultural consciousness. Mohammad Jafar Ghaem-Panah, the president's executive deputy, highlighted Beyzaie's lifelong dedication to safeguarding Iranian culture and identity, noting that he re-narrated Iran's history, mythology and literature through the language of art, leaving behind a rich legacy for future generations. Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi called Beyzaie's passing "deeply saddening," emphasizing his crucial role in expanding Iranian narrative art through a profound engagement with cultural and mythological roots. Salehi underlined Beyzaie's commitment to research, education and the nurturing of new generations of artists, describing these efforts as an inseparable part of his cultural legacy. Other senior officials, including the government spokesperson, the president's social and executive aides, and senior cultural administrators, echoed similar sen-

timents, collectively portraying Beyzaie as an architect of thought in Iranian art whose influence will remain firmly rooted in the nation's cultural fabric.

Reactions from Iran's cinematic, artistic institutions

Iran's major cinematic and artistic institutions responded swiftly. The House of Cinema of Iran described Beyzaie as a figure whose name would remain eternal because his ultimate aim was to preserve and immortalize Iranian culture itself. The organization emphasized that his films, plays and scholarly writings represent "golden pages" in the history of Iranian culture. The Cinema Organization of Iran hailed Beyzaie as a master who demonstrated that cinema could function as ritual and reflection. "From 'Downpour,' which awakened social consciousness, to 'Bashu, the Little Stranger,' a hymn of unity between land and people, each of his frames stands as testimony to the dignity of art in this land," its head wrote. The Iranian Association of Film Critics and Writers issued a detailed statement mourning not only the loss of a great filmmaker and playwright, but also that of a moral and intellectual reference point in Iranian art. The association described Beyzaie as a

master storyteller whose works reflected the complexities of history, society and the human psyche with clarity and depth. The Cinema Museum of Iran and the Independent Producers Guild similarly referred to Beyzaie as

described Beyzaie as his "great teacher," stating that he had followed Beyzaie's works, words and, above all, his profound love for Iranian culture with unwavering devotion. Farhadi wrote that he had never known anyone more deeply Iranian in spirit than Beyzaie, calling his passing a bitter loss for the cultural soul of the nation.

Photographer and documentary filmmaker Mehrdad Eskouei wrote that an entire "cultural Iran" was in mourning, noting that Beyzaie's lifelong dedication to his homeland was now being honored by generations shaped by his work. Scholars and researchers, including Abbas Milani of Stanford University, highlighted Beyzaie's lifelong devotion to Iranian culture, literature and myth, describing him as a figure who devoted his entire existence to art and cultural inquiry.

Media, academia react

Internationally, Beyzaie's death was widely covered by leading cultural publications. The Hollywood Reporter noted that Beyzaie's 1985 masterpiece 'Bashu, the Little Stranger' was screened at the 2025 Venice Film Festival, where it received the Venice Classics Award for Best Restored Film, an achievement that reaffirmed the film's global standing decades after its creation. The French daily Le Figaro de-

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Lasting cultural legacy

Born in Tehran on December 26, 1938, into a family steeped in poetry and literary scholarship, Bahram Beyzaie emerged as one of the leading intellectual forces of Iran's cultural modernity. Over the course of his prolific career, he directed 10 feature films, four short films and more than a dozen major stage productions. He authored over 70 books, plays, screenplays and academic studies. His cinematic works, including 'Downpour,' 'The Ballad of Tara,' 'Death of Yazdgerd,' 'Bashu, the Little Stranger,' 'Maybe Some Other Time,' 'The Travelers' and 'Killing Mad Dogs,' are widely regarded as cornerstones of Iranian cinema. Deeply informed by Indo-Iranian mythology, history and classical literature, these films combined intellectual rigor with narrative power. Beyzaie's influence extended equally into theater and scholarship. His seminal book 'Theater in Iran' remains a foundational study of Iran's indigenous performance traditions, including Ta'zieh (A traditional Iranian passion play depicting the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and the events of Karbala), Naqqali (Persian passion play), Kheimh shab-bazi (a traditional form of Iranian puppet theater) and Ruhowzi (a comic type of traditional folk musical drama in Iran). His research on 'One Thousand and One Nights' and ancient dramatic forms positioned him as one of Iran's foremost cultural scholars.

The breadth and depth of reactions to Beyzaie's passing reveal more than personal admiration; they reflect a collective recognition of a figure whose work shaped Iran's artistic identity across generations. While his physical presence has departed, Bahram Beyzaie's intellectual, artistic and cultural legacy endures—firmly embedded in the living memory of Iran and respected across the world as a defining voice of Iranian art and thought.



A scene from Bahram Beyzaie's 'Bashu, the Little Stranger,' screened at the 2025 Venice Film Festival where it won the Venice Classics Award for Best Restored Film.

one of the most irreplaceable cultural figures of contemporary Iran, emphasizing his integrity, intellectual independence and unwavering respect for the dignity of thought and creativity.

Artists' tributes

Prominent Iranian artists also expressed their grief. Oscar-winning filmmaker Asghar Farhadi

described Beyzaie as one of the central figures of Iran's New Wave cinema, citing landmark works such as 'Downpour,' 'Stranger and the Fog,' 'The Crow,' and 'Death of Yazdgerd'. The newspaper also highlighted his screenplay for 'The Day of the Event,' widely regarded as one of Iranian cinema's most significant portrayals of the Ashura narrative and the martyr-

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Iran will host a Global Nowruz Summit in Tehran on March 27–29, 2026, bringing together tourism and culture ministers from 18 countries in a high-level diplomatic and cultural gathering aimed at positioning Iran as the hub of the ancient festival, a senior official at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said on Sunday. The three-day meeting will take place at Tehran's Summit Hall and feature ministerial addresses alongside remarks, said Hojjatollah Ayoubi, the minister's senior adviser and head of the ministry's international affairs center, IRNA reported.

He said Iran has invited 27 ministers in total, with five additional countries participating as observers under the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization. Ayoubi identified Russia, India, China, Indonesia and the Shanghai-based ECO constituency as observer participants, adding that the event marks the first successful staging of the Nowruz summit after failed attempts in previous years.

He credited close coordination with the foreign ministry for clearing diplomatic and logistical hurdles. He stressed that the gathering is not designed as a public Nowruz celebration but as a formal international summit, with its final communiqué intended to convey a political and security message that Iran is a safe country operating under stable conditions. The agenda prioritizes network-building among Nowruz-linked nations rather

than large-scale public spectacles, he said, positioning Iran as the festival's central axis. The program will include limited cultural performances, including appearances by an international Nowruz Symphony ensemble, alongside official speeches, according to Ayoubi. Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey said China and India will attend as special guests, underscoring their demographic and cultural

weight in Nowruz-related diplomacy. He said a permanent Nowruz summit secretariat will be established in Tehran and supported by newly formed committees covering cultural affairs, accommodation, security, finance, taxation and media outreach. Mohseni Bandpey said enhanced cultural diplomacy, backed by the foreign ministry, helped lift inbound foreign tourist arrivals by 48.5% year on year in the Iranian month ending April 20, 2025. He added that a national travel coordination task force involving 27 state bodies is overseeing monitoring and services during the peak holiday season from March 16 to April 4.

Tehran to host global Nowruz summit with ministers from 18 countries