

Interior minister says rioters, not gov't silencing people's voices

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## Larijani urges Judiciary to firmly deal with rioters, instigators

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Pezeshkian calls for greater Iran-Oman cooperation to implement MoUs



President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) shakes hands with Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi in Tehran on January 11, 2026. 

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday said Iran and Oman needed to work together to put into practice "strategic memoranda of understandings" between the two nations with the focus on holding joint economic commissions.

During a meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi in Tehran, Pezeshkian said that setting up the joint economic commissions would accelerate the implementation of the existing MoUs, IRNA reported.

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Iranian lawmakers chant slogans at the legislative chamber to condemn foreign-backed riots in Iran. 

## Iran battling enemy on 'four fronts': *Speaker*

FM says fire of riot to come back to haunt US, Israel

International Desk

Iran's Speaker of Parliament Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on Sunday said the country is fighting in a pitched battle with the United States and Israel on "four fronts" but vowed that the nation would "stand firm" against the enemy. The comments come as the country have been the scene of street protests in several towns and cities in the past two weeks over economic woes and the depreciation of the national currency. The protests, however, turned violent in recent days with scores killed, including security forces, as, according to authorities, rioters and terrorists infiltrated the crowds to incite deadly unrest, vandalism, and arsonist attacks. Local media, including Fars and Tasnim, published dozens of photo-

tos showing banks, buses, cars, government buildings, and public and private property being set ablaze by rioters.

US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made "meddlesome" remarks about the developments in Iran, which was rejected by Iranian officials as interference in the country's domestic affairs. "We are today in a battle against the Zionist and American enemy on four fronts of economic, cognitive, military, and terrorist war," Qalibaf told an open session of Parliament, according to Mehr News Agency.

"The enemy was defeated in the 12-day war. It is now entering a phase of terrorist warfare and has adopted a Daesh-like method to create fatalities," he warned, referring to the US-Israeli aggres-

sion on Iran in June.

The top lawmaker said the Armed Forces and the Iranian people "would hold their ground firmly and would not step back an iota" in their fight against terrorists.

"They will put an end to this war," Qalibaf said, warning that traitors and terrorists would be brought to justice.

The speaker noted that the Islamic Republic "has insisted on recognizing people's rightful protests" and would bring back economic stability and stop volatility in the forex market in the short term.

"It is our duty to restore economic stability in the country. People should be able to plan for their livelihood and businesses... their purchasing power should be maintained."

The rial dropped to a record low against the US dollar last week. It is being traded at around IRR1.45 million in the free market.

**Fire' to backfire**

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi dismissed the US claim that Iran was "delusional" about American and Israeli spy agencies' involvement in the county's riots.

In a post on his X account republished by IRNA on Sunday, Araghchi accused those agencies of fueling unrest in Iran, citing acknowledgment by the former CIA chief under Trump who "openly and shamelessly" revealed Israel's Mossad and their US backers' activities in Iran.

"The only delusional aspect of the current situation is that you think the fire will not eventually burn its kindler," he wrote.

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# Larijani urges Judiciary to firmly deal with rioters, instigators

## National Desk

The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) called on the Judiciary to firmly confront armed groups and individuals seeking to foment insecurity and unrest by hijacking rightful public demands and protests over the livelihood problems across the country.

Ali Larijani was cited by Tasnim news agency as making the remark on Sunday amid heightened tensions and week-long widespread rallies across the country over livelihood woes stemming from the national currency depreciation.

The protests were exploited by armed elements after they transformed them into violent clashes by dispatching firearms and Molotov cocktails to streets, claim-

ing lives and destroying and setting ablaze military and government centers.

"The Judiciary must deal severely with those stoking unrest, killing people, and sabotaging public property. Fortunately, the Judiciary chief is resolute to do so, and perpetrators of such crimes will be adamantly confronted," Larijani said.

The head of SNSC also described the saboteurs and vandals as part of a "quasi-terrorist urban group," stressing that their attempts aimed at storming military and law enforcement buildings to acquire weapons indicate that they were after a civil war.

"The country is facing economic hardships. Not only insecurity and destruction fail to resolve the issue, but will also exacerbate it. Setting on fire economic

centers, religious and public sites, busses, and urban amenities, which are supplied through taxes, directly inflict damage on the economy," Larijani said, adding: "Unrest begets economic recession, and such destructive measures would not lead to the path of resolving hardships."

The Iranian economy has been grappling with the depreciation of the national currency and soaring inflation, developments that have unsettled markets and weighed heavily on households and businesses.

Various cities have been the scene of protests since December 28, with a number of rioters and agitators seizing on the chaos and agitation to destroy and burn down public property, in what was prompted by US and Israeli provocations.

In remarks on Friday morning, Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the vandals have destroyed the buildings of their own country in Tehran and other cities in order to appease the US head of state.

"The US president has the blood of more than 1,000 Iranians on his hands," the Leader said, adding that Donald Trump has confessed that he had ordered attacks during the 12-day war in June 2025 that killed upwards of 1,000 Iranians, including military commanders, scientists, and ordinary people.

The Leader lambasted the incognizant people who have been deceived by the US president and have set the garbage cans ablaze to please Trump.

Ayatollah Khamenei made



Ali Larijani  
IRNA

it clear that the Islamic Republic, which has come into being with the sacrifices made by hundreds of thousands of noble people, will

never back off in the face of vandals or tolerate mercenary activities. The Leader also called on the Iranian youth to pre-

serve preparedness and unity, stressing that a unified and integrated nation present in the scene will overcome all enemies.

## Interior minister says rioters, not gov't silencing people's voices

Streets become 'significantly calmer': Police chief

## National Desk

Iran's Interior Minister Ehsan Momeni on Sunday blamed the rioters for blocking people's voices from being heard in the wake of protests over economic hardship.

"It's not the government or the Islamic Establishment that does not allow people's voices to be heard, but rather, it's the rioters," Momeni told national TV.

He said a small minority that quickly turns protests into destruction, vandalism, and terrorist acts had prevented the people of Iran to protest. "In previous years, when people had demands, they expressed them calmly," the minister said, noting that, unfortunately, even back then, a few individuals, armed with cold weapons or firearms, diverted these demands at the end.

Momeni pointed out that the right to protest was recognized in Iran's constitution, and the government had repeatedly stated that it respected and safeguarded that right.

"In recent protests, we saw a few opportunists turning



The photo shows a number of fire trucks that were burned and became unusable by rioters in Tehran, on January 10, 2026.  
FARS

peaceful protests voicing people's legitimate demands into utter destruction, burning buildings and private and public vehicles, even emergency vehicles."

He noted that some of these individuals had been trained to steer protests toward violence.

The minister, emphasizing that people were stunned

by the scale of destruction in recent days, said: "Even law enforcement centers were attacked, and several of our security forces were killed." Ahmad Reza Radan, the chief of Iran's Police Force, said a significant portion of the victims of the recent riots had been killed by cold weapons and knife strikes.

Speaking to reporters on

Sunday, Radan said in cases where bullet firing was involved, the shooting took place at a very close range, indicating that these actions were not carried out by security forces but by trained and directed elements. "Our fellow Iranians need to know that anyone who stands beside these rioters is potentially the victims of

their violent acts," Radan said, warning that they were "sacrificing" the youths of the country to generate more fatalities.

The chief warned that from this point forward, "rioting" would be completely separated from "protesting", and rioters would be dealt with "decisively, quickly, and without compromise."

However, Radan maintained that through the synergy and proper coordination between security and police forces, the level of dealing with rioters was improved.

"Two significant events occurred in recent days that contributed to the significant calm in the country last night compared to previous nights: one was the condemnation of rioters by people in various provinces, and the other was the separation of protesters from rioters. This allowed security forces to quickly reach the main centers of riots."

The interior minister also echoed Radan's statement and said that the trend of riots and destruction is on the decline overall, denying the claims that a city was seized ever at all.

## Iran, Afghanistan launch new land route to reinforce border transit

## Economy Desk

A new transportation route between Iran and Afghanistan on Pol-e Abrisham border crossing was inaugurated in Afghanistan's Nimruz Governorate to boost bilateral trade, as announced by the head of the southwestern Afghan region on Saturday.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Seifollah Mohammadi said the new route will solidify the road transportation trend between the two neighboring countries, Fars News Agency reported. With the capacity of 1,000 goods vehicles, the road will be accessible for 24 hours, the report added.

Also, rail freight transport from Iran's Shamgigh border crossing to the eastern neighbor has recorded an unprecedented surge, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI).

The railway company has recently highlighted plans to further expand capacity and deepen bilateral cooperation in rail transport and economic development with Afghanistan.

The rail cargo volumes at the beginning of last calendar year, which began on March 21, 2024, stood at around 5,000 tons per month. Through targeted planning and the RAI's role in facilitating exports and transit to Afghanistan, the volume had risen to more than 70,000 tons per month.

Iran has also begun monthly rail shipments of 7,000 tons of diesel from Imam Khomeini Port to Afghanistan, marking a new phase in rail-based fuel transit to the landlocked neighbor.

## Pezeshkian calls for ...

Iran and Oman signed 18 cooperation documents in the fields of law, economy, politics, culture, education, health, defense, media, technology, energy and mining in May when the president visit the Arab sultanate.

"The government's priority is fostering cooperation with regional and neighboring countries," the president said, adding that Muscat had the special position in Tehran, due to their similar political stances.

The Omani foreign minister described Iran as a "strategic partner" of his country and a "key axis" in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

"This is almost clear, certain, and a mat-

ter of consensus for all regional countries," the minister added.

Busaidi expressed hope that the MoUs would "reached the operational stage" and pave the way for exploring untapped and new potentials to further strengthen relations.

According to Iran's Chamber of Commerce released in May, the bilateral trade between the two neighbors had surpassed \$2 billion.

During his visit to Oman in May, Pezeshkian highlighted Iran and Oman's pivotal role in connecting regional markets, stating that with adequate infrastructure, economic exchanges between the two sides "could reach \$20 to \$30 billion."

## Turkish FM: Israel will not reach its goals in Iran

## International Desk

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Israel's expectations for the fall of the Islamic Establishment in Iran would not be fulfilled.

Speaking in an interview with the Turkish TRT Haber TV network regarding the recent riots in Iran, Fidan briefly touched on the effects that the expansion of the scope of riots in various cities of Iran could leave on the Middle East. Various cities in Iran have been the scene of violent, disruptive, and destructive vandalism by rioters who have hijacked the earlier peaceful protests of guilds and shop owners

regarding the worsening economic situation.

Fidan maintained that it was no secret that the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his cabinet dreamed of "regime change" in Iran. "Their calculations about the people of Iran, however, are incorrect," he said.

Lauding the political awareness of the Iranian society, Fidan added that Iranians know quite well to which development they should respond, how much their level of response should be, and whose benefits the aforementioned development serves.

"Whenever Tehran steps on the



Hakan Fidan  
IRNA

path of negotiations," he said, "conditions beyond what they can reasonably accept are put forward, which further complicates the issue."

# Efforts underway to use tourism potentials of Choghakhor Wetland



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## Iranica Desk

The deputy head of Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization said the International Choghakhor Wetland in Borujen is one of the important tourism potentials of the province. Hadi Qasemi said, "In recent years, efforts have been made to utilize this significant tourism potential in Choghakhor Exemplary Tourism Area."

He added that one of the most important steps taken to promote tourism in this area is the establishment of a tourism complex, covering an area of 48,000 square meters, with the private sector's investment. In the first phase of the project, 45 two-bedroom units, 230 rooms with a capacity of 360 beds, have been added to the province's accommodation capacity, chtn.ir wrote.

Qasemi noted that green space, restaurant, traditional cafe and

coffee shop are among the other facilities which have been provided in first phase of the project. He added that with the inauguration of the first phase, 60 direct employment opportunities have been created for local people. Moreover, to benefit from the economic advantages of tourism development, the residents can sell their products, including handicrafts and traditional arts, to visitors and establish more ecodiges in the region.

# Gachan Mountain offering destination for nature lovers



IRNA

## Iranica Desk

In the silent, green mountains of western Iran, amid drifting mist and ancient oak forests, a hidden trail winds its way upward, where every step becomes a journey into nature and tranquility. Gachan Mountain, with its pristine landscapes and terraced gardens tucked into the mountainside, offers a destination for those seeking an authentic walking experience through oak forests and crystal-clear springs. Starting near the Azadi Tunnel, this route is more than a natural passageway; it is a living narrative of coexistence between humans and the mountain environment. Here, orchard keepers with weathered hands have cultivated walnut trees high on rocky slopes, while bubbling springs breathe life into stone and soil alike, according to ISNA.

After passing through the Azadi Tunnel — located about 15 kilometers from the city of Ilam, visitors must find a place

to park their cars beside the tunnel, as this point marks the start of the hike toward the heights of Gachan Mountain. At first, a steep mountainside lies ahead, with the trail cutting through dense stands of oak, ash, and wild pear trees. Once this demanding ascent is behind, occasional glances backward reveal Manesh Peak emerging through the foliage. Beyond this section, the path becomes slightly gentler, with the difficulty and elevation gradually decreasing. A deep sense of silence and calm dominates the area, and the surrounding natural beauty is so striking that fatigue seems to fade away.

After passing the milder slopes and reaching higher ground, the trail levels out further, offering new vistas of surrounding mountains and forests that enhance the pleasure of walking. After about an hour of hiking, the route reaches a zone of walnut orchards belonging to local residents — fertile and careful-

ly maintained gardens carved into the highlands through great effort. Separated by stone walls and wooden fencing, the orchards form a striking and picturesque landscape.

The presence of orchard keepers at such elevations, tending their trees in an area inaccessible by vehicle, is particularly noteworthy indicating a long tradition of perseverance and attachment to the land. Continuing past the orchards toward a spring, hikers arrive at the scenic Gachan Waterfall. The fresh water from this spring is used both to irrigate the walnut groves and to supply nearby villages.

The trail attracts a steady flow of mountaineers and families, especially during spring, summer, and autumn. Even in winter, despite the cold, Gachan Mountain remains a favored destination for nature lovers and hiking enthusiasts seeking solitude, beauty, and a connection to the mountainous landscape.

# AFC U23 Asian Cup: Iran, Uzbekistan share the spoils in goalless draw



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## Sports Desk

Iran and Uzbekistan played to a goalless stalemate in Group C of the AFC U23 Asian Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday. Iran dominated all statistics at the Prince Faisal bin Fahd Stadium, enjoying 66% of possession, but failed to break the deadlock for a second consecutive game, having shared the spoils with South Korea on Wednesday. The result left Iran third in the group table with two points, while Uzbekistan

stands second — level on four points with South Korea, which came from behind twice to beat Lebanon 4-2 earlier in the day to sit atop the table. Iran will have to beat Lebanon on Tuesday to stand a chance of a top-two finish in the group and a place in the quarterfinals. The bad news for Iran head coach Omid Ravankhah is that he will have to do without an established striker for its final game in the group after both Reza Ghandipour and Mohammad Asgari had to leave the pitch against Uz-

bekistan due to injuries. Asgari came off the bench to replace Ghandipour with 20 minutes remaining, only to be stretchered out 12 minutes later with what appeared to be a torn ligament injury — a massive blow for Sepahan, which has the young striker's seven goals in 16 games to thank for the top spot in the Persian Gulf Pro League table. Iran has managed to progress beyond the group phase only once in the previous four participations at the showpiece — at the 2016 edition, where Iran

# Iran finishes Greco-Roman runner-up in Vehbi Emre tourney



IAWFIW

## Sports Desk

Iran collected nine medals, including double golds, to finish runner-up to the host at the Greco-Roman event of the Yaşar Doğu, Vehbi Emre & Hamit Kaplan International Tournament in Antalya, Türkiye. Arman Tahmasbi rounded out Iran's medal hunt at the competition with a final victory in the 130kg weight class, adding to Amirreza Moradian's gold in the 97kg category. Meanwhile, Mohammad Ashiri (60kg), Mohammad Eskandari (67kg), and Ali-Asghar Samdaliri (77kg) finished with consolation bronze medals in their

respective divisions. The two-day Greco-Roman event served as the second phase of Iran's selection process — following last month's National Championships — for April's Asian Championships, as well as the World Championships and Asian Games in September.

Earlier in the competition, Reza Bahmani defeated Ali Hajivand in an all-Iranian 63kg semifinal but ultimately settled for silver after a final loss to the host wrestler. Mohammad Arjmand also suffered a final setback against his Turkish opponent to add a second silver to Iran's medal count

in the 82kg division. Kianoosh Shamshiri and Mahdi Kamali shared the bronze medals in the 55kg category following consolation victories over Turkish wrestlers in the third-place contests. Omid Bahmani and Kia Rostami — both participating in the 72kg class — as well as Mohammad Hosseini Ostad Mohammad (87kg) were the other members of the Iranian squad, finishing their campaigns empty-handed.

The Greco-Roman competition will be followed by the freestyle event, with 11 Iranian wrestlers competing across eight weight classes.

# Museums, historical sites closed amid unrest while cinemas open



IRNA

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ministry instructed the closure of all museums and historical sites as of January 9 until further notice due to the current unrest across the country.

Cinemas, however, continue to screen films as usual, though tickets can only be purchased in person due to the widespread internet shutdown. Under normal circumstances, 90% of tickets are purchased online, IRNA reported.

The National Library and Archives of Iran also operates as usual and will host the closing ceremony of the 16th research festival on Monday, January 12. The event will be attended by Cultural Heritage Minister Reza Salahi-Amiri.

Iran has seen economic protests in the past weeks which in certain cases led to violent clashes between rioters and security forces.

According to Iranian law enforcement officials, terrorist groups, led by the US and Israel, have taken advantage of the situation to destabilize the country.

As a result, many public places, including chain stores and banks, have been destroyed by these groups, while several civilians and security forces have also been killed during the operations.

Iran's Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution announced in a statement on January 10 that the current riots are orchestrated by the United States and Israel's intelligence agency Mossad, whose main strategy is extreme and widespread violence. The statement accused the US and Israel of focusing on destroying the Iranian's national unity after this exemplary solidarity caused their severe defeat in the 12-day war in June.

The purpose of this strategy, according to the council, is to pave the way for renewed military conflict against the country with

direct US engagement to eventually disintegrate the country.

"They used the legitimate economic protests of some Iranians as a tool to kickstart their 'revenge and disintegration' project," the statement read.

It explained that the forerunners of the riots are armed and organized people completely trained for urban fighting.

The council called on the public and the media to work toward promoting national unity and public vigilance and warned against any discourse that would undermine this solidarity and prepare the ground for a second military war.

It also urged families to caution their children against enemy plots, reminding them of the events in Syria and Venezuela.

"The US and Israel only aim to take possession of vital resources and other countries' strategic position; for them, there is no difference between Iranian and non-Iranian," the statement warned.

# National Toy Festival gets kudos by families

## Arts & Culture Desk

The 10th National Toy Festival, which began on January 7, has been warmly received by Iranian families, children and teenagers.

The Iranian toy market, indigenous and local toy exhibitions, promotional game sections, play and experience spaces, and toy introduction and sales stalls have all attracted families' attention.

The toy stalls, by providing specialized consultations to families, play a significant role in making informed choices for toys suitable for children's age and needs.

The head of the Public Culture Council, during a visit to various sections of the festival, described the event as a "valuable step" in the cultural education of children and teenagers.

Qader Ashena explained that children, at a young age, are not yet familiar with Iran's cultural heritage, traditions, and capabilities, and the best way to convey these concepts to the new generation is through art tools.

Ashena described toys as one of the most effective art tools popular among children, adding, "Kids should enjoy their childhood, and toys can provide a platform for expressing emotions, releasing energy, and shaping their cultural identity."

He added, "When children come across Iranian toys, Iranian characters, and indigenous symbols, their eyes, ears, and minds get accustomed to seeing and hearing Iranian cultural elements from the very beginning."



IRNA

Referring to the toys section of the festival, Ashena said, "to be honest, I was truly amazed by this section; dolls are not just toys, but cultural and civil identity symbols. When we see toys inspired by diverse ecosystems of Iran, from Sistan and Baluchestan to Kurdistan, Zagros, Alborz, the Persian Gulf, and the Caspian Sea, this vibrant display of Iran's cultural diversity is truly captivating."

He stressed that, "we should not promote other countries' cultural styles and products; this does not mean disconnecting from the world, but alongside cultural interaction and exchange with the global community, we should be advocates for our own cultural heritage."

Ashena said, "I reckon the 10th edition of the festival has successfully conveyed this important message to its audience and taken a significant step towards strengthening the cultural identity of children and teenagers."

The 10th National Toy Festi-

val, with the slogan "Play, the joy of life," while introducing such opportunities, provides a platform for families to get to know domestic productions, support the Iranian toy industry, and promote targeted and creative play.

The festival will run through January 17 at Iran's Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

Annually, the Iranian toy market has a turnover of between \$300 to 350 million, but only 40% of that comes from domestically made toys, while the rest is made up of imports and even smuggled goods.

There are about 250 official toy producers in the country, and exports of Iranian-made toys reached about \$20 million in 2023, with main destinations including Iraq and neighboring countries.

The industry faces persistent challenges such as heavy import competition, financing and investment limitations, and relatively low domestic market share.

# France to host Iranian cinematic event in 2026

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is holding a cinematic event in Paris in 2026 to introduce modern experiences and emerging Iranian talents to French audiences.

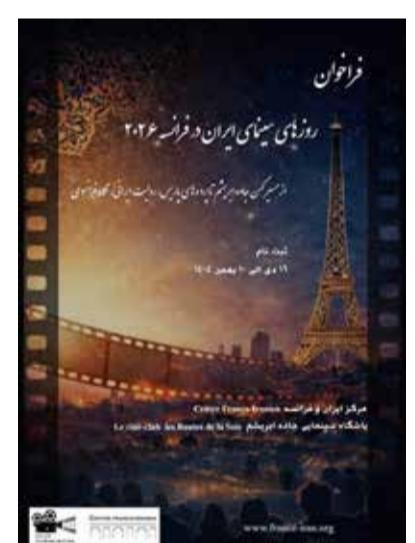
According to Iran Cinema Museum's news portal, the event, titled "Days of Iran's Cinema", is open for enrollment from January 6 to 30. Under the theme "from the old Silk Road to screens in Paris; Iranian narrative, French outlook", the event will run from March to December 2026.

Six long films will be selected for screening during the event, followed by Q & A ses-

sions with their creators in cooperation with Iran-France Center (CFI) and the Silk Road Cinema Club.

The selection committee includes Jean-Claude Voisin, an expert on Iran's history, archeologist, and former head of French Institute in Tehran, along with Iranian directors Monir Qeidi and Hossein Namazi. The executive director of the event is Vahid Yaghoubi, university professor and artistic advisor at the Iran-France Institute.

For more information, interested individuals are referred to the Institute's website: [france-iran.org](http://france-iran.org).



# 'Juliet & the King' on Iranian silver screens

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian animated feature film 'Juliet & the King' began its national screening since January 7 with a new perspective on Qajar history.

Written, directed, and produced by Ashkan Rahgozar, the

product is a musical animation in the comedy-romance genre, ILNA reported.

The film took six years to be produced, and it has so far participated in 14 international festivals and won six awards. In the 90-minute 2D family animation, Nasser-al-Din Shah, the

Iranian king, gets an invitation to visit France. He loves Europe and he always takes the chance to visit there. While visiting a Romeo-Juliet play in Paris, the actress catches his eye. He falls in love with her so deeply that he asks her to perform the same play in Tehran, so he can impress her and win her heart.

Julie, the actress, decides to take this chance. With the help of her friend Jamal, she goes to perform in Iran, anticipating progress in her career. But she suddenly finds herself among jealous court ladies and the center of the king's attention.

'Juliet & the King' is Rahgozar's second animated feature produced in Hoorakhs Studio after the mythic fantasy 'The Last Fiction' (2018).

The animated movie premiered at the 43rd Fajr Film Festival last year.

