



Minister hails Fajr Film Festival as symbol of national identity

Arts & Culture Desk



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance described Fajr Film Festival as a symbol of Iranians' national identity. Abbas Salehi, during his visit to the Fajr Film Festival secretariat on January 17, added that "whenever Iran is at greater risk, we should work harder for our country," IRNA reported.

He said Iran hosts various cultural events, but only a few have become identity symbols, emphasizing, "As we find ourselves in more critical conditions, we require more identity symbols; when geography, identity, and history are at risk, the role of such cultural symbols becomes more prominent."

Salehi said the festival, in previous years, has provided a kind of strength that is not merely symbolic or injective. Salehi considered the Fajr Film Festival as a symbol of Iranian cinema and stressed, "Iranian cinema is part of the identifying markers of Iran, and the image of Iran is intertwined with its cinema; to such an extent that after 'Iranian Poetry', 'Iranian Cinema' is known worldwide."

He noted, "When cinema holds such a position, then the symbols of this cinema also gain importance, and undoubtedly, the Fajr Film Festival is one of these symbols."

He recalled positive events that occurred during the previous rounds of the festi-

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi (C), flanked by the Secretary of the Fajr Film Festival Manuchehr Shahsavari (L) and Head of the Cinema Organization of Iran Raed Faridzadeh, attends a meeting on Fajr Film Festival in Tehran on January 17, 2026.

● IRNA

val, referring specifically to last year's efforts to reconcile cineasts with the Fajr Film Festival again, which he said was achieved in a short time.

"This year, Fajr Film Festival has gained thematic and formal diversity in order to develop into an event that will be the prelude to future improvements, which the ministry will certainly support," Salehi said.

Salehi also referred to the change in the media system and the need to perceive this change in events like the Fajr Film Festival. According to the minister, media activity is typically limited to the days of holding the festival, but to have a persistent path, the "continuous communication system" must take a different approach.

He stressed that "we should show that not only have not our motivations wavered, but our determination has doubled to not send a signal of weakness to the enemy and to prevent them from taking more hostile actions against our country."

The Fajr Film Festival is one of the events



that can send important signals, as the world is looking at this event.

The minister expressed hope that the Fajr Film Festival would be held more magnificently than ever.

Raed Faridzadeh, the head of the Cinema Organization of Iran, and Manuchehr Shahsavari, the secretary of the Fajr Film Festival, were also present.

Over 6,000 artists submitted works to Fajr Int'l Theater Festival

The number of works submitted to the 44th edition of the Fajr International Theater Festival secretariat has been very impressive, with over 6,000 theater artists from across the country participating in the festival so far, the minister

said in a visit to Kerman Province a day earlier.

The festival has reached a point where more attention needs to be paid to talent scouting and investing on young theater groups, Salehi added.

The festival officially opened in Kerman Province and will continue in the capital Tehran.

Hamedan's tourists rate posts 9% growth in as many months



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The number of tourists who visited the museums and historical sites in Iran's western province of Hamedan registered 9% increase and reached 609,548, during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar to December 21, compared to the same period last year, the provincial head of museums and his-

torical sites announced.

The 45-day closure related to the 12-day war in June was also taken into account, Amir-Hossein Fariba said, IRNA reported.

Fariba announced the Avicenna tomb of the province as the top attraction with 238,132 visitors.

This year, 200,595 visits were recorded for Tomb of Babataher, 115,877 for Heg-

mataneh Museum, and 19,190 visits for the Alaviyan Dome.

He added that the province saw 7,472 visits to the History and Culture Museum of Malayer, 3,936 to the Noshan Castle, 9,040 to Samen underground city, 2,929 to the Haji Agha Torab Nahavand Bathhouse Museum.

Also, 4,508 tourists visited the History and Culture Museum of Toyserkan, 5,456 the Tomb of Mir Razyeddin Artimani, and 2,413 the History and Culture Museum of Asadabad.

The province houses 21 museums, among which eight are directly supervised by provincial cultural heritage department and 13 are being managed collaboratively throughout the province. He added that Hamedan boasts 1,900 historical, cultural, and natural attractions, which has made it a special and important destination in the tourism industry. Out of the figure, 1,400 have been registered on the National Heritage List.

The provincial tourism official reminded that last year, a total of 593,214 visitors paid a visit to museums and historical sites, with Avicenna Tomb recording the highest number with 222,664 visitors.

Iran celebrates Prophet's Mission Day

Social Desk

Iran on January 17 celebrated the religious occasion of Mab'ath, marking the day Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was appointed by God to invite people to the Islamic faith.

On this day, various programs were held in different provinces, mostly at holy sites such as mosques and shrines. Most of these ceremonies included speeches by religious scholars and clerics and eulogy related to Prophet Muhammad. In some cities, motorcades and vehicle rallies were organized. Stalls were also set up across some cities, providing cultural and religious services.

The distribution of sweets, drinks, and



tea, holding competitions and awarding prizes, special children and youth programs, religious Q&A sessions, and more were part of the plans of these stalls which hosted the public.

Honoring religious rituals and condemning desecration of holy sites during recent unrests in the country were also key topics in speeches on this day.

In the week leading up to this celebration, following public protests over economic issues, unrests erupted in the country, which turned violent in certain cases. During these disturbances, several holy sites and mosques were attacked and damaged. These insults were condemned by clerical society and various organizations.

Schools return to normal as weather improves, unrest subsides



Social Desk

The Ministry of Education in Iran announced that all schools in the country will be open for all educational levels on Sunday, January 18, except for provinces where provincial governors have ordered a closure due to cold weather or air pollution, IRNA reported.

Last week, many schools in various provinces moved online due to air pollution and heavy snowfall, as well as riots in country

that in some cases escalated to violence and left several casualties.

As conditions improved, schools are ordered to return to normal operation. Majid Parsa, Director General of Tehran's Education Department, said with the improvement in conditions, all schools will resume in-person activities from Sunday.

Regarding the possibility of closure due to cold, he said that the Tehran Governor's Office will make the decision, but noted

that Tehran schools are currently in good condition regarding the supply of energy.

He added that during the recent riots, only a few schools in Tehran suffered damage (broken windows and damage to the façade), which have since been repaired.

However, some provinces, have also implemented closures due to weather conditions. Mashhad's Education Department announced that all primary schools in the city will be closed for both morning and afternoon

shifts on January 18. A similar decision has been made in the province of Kermanshah, where schools will operate remotely on Sunday.

Many cities in Iran saw protests in late December over economic problems, including the hike in foreign currency rates and rising prices of goods. However, protests turned violent in some instances and were exploited by terrorist groups. The unrest has been declining since last Sunday.