

Ministry backs concert comeback, holds off on ticket price rise



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry is moving to restart live mu-

sic after months of disruption, with its top music official pledging institutional backing for performances while stopping short of approving higher

ticket prices. Babak Rezaei, head of the Music Office at the ministry, said the government's remit centers on licensing and facilitation, adding it "supports" artists and welcomes the return of concerts. Talks with industry players are under way, he said, though the hiatus has complicated a swift rebound, IRNA reported. "A concert is a collective, time-intensive process," Rezaei said, noting that production cycles, from rehearsals to repertoire preparation, were interrupted. Restarting requires coordination among ensembles and venues, he added, with the ministry working to reconnect artists and streamline approvals. He said many performers are eager to take the stage again, but stressed that improved social conditions, access to

rehearsal space and full troupe participation are prerequisites for a sustained revival. The ministry aims to accelerate those conditions so new works can reach audiences. On pricing, Rezaei said no final decision has been taken. While current economic pressures have eroded the viability of past price levels, the ministry is seeking to cap end costs by managing fees at state-run halls, extending targeted support and strengthening media outreach so artists can perform and the public can attend. Rezaei also stressed music's role at "critical junctures," pointing to a surge of nationally themed works produced during recent wartime conditions despite operational constraints that limited formal licensing. Hundreds of pieces circulated via public squares

and media outlets across Tehran and the provinces, he said, with several deemed "notable" for their impact. He drew a parallel between contemporary releases and canonical works, citing Mohsen Chavoshi's track 'Hasbi Allah' (God is sufficient for me) alongside the historic 'Ey Iran' by Rouhollah Khaleghi as examples of music's capacity to transmit social meaning, foster unity and bolster public resilience. Recent hostilities and a temporary ceasefire have galvanized the cultural sector, prompting artists to issue statements of solidarity and produce new material, while cultural institutions organized programs to reinforce national unity. Rezaei said music has once again demonstrated its ability to stand "alongside the people" and to help document defining social moments.

Iran seeks to etch Minab tragedy into global cultural memory

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, said on Saturday the country is bringing its full cultural capacity to bear to turn the Minab school tragedy into a "lasting" national and international memory, outlining a coordinated push across arts, media and legal channels. Speaking at a Cultural Council meeting in Tehran, Salehi-Amiri called for moving beyond a temporary response toward embedding the event in Iran's collective consciousness and global discourse, IRNA reported. "This incident must become enduring," he said, urging the formation of a "global consensus" to secure its place in international legal and cultural frameworks. The attack occurred on February 28, the first day of the US and Israeli aggression against Iran, when an elementary school was struck by an airstrike, killing 168 people.



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri (6th L), speaks at a Cultural Council meeting in Tehran on May 2, 2026. ● IRNA

He outlined a multi-pronged plan, including early-stage research groups drafting a unified narrative. The program features a museum dedicated to the Minab school victims, urban memorials, and extensive documentation, alongside a wide range of cultural output, from feature films and animation to literature, poetry and music, designed to sustain long-term engagement. Describing the effort as nationwide, he said a central task force will align cultural, educational and media institutions to ensure coordinated execution. Plans also call for integrating the narrative into textbooks, public spaces and digital platforms, embedding it in everyday life. "Our aim is repetition and re-cre-

ation in social memory," he said, adding that the victims' names and images should resonate across schools, universities, festivals and online spaces. Salehi-Amiri highlighted international outreach as a priority, announcing plans for "high-caliber" productions with global reach to engage audiences abroad and spotlight the tragedy as a humanitarian issue. He also pointed to the role of Iranian communities overseas in amplifying the narrative, stressing the use of cultural diplomacy to extend its impact. Sustained storytelling and cultural production, he said, are essential to securing a permanent place for the Minab school victims in contemporary historical memory.

'Yooz' roars into Russian cinemas, lands in top 10 with swift box-office run

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The Iranian 3D animated feature film 'Yooz,' directed by Reza Arzhang, opened in Russian cinemas on April 16 and grossed \$245,000 in under 10 days, entering the country's top 10 box-office titles and drawing strong early audiences. Released across multiple cities under the Russian title 'Толстяк Юзи,' the family-oriented film secured a prominent slot among foreign releases, signaling a growing international footprint for Iran's animation sector, ISNA reported. Russian outlets highlighted its environmental narrative and commercial momentum, noting its appeal alongside global family titles. The feature follows an Iranian cheetah on an arduous journey back to its



homeland, weaving themes of identity, conservation and cultural heritage into a fast-paced storyline. Its ecological focus on the endangered Asiatic cheetah has been central to its reception abroad, broadening its reach beyond younger viewers. Produced by Soureh Animation Center and VistaMedia, and distributed internationally by 'Ten Letters,' 'Yooz'

builds on a strong domestic run. The film premiered in Iran in October 2025, drawing more than 1.5 million viewers and earning almost 970 billion rials, becoming the country's highest-grossing animated title to date. Industry observers point to the film's "cross-border" appeal and technical polish, achieved through high production standards, as key to its overseas traction.

'Persian Gulf Photographer' awarded in Taiwan with eco-focused short

Arts & Culture Desk

An Iranian filmmaker from Qeshm Island won the Special Jury Award at the 2026 Chiayi International Three-Minute Film Competition in Chiayi, Taiwan, as his environmentally themed short stood out among entries from 33 countries. Asghar Besharati, widely known as the "Persian Gulf Photographer," secured the honor with The Way of a Red, a compact, visually driven work that he wrote, directed,

shot and produced. The film's focus on environmental stewardship and the "vital" role of water resonated with an international jury and underscored Iran's growing cultural footprint at global festivals, IRNA reported. "The film speaks to a 'shared' concern," one festival juror said in a statement, praising its concise storytelling and visual clarity. Besharati's latest accolade builds on an established international track record. He has previously taken top



gold medals in Spain, the United Kingdom and Russia, and has increasingly pivoted toward documentary filmmaking that foregrounds the natural

heritage of southern Iran. Cultural officials describe him as a "credible ambassador" of Hormozgan's landscapes and traditions on the world stage. 'The Way of a Red' features Reyhaneh Sadeghi, with sound recorded by Maher Soroudi, sound design by Amin Ardani and editing by Mansour Vahdani. Its international distribution is handled by Exir Tasvir, led by Seyed Hamed Nobari. The film has already drawn recognition

across multiple platforms, including a special award at the Nikon International Film Festival 2025 and honors at the Golden Shot World Festival 2025, alongside national prizes in Iran's water and environmental cinema circuits. The Chiayi competition, hosted by the city's Cultural Affairs Bureau, is a prominent platform for ultra-short filmmaking, drawing a diverse international field and spotlighting concise narratives with global resonance.

Lake Urmia rebounds to five-year high as inflows lift water volume



Social Desk

Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran has reached its highest water volume in five years as inflows and transfer projects boosted levels, said Saeed Isapour, head of the Lake Urmia Restoration Headquarters planning office, in Urmia on May 3. Water volume has climbed to 3.5 billion cubic meters, more than 3 billion cubic meters above the start of the current water year, he

said. Water level has also risen to 1,270.90 meters, up 1.40 meters since start of the water year, ILNA reported. Surface area expanded to 2,255 square kilometers, about 1,700 square kilometers more than the same period last year. Rivers feeding the basin are delivering 300-350 cubic meters per second, alongside a 30 cubic meters per second transfer from the Kani Sib project. He forecast level could reach 1,271 meters within two weeks if conditions persist. Farmers along river routes were urged avoid unnecessary abstraction ensuring flows reach lake. Officials said projected autumn and winter rainfall offers cautious optimism to stabilize the internationally monitored hypersaline lake into next water year.