

'Alone in Tehran' to open Diaspora Film Festival in South Korea

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Amin Sahraei's 'Alone in Tehran' has been selected as the opening film of the 14th International Diaspora Film Festival in Incheon, South Korea, spotlighting a personal war-time narrative shaped by conflict, resilience, and human fragility. The film, which will be screened on May 22, unfolds as an intimate account of solitude and survival amid destruction, charting one in-

dividual's confrontation with pain and the search for meaning at the edge of collapse. Festival organizers described the work as a "raw, lived experience" that blurs the boundary between artistic expression and personal testimony, Mehr News agency reported. Sahraei, who directed the film under physically and emotionally challenging conditions linked to wartime circumstances, frames the project as both documentation and reflection. "It comes from within," he said, stressing the

film's deeply autobiographical tone and its focus on human endurance when hope becomes scarce. Alone in Tehran has already circulated on the international festival circuit, including screenings at the 34th Louis International Film Festival in the United States and the AMDOCS Documentary Film Festival, known for its focus on socially engaged cinema. Produced in both short and feature-length versions, the film is currently continuing its global festival run, with

plans for a domestic screening following its international trajectory. Although Sahraei secured visas for Greece and South Korea, he was unable to attend in person due to wartime-related constraints. In a gesture of solidarity, organizers of both the Paziouiti Festival in Greece and the Diaspora Film Festival dedicated the screenings to the filmmaker and the conditions under which the film was made, calling it a work that "speaks beyond borders."



Rural homestays become 'nat'l shelters' in post-war tourism



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Iran's community-based eco-lodges acted as "national shelters" during recent hostilities, as authorities managed more than 29 million domestic journeys, absorbed heavy damage to heritage assets, and mapped a return to growth with a renewed international outreach, the country's Deputy for Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said on Tuesday. The United States and Israel launched coordinated military operations against Iran on February 28. Speaking on state television, Mohseni-Bandpey said the government repurposed the national Travel Services Coordination Headquarters into a crisis command center, convening 137 emergency meetings to steer mobility and public services between March 16 and April 4. "We handled a vast, fluid population under

wartime constraints," he said, noting that 29.7 million trips were recorded, down about 18% year on year, CHTN reported. He said provinces with dense inflows, including Mazandaran, Gilan, East Azarbaijan and Khorasan Razavi, required "real-time monitoring" and broad logistical backing spanning communications, fuel supply and essential goods. With travelers shifting toward low-density destinations, official occupancy rates dipped while rural eco-lodges "stepped up," offering refuge "free of charge" and operating as a form of passive civil defense. More than 23,000 accommodation units, roadside complexes and tourism service providers kept operations running, preserving the travel support chain, he added. The official put damage to cultural heritage and tourism infrastructure at about \$48.6 million,

with 149 state-run historical sites, museums and monuments affected, including Golestan Palace. He said the impact prompted international reactions underscoring the need to safeguard cultural sites during conflicts. In the private sector, 64 facilities across 13 provinces sustained direct or indirect hits. Seventeen workers were killed at a tourism complex in Zanjan. Mohseni-Bandpey said inbound tourism, which had been rebounding, with April 2025 indicators up 48.5% and 116 tour operators from 26 countries visiting Iran in May, slipped after the 12-day conflict, with arrivals easing from 7.4 million to 6.2 million, a 16.8% decline. Looking ahead, he said the ministry aims to restore momentum and reach 15 million foreign visitors by the end of the Seventh Development Plan (2023-2027). Strategy scenarios range from "continued crisis" to "sustainable calm," with a focus on health and pilgrimage tourism, visa facilitation and regional markets in the Caucasus and Central Asia. He also cited support from Spain, host of the UN World Tourism Organization, and the incoming Spanish ambassador's readiness to promote Iran's tourism capacities as signs of "a new chapter" in international cooperation.

Ancient Iranian artifacts stay in China over security concerns

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Iranian cultural authorities have placed hundreds of loaned antiquities in secure storage facilities in China after extending major exhibitions, ILNA reported, as wartime conditions and airspace restrictions delay their return. The artifacts, dispatched under flagship cultural diplomacy initiatives, include 211 objects spanning the Iron Age to the Safavid era showcased in the 'Glory of Ancient Iran' exhibition, followed by 151 additional pieces under "Land of Mehr." Displayed first in Beijing and later touring Shanghai and Urumqi, the collections drew broad international audiences before their schedules were prolonged. With regional hostilities disrupting logistics, Iranian officials traveled overland to China to oversee the transfer of the items from exhibition venues into "secure" museum storage. "We checked and repacked each piece with precision," said Tehran's Deputy Cultural Heritage Director



Morteza Adibzadeh, describing the operation as meticulous and fully supervised. The artifacts were sealed in standard wooden crates and relocated under joint Iranian-Chinese oversight. Adibzadeh emphasized there was "no cause for concern," noting that the items remain protected under binding international protocols and formal agreements with Chinese counterparts. He added

that the works will remain in safeguarded repositories until safe transport conditions are restored. Originally slated for return in May 2026, the timeline has become uncertain as transport risks mount. Officials acknowledged that moving high-value antiquities requires specialized logistics, insurance coverage, and secure transit corridors, conditions currently constrained.

Iranian critic tapped for FIPRESCI jury at Cannes 2026

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Iranian filmmaker and critic Pouya Aghelizadeh was appointed to the FIPRESCI jury at the Cannes Film Festival 2026, Mehr News Agency reported, citing Iran's House of Cinema. Aghelizadeh, a member of the International Federation of Film Critics, will serve on the independent critics' panel that awards prizes across sections of the festival. The FIPRESCI jury operates separately from Cannes' official juries, underscoring its role as a global critical voice, Mehr News Agency reported.

The 79th edition of the festival is set to run from May 12 to May 23 in Cannes, bringing together leading filmmakers and critics from around the world. The lineup is expected to feature new works by internationally acclaimed directors including Asghar Farhadi and Andrey Zvyagintsev. Aghelizadeh has previously served as a juror at South Korea's DMZ International Documentary Film Festival and contributed as a critic at the Busan International Film Festival. He is currently developing a feature screenplay titled 'The Season of Bubble Flight,' which is slated for production after Cannes.