

Government spox calls Persian Gulf's 'historic identity' a global cultural imperative



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Government Spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani called for wider international recognition of the Persian Gulf's historical and cultural identity during a visit to the 'Persian Gulf, Sea of the Brave' exhibition at Tehran's Museum of the Islamic Revolution and Sacred Defense, saying museums and cultural institutions must help introduce Iran's civilizational roots to global audiences and younger generations.

Touring the exhibition's digital gallery



Iranian Government Spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani signs a large wall photo during her visit to the 'Persian Gulf, Sea of the Brave' exhibition at Tehran's Museum of the Islamic Revolution and Sacred Defense, on May 11, 2026.

● IRNA

alongside museum officials, Mohajerani viewed historical maps, archival documents and cultural artifacts related to the Persian Gulf, describing the event as a "documented and clear narrative" of Iran's enduring historical ties to the waterway, IRNA reported.

She said research-based cultural initiatives and museum exhibitions play an important role in strengthening public awareness while expanding cultural outreach to foreign tourists, diplomats, business delegations and Iranians living abroad.

"The Persian Gulf exhibition presents a clear and documented narrative of the region's historical and cultural identity," she said, praising organizers for combining scholarly work with artistic presentation. Mohajerani said the exhibition revolves around two parallel themes: historical evidence affirming Iran's longstanding con-

nection to the Persian Gulf and accounts reflecting foreign ambitions toward Iranian territory.

She also stressed the importance of cultural diplomacy through museums and public exhibitions. "After deepening awareness within society itself, introducing these concepts to international visitors becomes especially important," she said. Calling the Persian Gulf a source of collective national pride for Iranians, Mohajerani described the exhibition's tribute to the martyrs of the Shajareh Tayebah School in Minab, who were killed in US-Israel strikes on February 28, as "respectful" and emotionally resonant.

The exhibition, hosted at the Fakkeh Gallery in Tehran, ran through May 11 and features historical records and multimedia installations exploring the Persian Gulf's cultural legacy and historical significance.

Tourism sector set for 'smart overhaul' under new year policy framework

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts sector is moving toward a "smart management" overhaul in the new Iranian year which started March 21, as the government seeks to rebuild and reposition the industry following a turbulent year marked by regional conflict and domestic disruption, according to statements published by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri said in the preface to a newly released policy booklet that Iran is drafting a scenario-based governance framework for tourism in the current year, describing the sector as a strategic pillar of national development and international engagement.

"In Iranian thought, culture is not merely a collection of artifacts and rituals, but the foundation of national identity," Salehi-Amiri said, stressing that heritage, tourism and handi-

crafts form a unified civilizational system capable of strengthening social cohesion and national resilience.

He added that tourism today functions beyond economics, calling it a "strategic industry" and a channel for global communication. "Tourism is a language of peace and dialogue," he said, noting its role in shaping international perceptions of Iran and expanding soft power.

The minister said the government's new framework follows what he described as an "unusual" year in 2025 and early 2026, when regional tensions and multiple security incidents disrupted travel flows, reduced foreign arrivals, and strained hotels, tour operators, eco-tourism businesses and handicraft producers.

Despite the setbacks, Salehi-Amiri said the experience exposed structural weaknesses while also clarifying opportunities for reform. He emphasized that Iran's diverse tourism assets, spanning cultural, religious, medical, coastal, rural and

ecological segments, require professional and data-driven management to support sustainable national growth.

Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said the disruptions showed the urgency of a unified policy roadmap.

He described tourism as more than an economic activity, calling it a factor in "social resilience, psychological stability and national cohesion."

He noted that reduced foreign arrivals during periods of heightened tension affected employment, service quality and human capital in the sector, warning that without a coordinated framework, policy fragmentation could weaken long-term development.

Mohseni-Bandpey said the 2026 strategy must rely on academic research, scenario planning and future-oriented analysis to prepare for multiple possible outcomes. "In unstable conditions, a coherent and dynamic policy framework is indispensable," he said.

Tehran Int'l Book Fair opens virtual doors to foreign publishers

Arts & Culture Desk

Registration for foreign publishers to join the seventh Tehran Virtual Book Fair has opened ahead of the nationwide online event scheduled for May 16-23, deputy director of the Tehran International Book Fair Ebrahim Heydari said, as Iran moves to broaden international cultural participation and expand access to foreign-language titles through its flagship digital publishing platform.

Heydari, who also heads Iran Book and Literature House, said licensed foreign publishers, official representatives and distributors can now upload credentials

and catalogues to take part in the week-long fair, which will run under the slogan "Let's Read for Iran."

The international section will feature Arabic- and Latin-language publications, with all titles undergoing expert review before entering the online sales platform to ensure authenticity and compliance with the country's cultural standards, Heydari said.

He described transparency in pricing, cooperation with supervisory bodies and the supply of original editions as key conditions for participation this year, signaling tighter oversight as the event scales up its international footprint.

The fair will offer layered discounts aimed at boosting readership and cross-border publishing exchange. Books published in 2025 and 2026 will be sold with a combined 20% reduction, including publisher discounts and subsidies from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Older titles will receive steeper markdowns.

Organizers have also extended the registration deadline for domestic publishers to May 9 following requests from industry participants seeking more time to complete applications. Iranian publishers are now permitted to offer books released from 2021 onward, a revision that significantly widens the eligible catalogue.

'Paper Flowers' heads to Moscow family film showcase

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian animated short 'Paper Flowers' by filmmaker Ramak Amin Kazemi was selected for the short film competition of Russia's 21st International "In the Family" Film Festival, as the festival prepares to gather family-themed productions from across the international cinema circuit in Moscow on July 4-7.

Produced by the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), 'Paper Flowers' follows a writer who believes he has reached "the end of the road," unfolding through a visually



restrained narrative centered on loss, reflection and emotional renewal.

The selection extends the film's strong international festival run over the past year.

The animated short previously captured the Best Short Animation award at the Kazan festival and screened at a string of overseas events, including festivals in Girona, Spain, Cinema Nebrodi in Italy, T-Shorts in Germany and Tampa in the United States.

Widely regarded as Russia's largest festival dedicated to family-oriented cinema, the "In the Family" event spotlights works built around themes of love, loyalty and the revival of family values. Its competitive lineup spans feature films, children's features and animation, and short films.

Tehran faces deepening water strain as dams drop to 22% amid uneven rainfall

Social Desk

Iran's water sector spokesman Issa Bozorgzadeh said on Monday that Tehran is now at the center of the country's most acute water stress, with reservoir levels in the capital's supply dams falling to just 22%, sharply below the national average, showing mounting pressure on urban consumption patterns.

Bozorgzadeh said total storage in the five dams supplying the capital had declined to about 419 million cubic meters as of May 9, down from 459 million cubic meters a year earlier, adding that the figure

was also significantly below long-term averages. "The situation requires serious consumption management," he said, IRNA reported.

He noted that the national average dam fill rate stands at around 65%, but stressed that regional disparities remain pronounced, with Tehran, Alborz, Mashhad, Saveh and Arak among the most water-stressed areas.

Within the capital's network, conditions at key reservoirs remain particularly tight, with Lar dam at 6% capacity and Mamloo at 14%, both described as "concerning" amid continued pressure on urban de-

mand.

Bozorgzadeh said around 35 million people nationwide are still affected by water stress, down from 65 million last year, but warned against reading broader rainfall improvements as a sign of recovery.

Average precipitation has reached 226 millimeters, only about 2% above the long-term norm, which he said does not indicate a shift into a wetter cycle. "The country has not entered a wet period," he said.

He added that rainfall remains uneven, with surplus precipitation in southern provinces such as Bushehr and Hor-

mozgan, while central and northern provinces including Tehran, Isfahan and Yazd continue to record deficits. "Local management is essential," he said, noting that national averages mask sharp regional imbalances.

The spokesman also warned against misinterpreting improved inflows, up 68% year-on-year in some reservoirs, as structural recovery, saying water management must remain "strictly consumption-focused," with higher tariffs for heavy users and incentives for conservation.

Bozorgzadeh said 11 provinces remain below normal rainfall levels, with Tehran



among the most affected, and reiterated that "no relaxation" in water-saving measures is expected in the coming period.