

# Tehran Symphony Orchestra opens 2026 season with cross-border classical showcase



## Arts & Culture Desk

The Tehran Symphony Orchestra opened its first official concert of 2026 titled 'From Beyond Borders' at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on May 21, under guest conductor Omid Mehrabi, performing a wide-ranging program of Ira-



nian and international classical works. The sold-out performance opened with Beethoven's 'Coriolan Overture,' setting a dramatic tone that moved between tension and resolve. It was followed by Mascagni's 'Intermezzo' from 'Cavalleria Rusticana,' before the orchestra shifted into the lyrical sweep of Smetana's 'The Moldau,' evoking flowing landscapes and national romanticism, according to IRNA. Tchaikovsky's 'Slav March' brought a martial intensity rooted in 19th-century Eu-

ropean orchestral tradition, while Borodin's 'Polovtsian Dances' added rhythmic color and choral-inspired momentum from the Russian repertoire. The ensemble also performed Fikret Amirov's 'Azerbaijan Caprice,' reflecting regional modernist orchestral writing. In a notable domestic highlight, the program concluded with Heshmat Sanjari's 'Dances of the Plectrum' from 'Iranian Paintings,' showing the orchestra's commitment to Iranian symphonic heritage alongside global canon works.

Audience response was strongly positive throughout, with repeated standing ovations between pieces. At one point, conductor Omid Mehrabi praised the ensemble's performance from the stage, urging the audience to match the musicians' intensity with equally strong applause. Founded in 1944, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra remains Iran's oldest symphonic ensemble and operates under the Roudaki Foundation, continuing its long-standing role in the country's classical music landscape.

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# Iran urges overhaul of global development rankings

## Arts & Culture Desk

Senior Iranian policymakers and academics called for a sweeping revision of international development rankings during the 15th International Conference on Progress (ICP-2026) in Tehran on May 19-20, arguing that prevailing global indicators fail to reflect the political resilience, social cohesion and strategic independence of emerging nations. The two-day conference, held both in person and virtually under the theme "Convergence and Progress", brought together Iranian and foreign scholars, researchers and university professors to examine the social, political, cultural and economic dimensions of development in the Islamic world. Sadeq Vaez-Zadeh, head of the Supreme Council and Center

for the Islamic-Iranian Progress Model, said existing international classifications that divide states into categories such as "developed", "developing" or "advanced" were no longer sufficient to portray the realities of national progress. He said such rankings, despite criticism over methodological bias, continue to shape foreign trade, international investment, tourism and the global credibility of nations, making engagement with them strategically unavoidable. Referring to recent regional tensions, Vaez-Zadeh said several indicators demonstrating Iran's national convergence, defensive capability, political stability and relative economic resilience had become more visible under pressure.

He added that many internationally recognized measurements overlook these dimensions despite their growing significance in assessing state capacity and endurance. The Expediency Council member urged the Iranian government to establish a specialized inter-agency committee tasked with reviewing the country's standing in global indices and preparing scientific critiques and reform proposals for submission to international organizations through diplomatic channels. He further proposed that, if international institutions fail to adopt such revisions, emerging multilateral blocs including BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation could jointly formu-

late alternative scientific frameworks for assessing national progress. Vaez-Zadeh also called on the United Nations Secretary-General to create a balanced international committee, preferably under the supervision of the UN General Assembly, to reassess indicators produced by bodies such as UNESCO, the UN Development Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization in light of new scientific and technological realities. Citing an earlier Iranian initiative in the early 2000s, he said Tehran had previously compiled national indicators in science, culture, education and technology and submitted them to the United Nations, which later incorporated parts of the data into its statistical yearbooks.



Head of the Supreme Council and Center for the Islamic-Iranian Progress Model Sadeq Vaez-Zadeh (L) and conference secretary Hadi Akbarzadeh attend the 15th International Conference on Progress (ICP-2026) in Tehran on May 20-21, 2026. ● IRAN DAILY

Conference secretary Hadi Akbarzadeh said the event focused on the interrelationship between convergence and progress across four principal spheres: Society, politics, culture and economics. He added that justice, spirituality and rationality had been identi-

fied as the three foundational pillars of the Islamic-Iranian model of progress and national unity. A total of 146 papers were submitted to the conference, of which 82 were accepted following peer review, including 61 oral presentations and 21 poster sessions.

# Tehran Virtual Book fair draws strong reader demand in digital push

## Arts & Culture Desk

Orders at the seventh Tehran Virtual Book Fair rose sharply midway through the nationwide cultural event, with more than 130,000 purchases registered and nearly 325,000 books sold by Thursday afternoon, deputy director of the Tehran International Book Fair Ebrahim Heydari said. Heydari, who also heads Iran Book and Literature House, said the online platform had recorded 130,245 orders since the fair opened on May 16, showing sustained public demand for books and growing engagement with Iran's expanding digital publishing market, IRNA reported. According to figures released on May 21, publishers had offered 473,942 printed and digital titles through the fair's online portal, while 86,642 distinct book titles had been sold by 2



p.m. local time on Thursday. Total sales reached 324,931 copies, including 290,570 printed books and 34,361 digital editions, showing the resilience of Iran's publishing sector despite mounting global shifts towards electronic consumption. Heydari said the figures highlighted continued enthusiasm among readers and broad participation by publishers in one of the country's largest cultural initiatives. Held under the slogan



"Let's Read for Iran", the virtual fair runs until May 23 through the official platform of the Tehran International Book Fair, extending nationwide access to publishers, readers and literary institutions beyond the capital's conventional exhibition halls.

A fleet of Iran Post delivery trucks lines up to distribute the surge of orders from the seventh Tehran Virtual Book Fair, which has recorded over 130,000 purchases and nearly 325,000 books sold since opening on May 16, 2026. ● IRNA

# 'War crime' of US-Israeli attack on Pasteur Institute demands retribution: FM spokesperson

## Social Desk

Tehran has condemned the deliberate targeting of the Pasteur Institute of Iran during the recent US-Israeli aggression, calling for those responsible for the attack on the country's iconic medical research center to be held accountable. In a post on X on Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei pointed to a recent report published in The Lancet medical journal warning that the destruction inflicted on the Pasteur Institute threatens not only Iran's healthcare system but also regional health security, Press TV reported. Baqaei described the attack on the century-old scientific and public health institution as "a flagrant war crime," saying it constituted an assault on people's right to health, science and life. "The American-Israeli



US-Israeli airstrikes targeted the Pasteur Institute of Iran in Tehran in early April 2026. ● IRNA

deliberate attack on the Pasteur Institute of Iran was a flagrant war crime. The perpetrators must be held accountable," he wrote. Quoting The Lancet report, Baqaei noted that the institute had served as "a pillar of the country's public health system for more than a century," warning that its destruction poses "a real, immediate, and dangerous threat to public health." A group of international researchers and health experts, whose paper appeared in The Lancet

this week, also urged the global health community to support the restoration of the institute following the extensive damage caused by the strikes. The researchers warned that several critical laboratories, including facilities dedicated to genomic surveillance, rabies, HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and vector-borne diseases, had been completely destroyed, potentially undermining timely responses to future outbreaks. The Pasteur Institute

of Iran was bombed on April 1 and 2, with its headquarters and 13 source laboratories reportedly levelled during the US-Israeli attacks on the Islamic Republic. The aggression began on February 28 and ended under a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire on April 8. Founded in 1920 through cooperation between the Pasteur Institute of Paris and the Iranian government, the institute has played a pivotal role in combating infectious diseases and advancing vaccine production in Iran and across the region for more than a century. The Lancet paper stressed that the consequences of the attacks extend beyond Iran, warning that regional public health security is now at risk due to the damage inflicted on one of West Asia's most important medical and research institutions.