

# Isfahan to plug Iranian handicrafts into global markets

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has launched a broad initiative to modernize its handicrafts sector and expand its global reach, with Isfahan set to serve as the driving force behind a new phase of growth, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri said on June 15 during a ceremony marking National Handicrafts Week in the central Iranian city.

Describing handicrafts as one of Iran's most effective instruments of cultural diplomacy, Salehi-Amiri said the government is pursuing a comprehensive overhaul of the sector's production, marketing and export chain to better connect Iranian artistry with international markets, CHTN reported.

"Traditional approaches are no longer sufficient," he said. "We must redraw the path for Iranian art in global mar-

kets by utilizing modern technologies, major economic capacities and international distribution networks."

The minister said Isfahan, long regarded as Iran's foremost handicrafts hub, would spearhead the transformation.

"Isfahan must become the center of a new rise in Iran's handicrafts sector," he said. "We should prepare for a major leap that strengthens both the domestic market and Iran's share of global markets."

Salehi-Amiri said Iranian handicrafts continue to attract admiration during official meetings and overseas visits, calling the sector a powerful showcase of the country's cultural and civilizational heritage.

"Handicraft artists are, in reality, Iran's cultural ambassadors," he said. "Their works narrate the grandeur of Iranian civilization for today's and future generations."



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri speaks during a ceremony marking National Handicrafts Week in the central Iranian city of Isfahan on June 15, 2026.  
● CHTN

He also announced new provincial support mechanisms aimed at boosting production, expanding market access and increasing exports. A special transformation headquarters for the handicrafts sector is expected to be established in Isfahan to accelerate implementation.

Calling Isfahan a "showcase of Iran's civilization, culture, art and heritage," Salehi-Amiri said the province plays an outsized role in projecting the country's cultural identity abroad.

The minister linked the sector's future growth to Iran's broader tourism strat-



egy, noting that under the Seventh National Development Plan the country is working toward attracting 15 million foreign tourists. Increased visitor ar-

rivals, he said, would directly support handicraft sales, strengthen family incomes and generate new employment opportunities across the sector.

## Iran mourns legendary radio voice Behrouz Razavi



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Behrouz Razavi, the veteran broadcaster, narrator and cultural figure whose distinctive voice accompanied generations of Iranians through radio, literature and documentary programming, died late on June 14 in a hospital in Karaj after a prolonged illness, according to family members and colleagues. He was 79.

Razavi, one of the most recognizable voices in Iranian broadcasting, spent nearly six decades behind the microphone after joining national radio in 1968. His warm, measured delivery made him a fixture of cultural programs, most no-

tably 'Ketab-e Shab' (Book of the Night) and the long-running documentary series Iran, where he brought Persian literature, history and national heritage to life for millions of listeners.

A native of Yazd, born in January 1948, Razavi built a career that extended beyond radio into television presenting, voice acting, acting and songwriting. Cultural observers often described him as more than a broadcaster, a literary storyteller whose voice served as a bridge between generations and between contemporary audiences and Iran's rich intellectual tradition.

Tributes poured in from senior cultural and media officials across the country.

Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi led the condolences, describing Razavi's passing as "the loss of a part of our collective memory." In a statement, Salehi said that "in an age when many voices are heard but few endure, Behrouz Razavi was a voice that found a

lasting place in people's hearts." Peyman Jebelli, head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), hailed Razavi as "the eternal voice of Iran," saying his narration of stories, epics and cultural ideals would remain embedded in the nation's memory.

Ahmad Pahlavanian, IRIB's Deputy for Radio, called him "one of radio's most valuable assets," while Mahmoud Shalouei, president of the Association of Cultural Works and Honors, said Razavi had devoted his life to preserving the Persian language, promoting reading and introducing the country's literary and intellectual luminaries. Actor Hossein Pakdel also paid tribute, writing that Razavi's "unique voice and enduring legacy" would remain alive in public memory.

Funeral services are scheduled for June 17 at the IRIB headquarters in Tehran. He will be laid to rest at the Artists' Section of Behesht-e Zahra cemetery.

## Short documentary wins top honor at Oscar-qualifying CineLebu festival

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Iranian filmmaker Serna Amini's short documentary 'The Third Child' won the Best Documentary award at the 26th CineLebu International Film Festival, held from May 22 to 30 in Chile, marking a fresh international success for Iranian documentary cinema.

Written and directed by Amini, 'The Third Child' secured the festival's top documentary prize during the closing ceremony in Concepción, where CineLebu honored outstanding short films from across the globe. The Iranian production was named



Best International Documentary among entries from several continents, ILNA reported.

CineLebu is recognized as an Academy Awards-qualifying festival, meaning selected winning films may become eligible for Oscar consideration if they meet the Academy's requirements. The 25-minute Persian-language

documentary has already built momentum on the international festival circuit. It screened at Canada's Hot Docs International Documentary Festival and earlier earned nominations for Best Director and Best Editing at Iran's Cinéma Vérité festival. The film was also showcased at the Tehran International Short Film Festival.

With its global festival run now complete, 'The Third Child' is preparing for release on digital platforms, opening a wider window for audiences to experience a work that has carried Iranian storytelling onto another prominent international stage.

## Tehran exhibition opens door between art, credit

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A new exhibition in Tehran is testing an unprecedented model for Iran's visual arts market, allowing buyers to purchase artworks through bank financing in a move aimed at widening access to art and strengthening the country's cultural economy. The group exhibition titled 'Evermore,' running from June 10 to July 11 at the Karafarin Bank Gallery, brings together works by prominent Iranian painters under a pilot scheme developed through cooperation between the Institute for the Development of Culture and Art, Karafarin Bank, the Tehran Gallery Owners Association, Artibition, and GSM Group, IRNA reported.

"This is the first art exhibition in Iran to be accompanied by a structured credit-based sales system," Amir Tabatabaei, adviser to the chief ex-



ecutive of the Institute for the Development of Culture and Art, said.

"It enables galleries to present their works to a broader audience while helping people who may not be able to make a full cash purchase," Tabatabaei added.

Under the program, buyers can pay 30% of an artwork's value upfront and finance up to 70% through a one-year bank loan, subject to credit assessment, with financing capped at 4,000 million rials (\$2,481). The funds are transferred directly to galleries, while purchasers repay the

loan in installments. Organizers say the initiative seeks to draw new collectors into the market by lowering financial barriers and reducing perceived risks associated with art acquisition.

The pilot is being carried out both at the gallery and through the online platform Artibition, where prospective buyers can apply for financing after selecting a work.

Each artwork sold through the scheme receives an official certificate of authenticity. Tabatabaei said the certificate remains in trust with the institute until the loan is fully repaid.

Once ownership documentation is released, the artwork may potentially be used as collateral in future banking transactions, creating what organizers describe as a new financial pathway linking cultural assets and formal credit systems.

## Key to success ...

I believe many of the challenges surrounding the team today can be traced back to the original decision to participate in a World Cup hosted by the United States. The actions of the US government, from visa issues affecting members of Iran's delegation to restrictions placed on football federation officials and public statements by American authorities regarding the team's security, all amounted to a display of disrespect toward Iranian football. Such behavior, in my opinion, should not have gone unanswered.

FIFA, meanwhile, has fallen short in fulfilling its role as an impartial governing body. Promises about containing political distractions and ensuring equal

conditions for Iran have not materialized in practice. Once again, this raises an important question: Does FIFA truly act independently, or have political considerations come to make its decisions?

FIFA continues to insist that politics and football should remain separate. Yet in multiple cases, including the exclusion of Russia from the World Cup, it has made decisions that were unmistakably political. At the same time, it has remained silent regarding the host country's treatment of Iran's national team.

This reflects a broader problem of double standards within FIFA's management. If politics is to enter football, it should not be applied selectively to certain countries. Logic and fairness

should guide FIFA's decisions, not political or economic calculations.

Now that Iran is already at the World Cup, the circumstances have changed. From this point forward, what matters most is preserving unity within the team, avoiding distractions and maintaining complete focus on the matches themselves.

Ultimately, both the sporting outcome and the political and media consequences of this participation will be judged by public opinion. At this stage, the national team's greatest assets are professionalism, composure, discipline and an unwavering focus on football. Iran's players and coaching staff must devote all their energy to achieving positive results on the field.