



Japan envoy performs beloved TV drama themes in Iran to mark centenary of diplomatic ties

Arts & Culture Desk

Japan's ambassador to Iran has stepped onto the concert stage as a flute soloist to play music from three Japanese television dramas that became enduring favorites among Iranian audiences, in a cultural project ahead of the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Tokyo. A video released on Wednesday showed Ambassador Tamaki Tsukada, performing with the private Istgah Orchestra, taking on the role of flute soloist rather than diplomat in new renditions of the theme music from Oshin, known in Iran as Years Away from Home, Hanekonma, known as The Story of Life, and From the North Country,

IRNA reported. The three series were broadcast on Iranian national television during the 1980s and early 1990s and captivated Iranian viewers with depictions of Japanese culture. The performances were presented as an effort to retell part of Japan's cultural identity through three landmark works of Japanese television music. The international project was conceived by Mehdi Norouzi, who also heads the Istgah musical institute. The collaboration comes as Iran and Japan draw closer to the centenary of diplomatic relations, a historic milestone that gives cultural cooperation greater significance than ever. Oshin is widely regard-

ed as the most popular Japanese television series ever shown in Iran. After its original broadcast in Japan, the series was aired in more than 60 countries and became part of the cultural memory of many societies. No country outside Japan formed a stronger emotional bond with Oshin than Iran. In the mid-1980s, when Iranian society was enduring the hardships of war, the story of a young girl building her future through patience, hope and perseverance became part of daily life for millions of Iranian families. The opening notes of Oshin's theme music still evoke memories of home, family, solidarity and a shared era for many Iranians, making that collec-



Japan's Ambassador to Iran Tamaki Tsukada plays the flute during a performance with the Iranian private Istgah Orchestra in Tehran, Iran in a video released on August 5, 2026.

● IRNA

tive memory the starting point for the new musical project. Hanekonma tells the story of a girl from a poor family who, with her mother's support, saves enough money to attend a Christian school and study English. Although her father initially rejects her decision, she perseveres and ultimately becomes Japan's first female journalist. From the North Country follows Goro, who returns from Tokyo to his hometown in Japan's northern



island of Hokkaido with his daughter Hotaru and son Jun after separating from his wife, where the family begins a new life.

The music of all three series remains among the most memorable television soundtracks for Iranian audiences, with

some people continuing to use the themes as mobile phone ringtones decades after the programs first aired.

Iran, Tajikistan willing to increase academic scholarship quotas



● IRNA

Social Desk

Iran and Tajikistan are stepping up efforts to foster academic cooperation, with officials from the two countries discussing an increase in annual scholarship quotas alongside broader collaboration in higher education, scientific research and Persian language teaching. Tajikistan's Minister of Education and Science Rahim Saidzoda and Iran's Ambassador to Ta-

jikistan Alireza Haqiqian met to discuss ways to enhance educational, scientific and university cooperation, including raising the number of scholarships exchanged between the two countries, IRNA reported on Wednesday. According to Tajikistan's Ministry of Education and Science, Iran and Tajikistan currently allocate 50 scholarships each year to one another's citizens, with most places dedicated to med-

ical sciences.

Both sides stressed the need to raise the quotas to increase academic and university cooperation. The meeting also covered joint research projects, the preparation of educational and scientific textbooks, expanding cooperation between universities and promoting the teaching of Persian language and literature in Tajikistan where people speak a dialect of the Persian language. The ministry said both sides welcomed the growing trend in scientific and educational cooperation and described scholarship programs as one of the key drivers of stronger university links and academic exchanges. The issue of expanding scholarship quotas has been on the table before. It was discussed during meetings in 2024 be-

tween Chairman of the National Assembly of Tajikistan, Rustam Emomali, and Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, as well as in 2023 talks between Tajikistan's education minister and Iran's former ambassador. The latest meeting also noted that Persian language teaching is already under way in Tajikistan's schools, while Persian language and literature are taught at five higher education institutions across the country. The expansion of Persian language and script education in Tajikistan has gathered pace in recent years with government backing. The trend accelerated after Tajik President Emomali Rahmon instructed schools and universities to broaden the teaching of the Persian script.

'Calm Man' wins three awards at Italy's Imago

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian social drama 'Calm Man' won three awards at the fifth Imago Film Festival in Italy after being nominated across every category in the event's international competition, adding to its growing international festival run. The 2024 film, directed by Behnoush Sadeghi and produced by Mehdi Hashemi, won Best Foreign Film Director for Sadeghi, Best Foreign Film Cinematography for Farshad Mohammadi and Best Foreign Film Actress for Shamila Shirzad at the festival's closing ceremony, held on Monday evening in the Italian city of Teramo, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday.

The film had been nominated in six categories in the Best Foreign Film section, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay for Mahnoush Sadeghi, Best Actor for Mehdi Hashemi, Best Actress and Best Cinematography, marking an unusually strong performance across the festival's international competition. Composer Media Hashemi received the awards on behalf of the filmmaking team. 'Calm Man' previously won the Crystal Simorgh for Participation and the Best Artistic Achievement award for director Sadeghi at the 43rd Fajr International Film



Festival last year. The film is now making the rounds at international festivals and is set to compete next in the competition section of the Ahmedabad International Film Festival in India. According to the film's synopsis, "Nobahar reluctantly marries an elderly man named Zaman. At the beginning of their life together, a series of events completely changes Nobahar's feelings toward Zaman." The film's international distribution is being handled by White Dreams Pictures, headed by Mastaneh Mohajer.



'My Little Moon' to vie at Spain's Marbella Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian feature film 'My Little Moon' has been selected for the Official Selection of the 21st Marbella Film Festival (MIFF 2026) in Spain, the latest international appearance for the independent production. The film is written, produced and directed by Ali Atshani and will be screened during the festival, which runs from October 7 to October 12 in the Mediterranean resort city of Marbella

on Spain's Costa del Sol, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday. The Official Selection puts the film alongside independent productions from around the world at one of Europe's established independent film events, which has been held for more than two decades and brings together filmmakers, producers, distributors, investors and cinema professionals. Beyond film screenings, the festival also hosts industry

meetings, project-pitch sessions, workshops, expert panels, networking events, red-carpet programs and meetings with international producers, distributors and investors, offering opportunities for filmmakers to reach out to the global film industry. 'My Little Moon' stars Natalia Polo, Nikole Amateau, Brent Kublick, Elnaz Sepantamehr, Ramin Madani, Gia Garcia O'Hearn and Matthew Fairman. The film's cast includes di-

rector and writer Ali Atshani, director of photography Koo-hyar Kalari, make-up designer Farzaneh Zardasht, production manager Siavash Taraz-andehpour, photographer Hadi Akhoundi, first assistant director and scheduler Sepehr Mikaeilian, line producer Anna McNiven, cinematographer Reza Kabiri, and editor Rouzbeh Kalbasi. The social drama was produced by American Brightlight Film Productions.