



Iran calls for roadmap to turn Russia cultural ties into sustained cooperation

Iranian National Library, Russian Oriental Manuscripts Institute sign MoU



Head of Iran's National Library and Archives, Gholamreza Amirkhani (C), explores a manuscript at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg, Russia, on September 28, 2026.

● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture Minister Abbas Salehi called for a roadmap and sustained activity to turn cultural exchanges with Russia into longer-term cooperation, saying cultural events should serve as a starting point rather than an end in themselves.

Speaking to Iranian artists in Moscow during Iran's Cultural Days, Salehi described Russia as a priority in Iran's cultural diplomacy and said the two

countries needed a "roadmap and continuity of activities" after the cultural week ends, IRNA reported on Monday. "Iran's cultural days in Russia should be the starting point for sustained interactions between the two countries," Salehi said, calling the participating Iranian artists "cultural ambassadors of the nation". He said the 168-member Iranian delegation included musicians, visual artists, handicraft producers, filmmakers, theatre professionals, writers, Per-

sian-language specialists, experts in manuscripts and media workers.

The program is being held in Moscow, St Petersburg in northwestern Russia, Kazan in western Russia and Astrakhan in southern Russia.

Salehi said Russia's size, population and large Russian-speaking community gave it an important place in Iran's cultural diplomacy.

He estimated that 250 million to 300 million people in countries across the region speak Russian as a first or second language.

He also pointed to the long history of cultural relations between Iran and Russia, saying the first cultural agreement between Iran and the Soviet Union was exchanged in 1966.

The minister said the government should make greater use of the private sector and act more as a facilitator in cultural and artistic cooperation.

He also called for the development of the cultural economy alongside the preservation of cultural identity, describing the cultural days as an "opening for expanding this path".

The comments came as Iranian and Russian cultural institutions stepped up cooperation in several fields.

At the third Iran-Russia Cultural Committee meeting in St Petersburg, Salehi and Russian Culture Minister Olga

Lyubimova discussed new avenues for cultural and artistic cooperation.

Manuscripts, research take center stage

Gholamreza Amirkhani, head of Iran's National Library and Archives, announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Under the agreement, Iranian and Russian researchers will have wider access to manuscripts and other valuable sources held in collections in the two countries.

"The researchers of Iran and Russia will have greater opportunities to make use of the manuscripts and valuable sources held in the collections of the two countries," Amirkhani said.

The agreement covers the exchange of digital resources and researchers, joint research and greater use of scientific expertise in the field of written heritage.

An Iranian delegation also visited the Oriental and Iranian Studies section of the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg and discussed expanding cooperation with Russian officials.

The collection of manuscripts associated with Russian Orientalist Ignaty Krachkovsky includes 34 Persian

works, among them copies of the Divan of Hafez and Anwar-i Sohaili. His personal library also contains works in Persian.

Film, wider cultural ties

Vadim Duda, head of the Russian State Library in Moscow, announced plans for a commemoration of Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi as part of Iran's cultural days in Russia. He also praised the earlier commemoration of Russian poet Alexander Pushkin in Iran.

The cultural program follows Salehi's arrival in Russia on Sept. 24. After a brief stop in Moscow, he travelled to St Petersburg to attend the 12th International Forum of United Cultures, held from Sept. 24 to 26.

During the visit, Salehi met his Russian counterpart, attended the joint cultural committee meeting and visited St Petersburg State University of Culture and Russian cultural and Iranian studies institutions.

Iran and Russia also signed a memorandum on joint film production during the visit, adding cinema to the areas of cooperation being developed between the two countries.

Salehi later returned to Moscow for the official opening of Iran's cultural days, with programs continuing across the four Russian cities.

Iranian animator Ashkan Rahgozar joins Berlin festival jury

Economy Desk

Iranian writer and animator Ashkan Rahgozar has been selected as a jury member for the New Talents competition at the Festival of Animation Berlin, where his feature film Juliet and the King will also be screened outside competition. The New Talents section is dedicated to animated shorts made by students at international film schools. Rahgozar will join the jury assessing the

films in the competition, which is part of the festival running from Oct. 8 to 11 in Berlin, the capital of Germany, IRNA reported on Monday.

His feature Juliet and the King will be shown in the festival's Feature Special program. The official program lists the film as an out-of-competition screening, with a presentation scheduled for Oct. 10 at City Kino Wedding.

Rahgozar will also take part in a festival talk titled "Juliet and

the King: Animation Between Art and Challenge", discussing the making of the film and his experience producing a feature animation in Iran. The talk is part of the festival's professional and supporting program.

The Berlin appearance adds to Rahgozar's previous experience on international cinema and animation juries. In 2021, he served on the jury for the Satoshi Kon Award for Excellence in Animation at Canada's Fantasia International

Film Festival, which selects an award for excellence in animation.

He also served that year on the national competition jury of the Tehran International Short Film Festival and was a jury member at the Thessaloniki Animation Festival in Greece.

The Festival of Animation Berlin's 2026 program features 161 films from 78 countries across its competition and wider film program. The New Talents competition show-

cases student animation from international film schools, while the festival's supporting program includes talks, workshops, professional events and screenings.

Juliet and the King follows an Iranian king who travels to Paris and falls in love with an actress after watching a performance of Romeo and Juliet. He invites her to stage the play in Tehran, but she becomes caught up in tensions among women at the royal court.



Naval blockade opens ...

Unfortunately, before this war, Iran did not make use of its

road and rail capacities to the extent it could have. The war prompted greater attention to these routes so that they could be used as a complement to maritime transport. Naturally, they cannot fully replace maritime routes, but they can provide significant support. For example, goods that are essential for the country, such as basic commodities, food products or sensitive goods that are essential for production, such as machinery, can be transported through these routes. This is already happening.

Three to four train sets are now arriving from China every day. Cargo is also being transported by truck, while shipments are coming from

Turkey and Pakistan. Even through southern routes, cargo is arriving from the ports of neighboring countries along the southern coast. However, the shipments coming through these routes are generally made up of goods for which there is a particularly high level of demand.

What opportunities can the development of regional transport corridors create for Iran? Can Iran make use of its geographical position to strengthen trade with neighboring countries, Central Asia, Russia, China and other Asian markets?

A corridor is not merely an economic or trade issue. Two other dimensions also need to be taken into account. One is the sustainability of routes, and the other is the resilience

of trade.

Regardless of the fact that cargo needs to be delivered to a particular destination, what matters is that the route remains continuous and sustainable. A trader may put in a great deal of effort to market products and find a market in Europe, for example. If the cargo arrives late, the route is disrupted or there is an interruption in the flow of goods, that customer will be lost.

Therefore, sustainability is now important, while trade resilience is also crucial. From this perspective, security considerations and non-economic risks must also be minimized. Thus, these corridors not only provide highly reliable support for trade, but can also make a significant contribution to a country's security and resilience and to strengthening its

economy. They provide greater depth, create new jobs and open up new trade opportunities in areas such as cargo transportation and logistics. Therefore, looking at corridors solely from a trade perspective is not enough.

What infrastructure and reforms should be prioritized to increase the share of road and rail transport in foreign trade, particularly in terms of border capacity, customs, rail lines, northern ports and coordination among relevant agencies?

If I were to put it in very academic terms, there are six items that need to be taken into consideration. The first is infrastructure, which I do not think requires much explanation. The second concerns process-

es. At sea, because these processes have been established and defined over a long period of time, they are relatively clear. But in the rail and road sectors, those processes have not yet been fully streamlined. The third issue is inspection and inspection equipment, which requires considerable attention. There are currently significant shortcomings in this area.

The fourth concerns intergovernmental diplomacy. After all, cargo is moving from one country's jurisdiction into another country's jurisdiction, unlike maritime transport. Therefore, diplomacy needs to be highly active and serious. The fifth issue is continuity and precision in managing the flow of work. There needs to be oversight to ensure that the flow of goods continues and re-

mains uninterrupted.

The sixth concerns governance at border terminals, which has come to be referred to as unified management. Effective and proper governance needs to be established at these borders.

Can current circumstances provide an opportunity to redesign and diversify Iran's foreign trade network?

Certainly. In my view, although war is not a good thing, and although sanctions and a blockade genuinely put pressure on the economy and distress the people, the reality is that, if the situation is viewed from another perspective, it is defining new opportunities and revealing new capabilities for Iran. It seems that this is how the situation can be viewed, and these opportunities can be seized.