License Holder: Islamic Republic News Agency
Publisher: Iran Cultural & Press Institute
Chair of ICPI Board of Directors: Sadegh Hossein Jaberi Ansari
ICPI CEO: Ali Motaghian
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Iran Daily

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Vol. 8256 ● Wednesday, November 04, 2026 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

Culture remains overlooked in development plans, senior official says

Arts & Culture Desk

Culture accounts for 3.39% of global economic output and 3.55% of employment but remains overlooked in development strategies, Iran's deputy cultural heritage minister said on Monday, urging governments to give it a greater role in plans for sustainable development.

Ali Darabi made the remarks at a conference on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Iranian architecture at Pars University of Architecture and Art in Tehran.

He cited the 2022 MONDIACULT declaration, adopted by 150 countries in Mexico City, which called for culture to become a standalone goal in the development agenda beyond 2030.

"Despite its growing role in building inclusive and sustainable societies, culture remains underrepresented in development strategies," Darabi said, citing a UNESCO report on cultural policies.

He said 46% of countries in the Global North and 58% in the Global South had included culture in their development strategies.

Darabi also pointed to wide disparities in cultural spending. Average per capita spending in Europe and North America is $418.56, nearly 13 times the combined figure for other regions.

"The equivalent figures are $3.09 in Central and South Asia and $1.10 in sub-Saharan Africa," he said.

War, conflict, insecurity, natural disasters and climate change threaten communities and their living heritage, Darabi said.



Iran's deputy cultural heritage minister Ali Darabi addresses a conference in Tehran on November 2, 2026.
IRNA

Culture, he added, can foster dialogue and understanding across national and political borders.

Describing Iran as an "open-air museum," he cited the country's more than one million historical works, 23,000 historic sites and mounds, 14,000 historic buildings and sites, and 833 museums.

He also noted its six main languages, 17 ethnic groups and 40 dialects and regional varieties.

Darabi said Iran has 30 tangible and natural heritage properties on UNESCO's World Heritage List and 27 intangible heritage elements inscribed internationally, placing it fourth worldwide in the latter category.

Tehran to host Asia-Pacific National Library Chiefs' Meeting



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran will host the annual meeting of Asia-Pacific national library chiefs for the first time on November 17.

Representatives from 15 countries set to discuss how artificial intelligence can help preserve written heritage and expand regional cooperation during the meeting, Mehr News Agency reported.

The 32nd Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) will be held both in person and online at the National Library and Archives of Iran in Tehran, said Reza Shahabi, the library's deputy director.

Qatar, Australia, China, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Pakistan are among the countries that have confirmed participation.

The secretary-general of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) will deliver a special video address.

National library directors will report on their institutions and share recent experience under the meeting's theme: "National Libraries in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Preserving Written Heritage, Transferring Knowledge and Expanding Regional Cooperation."

First held in Australia in 1979, CDNLAO was established to promote information-sharing, exchange expertise in library organization and publishing, strengthen cooperation and help libraries in developing countries improve their infrastructure.

The 31st meeting was held in Kuwait in 2025. Shahabi said Iran secured the 2026 gathering after consulting the conference's board and obtaining agreement from its members.

He said the National Library of Iran had taken on the hosting role as part of a broader effort to strengthen cultural diplomacy and build closer ties among national libraries.

Iran's tech olympics attracts applicants from 118 countries



Social Desk

More than 13,000 people have registered for Iran's third Tech Olympics, including 3,631 applicants from 118 countries, as the four-day competition brings together technology talents in fields ranging from artificial intelligence to robot battles.

The finals run from November 2 to 5 at Pardis Technology Park, northeast of Tehran.

International registrations rose 98.2% from 1,832 in the previous edition, while the number of countries represented increased 11.3%, from 106 to 118. About 10,000 applicants registered from Iran.

Twenty-two finalists from 11 countries, including India, Turkmenistan, the Czech Republic, Pakistan, Belarus, Vietnam, Russia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, are competing in programming, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things.

The contests are held both in person and online. About 1,200 finalists are taking part in the four-day event.

The competition covers six fields: programming, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, drones, the Internet of Things and robot battles.

Sajjad Abbasi Fashami, secretary of Tech Olympics 2026, said international participation had grown significantly, with foreign registrations nearly doubling from the previous edition.

Organizers say the event aims to identify talent and connect participants with knowledge-based and technology companies, using real business and technical challenges to assess their skills.

An academy and a club have been set up to maintain contact with selected participants and support their professional development. A job station also links competitors with potential employers.

The international outreach program includes 13 ambassadors from nine countries, who promote the event, share information and help foreign teams communicate with organizers.

Foreign guests are also scheduled to visit Pardis Technology Park and technology companies, learn about Iran's innovation ecosystem, attend other competitions, explore job opportunities and take a tour of Tehran.

Organizers hope the visits will encourage scientific, technological and business ties beyond the competition itself.

Iranian director wins award at Barcelona festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Reza Ardalan has won the Best Director Award in the Other Narratives section of the 14th Asian Film Festival Barcelona for "Poultry Farm", a film that has earned recognition at several international festivals.

Written and directed by Ardalan, the film follows Hawar, a homeless, undocumented Kurdish teenager who crosses from Iraq into Iran in search of work.

He finds a job at a remote poultry farm on the outskirts of Tehran. When the only worker he has befriended disappears, Hawar sets out to find him and uncovers exploitation, fear and violence. The film blends mystery and social drama to explore the vulnerability of undocumented migrants.

Madakto Pictures began distributing the film internationally in 2025. It was previously titled "Faryad".

"Poultry Farm" has already won two awards at Russia's Mary Ann International Ethnic Film Festival: best screenplay for Ardalan and a special jury award for best music for composer Navid Hejazi.

It has also been selected for the 17th Puerto Rico International Film Festival, the second Kathmandu Horror Film Festival in Nepal and the 57th International Film Festival of India in Goa, western India.

The Barcelona prize recognizes Ardalan's work in the Other Narratives category, not the festival's overall competition.

