

Fajr Festival Receives Entries From 46 Countries



TEHRAN -- The 43rd Fajr International Theater Festival (FITF) is set to bring together artists from around the globe, with 231 submissions pouring in from 46 countries.

Mojgan Vakili, director of the festival's international section, announced during a press conference here that this year's international lineup would be presented as non-competitive.

After meticulous evaluation, 20 works have been shortlisted for final consideration, with six performances set to grace the festival stage and one featured as an on-line presentation.

In addition to the performances, 15 international instructors from countries such as Canada, France, Tunisia, India, and oth-

ers expressed interest in leading workshops.

Among them, a three-day session titled "Exploring Contemporary Theater" by an Indian instructor has been approved, promising enriching discussions on modern theatrical practices.

This year's festival also introduces a special segment dedicated to highlighting the struggles of Gaza's oppressed people. "Six stage works will be presented in the Gaza section," Vakili revealed, emphasizing the festival's commitment to addressing global humanitarian issues through art.

The 43rd FITF will run in Tehran on January 22-February 1, offering a rich blend of performances and workshops that celebrate cultural diversity and solidarity.

Raisi's Martyrdom Named as 'Day of the Martyrs of Service'

TEHRAN -- The date corresponding to the martyrdom of Iran's former president Ebrahim Raisi and his companions has been registered as a national day in Iran's calendar.

The date, which witnessed the martyrdom of president Raisi and his companions, including former foreign minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian, was registered as the "Day of the Martyrs of Service."

The development took place as per a decree issued by President Massoud Pezeshkian and the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution.

The 63-year-old cleric, who rose through the ranks to become one of the most important politicians in Iran and beyond, passed away in a helicopter crash in a mountainous region in bad weather after visiting the northwestern border region where he and his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, inaugurated two dams built on the Aras River.



Uzbekistan, Iran to Set Up Tourism Committee

TEHRAN -- Iran and Uzbekistan will soon set up a tourism technical committee with the aim of expanding and deepening cultural relations between the two countries.

Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Iran Fariddin Nasriyev and Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri met here Tuesday, where they discussed strengthening joint cooperation in the three fields of tourism, cultural heritage and handicrafts.

Salehi Amiri expressed hope that the meeting will strengthen bilateral relations between Iran and Uzbeki-



stan.

He then referred to his recent meeting with Uzbekistan Deputy Prime Minister Aziz Abdukhakimov to sign an MoU for joint cooperation and termed the establishment of a tourism technical committee in line with increasing the number of tourists between the two countries and depending their cultural communications.

Cooperating and exchanging experience in the field of renovation, health tourism, and organizing joint handicrafts exhibitions were of the other issues discussed between the two sides.

Yemeni DNA Reveals Links to Levant, Arabia, Africa, Iran

DUBAI (Phys.org) -- Researchers from Khalifa University, United Arab Emirates, working with regional and international collaborators, have examined Yemeni DNA to reveal how migrations from the Levant, Arabia, and East Africa formed the modern Yemeni gene pool. Analysis of Yemeni genomes revealed genetic contributions from both the Levant and East Africa, with significant regional influxes occurring at different historical periods.

The study is published in the journal Scientific Reports.

Yemen has historically served as an important crossroads between Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant. Ancient involvement in spice and incense trade networks connected Yemen to Egypt, Sumer, and Dilmun, while Mediterranean trade with Palestine, the Phoenicians, and Greece solidified its role in regional commerce. As wealth grew in Yemen, so did its slavery trade networks with East Africa.

Arabia's prehistoric population movements in Yemen have only been superficially explored to date. Past genetic assessments explored ancestral ties but lacked precise insights into when and from where

ancient groups arrived.

In the study, titled "Human migration from the Levant and Arabia into Yemen since Last Glacial Maximum," researchers analyzed 46 whole genomes and 169 genotype arrays from Yemeni individuals, along with 351 comparative genotype arrays from neighboring populations.

They specifically looked for signals of migration from the Levant, Iran and ancient trading partners, as well as the presence of Out of Africa genetic signatures in modern Yemeni populations.

Yemen's paternal Y-chromosome haplogroups were dominated by J1, a marker associated with Southwest Asia, indicating ancient ties to the Levant and Arabia along male decent lines.

Mitochondrial DNA haplogroups revealed substantial African matrilineal influence, with nearly one-third of Yemeni samples carrying African-specific mtDNA haplogroups such as L2a1, the most widespread haplotype in sub-Saharan Africa. This suggests a robust female-mediated gene flow from East Africa into Yemen at some point.

Neanderthal allele frequencies

within the population hinted at exchanges that would have taken place early in the Out Of Africa migration and were similar to those found elsewhere in Arabia.

Two major gene flow events emerged from the data, one around 5,220 years ago involving populations in Palestine and another about 750 years ago involving East African groups.

Levantine contributions align with the time of the Bronze Age and earlier migrations, whereas the East African component may reflect the region's long and intense involvement in slavery. Yemen was a key player in the Red Sea slave trade, particularly involving enslaved people from East Africa.

The medieval forced migration into Yemen would be expected to influence the genomics of the population in very specific ways that seem reflected in the research findings. While male slaves were often forced to undergo castration, enslaved women were most likely to be sexually exploited.

Under ancient Islamic law, Muslims were not allowed to be enslaved. No such rules existed for the enslavement of non-Muslims. Enslaved African women were of-

ten forced into harems, and Islamic law legitimized children born from these relationships. Such children had inheritance rights and were considered free.

These practices have been documented, though the scale and specifics have not been extensively studied in Yemen. Slavery was only officially outlawed there in the 1960s.

While the study does not explicitly attribute their findings to ancient slavery practices, data showing predominantly Levantine father and significant African mother haplogroups in the modern population would be difficult to explain otherwise.

When looking at all 22 autosomes, East African alleles show

low frequency in most Yemeni groups, except for those in some coastal regions. This difference between the high African maternal haplogroup and low allele frequency implies how substantial the maternal East African influences must have been.

Maternal haplogroups are only passed down from mother to child. Despite generations of admixture with predominantly Levantine/Arabian paternal input diluting the total of East African DNA, an unbroken chain of mothers of East African origin persists in around a third of the population.

While the study suggests that the alleles of the modern population—which cluster more strongly with Saudi Arabian and Bedouin

groups—could have been introduced to Yemen more than 5,000 years ago based on the diversity of paternal haplogroups, it is also clear that the Yemeni population best representing its documented history has East African roots as well.

Coastal regions exhibited stronger African admixture in the study, while more northern, inland Yemeni districts indicated tighter genetic ties to Arabia and the Levant. It should not go unnoticed that amidst the long and ongoing civil war in Yemen, the study finds differing historical genomic origin journeys along coastal and inland divisions that overlay well with the demarcated lines of the current conflict.

Sobh Festival Releases Official Teaser



TEHRAN -- The Sobh International Media Festival's Secretariat has released the official teaser for the third edition of the event.

According to the festival's public relations, the official teaser for the third edition of the Sobh International Media Festival has been released.

The third Sobh International Media Festival, under the direction of Ehsan Kaveh, will be held in two sections (main sections and a special section for Palestine).

The deadline for registration and submission of works is February 5, 2025.

Picture of the Day



Lalehjain, a city in Hamadan, is celebrated as the world's pottery capital with a tradition spanning over 7,000 years.

Photo by IRNA