

Minister Outlines Plan to Connect With Iranians Abroad



TEHRAN — Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri had outlined plans to strengthen ties with the millions of Iranians living abroad and revitalize the country’s tourism industry.

Addressing cultural officials and diplomats, Salehi Amiri emphasized the government’s commitment to facilitating greater engagement with the Iranian diaspora, estimated between seven and nine million people worldwide.

“The more they can remain connected to Iran’s cultural space, the greater the influx of expertise and investment,” he said. “The government is determined not to impede this relationship.”

In the wake of a recent 12-day war, the minister underscored the urgent need for national cohesion, renewed public optimism, and reinforcement of social trust.

“Our most critical task now is fostering hope, unity, and attachment to Iran, its government, and society,” he said.

Tourism remains a central focus of the recovery strategy. Prior to the war, Iran had set a target to welcome 15 million foreign visitors by the end of its current development plan.

Although progress was disrupted, Salehi Amiri reported a 30 percent increase in tourist arrivals during the spring months and forecasted that, with continued stability, visitor numbers could exceed eight million by year-end.

The government plans to prioritize visitors from neighboring and regional countries, including Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt, and broader Asian markets such as China, India, and Russia.

It has also established task forces aimed at leveraging tourism, technology, education, legal frameworks, and economic incentives to encourage diaspora investment and facilitate the return of expatriates.

To attract investment, the ministry secured significant incentives including tax exemptions and streamlined procedures for hotel development. Concurrently, a multilingual media campaign seeks to reshape Iran’s international image, with efforts to host global influencers and enhance cultural diplomacy.

“Rebuilding Iran’s image is a national priority. We stand ready to welcome all who wish to engage with the true Iran,” Salehi Amiri said.

Poets From 20 Countries Join Nabi Rahmat Contest

TEHRAN -- Poets from more than 20 countries have joined the race in a global poetry contest honoring the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) — and the prize just got a massive upgrade.

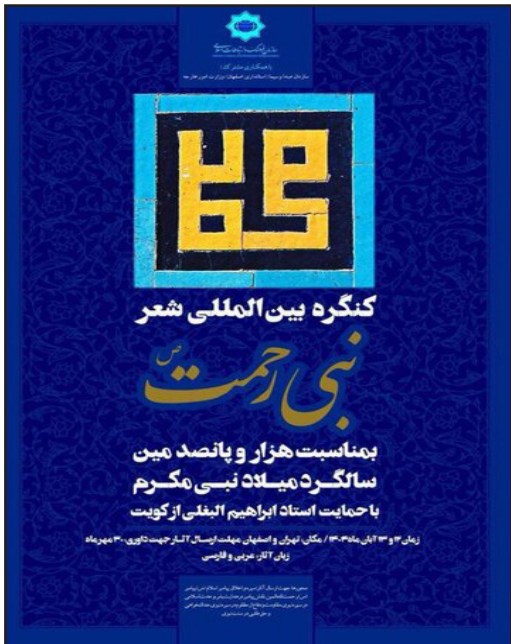
The Nabi Rahmat International Poetry Congress, backed by Iran and marking 1,500 years since the Prophet’s birth, has seen entries pour in from across Asia, Europe and Africa.

Works have arrived in Persian and Arabic, with organizers saying big names from the poetry world are already taking part.

With the contest gaining huge momentum, organizers have upped the total prize fund from \$9,000 to \$14,000.

Even better — the number of final winners has jumped from 6 to 12, with the prizes split between 6 Arabic-language poets and 6 Persian-language poets.

Alireza Qazveh, the scientific secretary of the event, says the level of participation — especially from Arab poets — has been “remarkable.”



“Thanks to the name of the Prophet and the support of God, we’ve had an incredible response,” he said.

The grand finale will be held in Tehran and Isfahan, with support from major Iranian bodies including the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, national broadcaster IRIB and Isfahan Governor’s Office.

The event is being supported by a private Muslim donor, with Qazveh saying it’s a powerful example of what people can achieve when they back the arts.

“We hope this will be the beginning of more festivals focused on religious and spiritual poetry,” he added.

With entries flooding in from all over the world, the stage is set for a powerful, poetic tribute to the Prophet — and one big payday for the 12 top poets.

Who’ll win the verse battle of the year? Stay tuned.

Tehran Short Film Festival Tackles Elderly Isolation

TEHRAN -- In the pale autumn light of Tehran, the 42nd Tehran International Short Film Festival opened its doors on Sunday, with a sharp, unflinching gaze toward a future that feels far too near — a future not imagined, but inevitable.

A future in which an aging population finds itself increasingly alone, and the silence of empty homes echoes louder than any dialogue.

Among the first-day screenings, what stood out was a recurring concern among filmmakers: loneliness in old age and the fragile fabric of family that no longer guarantees connection. The question wasn’t just cinematic — it was existential. Where do we go when we are no longer seen?

One such film, “Tamaroz” (Malinger), quietly captured this crisis. Directed by Payam Inalouei, it tells the story of an elderly man trying — in his own dignified, desperate way — to find someone, anyone, to talk to. Veteran actor Esmail Mehrabi delivers a nuanced performance, playing a man whose face carries the weight of unspoken stories. He is alone in his apartment, organizing pointless building meetings, simply to have a moment of human connection. The heartbreak is not melodramatic — it’s real, grounded, and unsettlingly familiar.

Inalouei avoids sentimental clichés. He doesn’t paint the elderly man as a victim, nor does he vilify the younger generation. Instead, he creates a bal-

anced, human portrait — a man with pride and history, confronting the void left by a lost child and a fading community. In his silence, there’s a storm. In his attempts to speak, there’s a desperate reach for meaning.

What’s striking is the way the film refuses to judge. It presents the struggles of today’s youth — crushed under economic pressure — alongside the quiet erosion of elder lives. There are no villains, only consequences. Tamaroz doesn’t ask you to take sides. It simply invites you to watch and wonder: Is this my future too?

In stark contrast, yet on the same thematic ground, we find the return of the Ark brothers — Bahman and Bahram — with their haunting short film “Goodbye Garbage”. Known for their Cannes-winning “Animal” and the striking “Skin”, the brothers come back after a long hiatus with a visceral, grotesque, and deeply poetic piece. “Goodbye Garbage” is the surreal descent of a lonely elderly woman into companionship with a garbage monster — a literal heap of trash that becomes her only friend. She’s an Azerbaijani woman, marginalized not just by language but by time itself. The film dares to anthropomorphize what society discards, giving life to waste, and reminding us that what we throw away may be someone’s last connection to the world.

Fifteen years ago, the media reported on a 60-year-old woman in Iran



who had filled her home with trash — a story that was reduced to ridicule. The Arks resurrect this tale, not to shock, but to empathize. Their lens isn’t tabloid — it’s tragic, symbolic, and empathetic. The garbage becomes more than a backdrop. It’s a metaphor for accumulated neglect, for memories unprocessed, for a society that forgets its elders.

Mahrokh Rafieezadeh, in the role of the elderly woman, gives a staggering performance. Her presence is physical, tactile, heartbreaking — a woman who has turned to a monster not out of madness, but out of necessity. And the monster? Surprisingly believable. The creature, foul yet endearing, becomes a stand-in for everyone who never called, never visited, never cared. That the audience accepts this crea-

ture is a testament to the filmmakers’ mastery.

There are moments of dark humor, too — as when the neighbors, disgusted by the smell, suddenly “remember” someone lives in that house. It’s absurd, yes — but also deeply, tragically real.

Both Tamaroz and Goodbye Garbage speak to the same fear: the erasure of the elderly. One does it in stillness, the other in surrealism. But both ask us — the viewer, the citizen, the child of aging parents — to look forward. Not just to what we will become, but to how we are treating those who’ve already arrived there.

This is what cinema can do — not just mirror reality, but hold it up like a lantern, illuminating what we too often choose not to see.

Warsaw Film Festival Awards Iranian Documentary



TEHRAN -- The 41st Warsaw Film Festival wrapped this past weekend with a quiet but notable win for Iranian cinema.

The NETPAC Award, given to the best film from the Asia-Pacific region, was awarded to “The Distant Roads” (Uzak Yollar) — a feature-length documentary by Sara Khaki and Muhammad Reza Eyni that’s been steadily gaining momentum on the international circuit.

Fresh off its Grand Jury Prize for documentary filmmaking at Sundance, The Distant Roads continues to resonate with festival juries for its nuanced and deeply human portrayal of a woman navigating the intersection of gender, politics, and rural life in contemporary Iran.

The film follows a 37-year-old former midwife who now owns land in a remote Iranian village. Her day-to-day is marked by rou-

tine, responsibility — and resolve. Whether riding a motorbike across the dusty backroads or engaging with neighbors over local concerns, she gradually emerges as an unlikely yet compelling political figure. When she decides to run in the village council elections, the film shifts into a subtle political drama — one rooted in lived experience rather than ideology.

Khaki and Eyni employ a restrained, observational style, avoiding interviews or overt commentary. Instead, they let the camera linger, allowing the textures of the woman’s life to speak for themselves. It’s a film that favors atmosphere over argument, but its political implications are clear: in a landscape often defined by erasure, presence is power.

The documentary, which also screened at the 2025 Sydney Film Festival and is slated for a premiere at IDFA, has drawn praise

Exhibit at Niavaran Palace Explores Iran’s Culinary Heritage

TEHRAN -- In honor of World Food Day, the Niavaran Palace Museum in Tehran invites food lovers and culture enthusiasts alike to explore “Flavor of the Museum; From Table to Art,” a thoughtfully curated exhibition running until November 15.

This unique showcase offers a compelling glimpse into Iran’s rich gastronomic history, bridging the worlds of heritage, art, and culinary tradition.

The exhibition presents an exquisite collection of historic and museum artifacts related to Iranian food culture and dining etiquette, primarily from the Pahlavi era.

Visitors can admire elegant serving ware and traditional kitchen tools that reveal the art and craft behind Iranian hospitality. A highlight is the evocative oil painting “The Cooks,” dating back to the Qajar period, which captures the vibrant life of kitchens past.

More than a simple display, the exhibition traces the social and historical narratives of food in Iran—from royal courts to everyday life—reflecting the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity, identity, and cultural continuity. It invites visitors to consider the table not only as a place of nourishment but as a vibrant symbol of community and cultural expression.

World Food Day, established in 1945 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United

Nations, is now celebrated by over 150 countries worldwide. Since 2014, the day has evolved

into a platform promoting innovative ideas around nutrition, poverty alleviation, and sustainable

food systems—goals that resonate deeply with this exhibition’s vision.

Picture of the Day



The historic Qom Old Bazaar, dating back to the Safavid era and registered as a national heritage site, remains a vibrant center for traditional crafts such as leatherworking, dyeing, carpentry, and woodturning.

Photo by Mehr News