

Turkey, Iran Sign New Pact to Boost Cinematic Cooperation



TEHRAN -- Iran and Turkey have signed a new agreement aimed at strengthening cinematic ties, marking a notable step in cultural cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

The memorandum of understanding was concluded in Shiraz during an international gathering on film collaboration, held alongside the Fajr International Film Festival. It was signed by Raed Faridzadeh, head of Iran's Cinema Organization, and Birol Güven, director-general for cinema at Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

According to officials, the agreement is designed to broaden opportunities for both nations' film industries. One of its central aims is the mutual exchange and commercial distribution of Iranian and Turkish films, opening the door for wider audiences and potentially improving the global reach of each country's productions.

The document also places strong emphasis on joint film-making. It outlines plans for co-productions across a wide range of formats—including feature films, documentaries, short

films and animation—drawing on the shared cultural and historical links between the two societies.

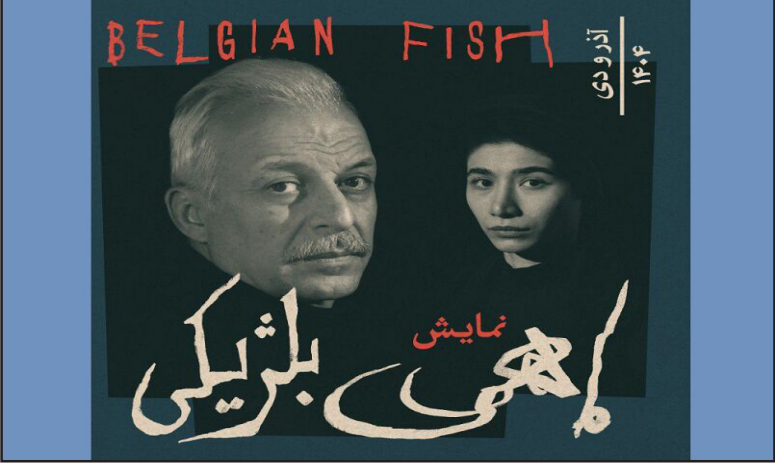
Access to filming locations and studio facilities will be made easier under the agreement, with both sides expressing hope that smoother logistical cooperation will encourage larger and more ambitious projects.

A further section focuses on talent and training. The two nations intend to promote exchanges between technical experts, film professionals, teachers and students, aiming to enrich skills and support the development of emerging film-makers.

Cultural engagement sits at the heart of the initiative. The two countries plan to host joint film weeks, offering audiences in both Iran and Turkey a curated introduction to each other's cinema.

The announcement came during a three-day international cinema meeting in Shiraz, attended by representatives from 23 countries—including ministers, senior cultural officials and ambassadors—highlighting a growing appetite for regional collaboration in the arts.

Tehran's Theater Season Opens With Bold New Works



TEHRAN -- After a six-year hiatus, Iranian director Ahmad Soleimani is making a highly anticipated return to the stage with In the Tsars' Neighborhood, written by longtime collaborator Mohammad Reza Kohestani.

The production, set to open this January, marks Soleimani's first show since his acclaimed staging of Mary Poppins at Tehran's Vahdat Hall. Produced by Muhammad Ghods, the new play continues the creative partnership that has brought works like Monks of the Wang Temple, The Last Supper, and One Small Click to life.

Set in a Qajar-era mansion near a centuries-old city cemetery, In the Tsars' Neighborhood centers on Mah Monir, a woman who follows her family tradition of offering shelter to travelers. When reports surface that several elderly men have mysteriously disappeared over the past year, the household becomes the site of a suspenseful chain of events, culminating in the revelation of a deeper, long-held secret. Casting, crew, and performance

details are expected to be announced soon.

Meanwhile, Arvand Dasht-Arai's latest production, Belgian Fish, is gearing up for its debut at Tehran's Core Box theater in the Book Garden Cineplex. Pre-sale tickets opened this week for the show's first three performances, which run December 14–16. The cast includes Kazem Sayahi and Tahereh Hazaveh.

Written by Leonore Confino and translated by Hamidreza Amanpour Gharaci, Belgian Fish tells “an unusual account of a surprising encounter,” promising an intimate yet thought-provoking theatrical experience. The production is the newest offering from the Virgule Film & Performing Arts Company and will run nightly at 7 PM beginning December 14.

With Soleimani's return and Dasht-Arai's latest work, Tehran audiences are set for a vibrant start to the new theater season, showcasing both historical intrigue and contemporary storytelling.

Protecting Iran's Craft Foundations From Silent Threats Within

TEHRAN -- Iran's handicrafts are a treasure trove of color, texture, and history—from intricate carpets to delicate embroidery—but according to researcher Hojatollah Moradkhani, all is not as calm as it seems.

Beneath the beauty, hidden structural “fault lines” could shake the world of Iranian crafts, with economic, cultural, and social consequences.

Government reports praise crafts as national heritage and a source of sustainable income. Yet many artisans face rising material costs, unstable markets, and little financial safety. Even a small economic jolt can threaten the delicate balance of workshops and small-scale makers.

Artisans are the heart of craft. But with aging masters, fewer young people joining the trade, and workshops closing, centuries of skills are at risk of vanishing. These “silent cracks” in the craft community could erode Iran's rich creative legacy.

Without clear strategies for market de-



velopment or international branding, many crafts remain low-profit and locally confined. This economic fragility means inflation, export hurdles, or foreign competition can have a big impact on artisans' livelihoods.

Weak associations and inconsistent government support leave makers vulnerable. There's no strong central body to oversee research, innovation, or skill sharing—leaving many initiatives isolated and short-lived. Iranian crafts are at a crossroads. Too

much focus on heritage can stifle creativity, while unchecked modernization risks losing authenticity. Finding the balance is key to keeping crafts relevant, both culturally and commercially.

Years of unfulfilled promises and fragmented programs have sown distrust. When artisans stop collaborating or sharing knowledge, the entire craft ecosystem becomes weaker.

Despite these challenges, Iran's crafts remain extraordinary. With better governance, stronger institutions, economic awareness, and support for makers, these traditions can not only survive—they can thrive.

Moradkhani reminds us: “The future of Iranian handicrafts depends not on appearances, but on strengthening the hidden foundations that support them.”

For makers everywhere, this is a reminder that craft is fragile as well as beautiful—and that the work behind the scenes matters just as much as the finished piece.

Discovering Kermanshah, Iran's Hidden Paleolithic Treasure



TEHRAN -- Over the past decades, extensive archaeological excavations across Kermanshah have uncovered extraordinary Paleolithic sites, yet much of this wealth

remains hidden from public view.

Despite being among Iran's richest provinces in early human remains, the discoveries have rarely been exhibited, leaving locals and visitors alike without a tangible connection to this deep past.

Traces of human presence in Kermanshah date back to the earliest inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau, earning the province a reputation as a veritable archaeological haven. To date, archaeologists have identified roughly 700 Paleolithic sites, caves, and shelters in the region—the highest number recorded in any Iranian province.

The oldest Paleolithic artifacts, dating back nearly one million years, were unearthed south of Kermanshah at the archaeological site known as Sang-e-Ma' dan. Equally significant are the discoveries associated with Neanderthals, whose remains from the Middle Paleolithic period have been found across around 200 sites in the province.

Over the past decades, nationwide excavations have revealed four Neanderthal remains, three of which come from Kermanshah: a six-year-old child's tooth from Bawa Yawan Rock Shelter, a tooth from Wezmeh Cave, and skeletal fragments from Bisitun Cave.

Kona Khers Cave, perched at 1,900 meters above sea lev-

el, is the highest known Neanderthal habitation site in Iran, where recent findings have offered intriguing insights into Neanderthal life.

Despite these remarkable discoveries—including stone tools, skeletal remains, and evidence of ancient lifeways—Kermanshah has lacked a dedicated Paleolithic museum. Existing exhibitions, such as the small display within the historic Takyeh Moaven-ol-Molk, offer only a fraction of the province's archaeological wealth and fail to fully convey the daily life of its Paleolithic inhabitants.

Local residents have yet to see the Neanderthal teeth from Bawa Yawan and Wezmeh caves firsthand; these artifacts are currently held elsewhere, far from the sites of their discovery. The absence of a major museum highlights a critical gap in public engagement with Kermanshah's prehistory.

According to Alireza Barshahi, head of the Museums and Movable Heritage Group at the province's Cultural Heritage Department, plans are underway to address this. The forthcoming Regional Museum of Kermanshah will dedicate a section to Paleolithic discoveries, including Neanderthal remains and the province's archaeological excavations. The exhibition will also feature life-sized models and dioramas to illustrate Neanderthal daily life, hunting practices, and diets.

Photojournalism Festival Opens at Tehran's City Photo Museum

TEHRAN -- The 18th Doorbin.net Photojournalism Festival has opened its doors at Tehran's City Photo Museum, offering visitors a sweeping visual record of a year marked by political change, environmental strain and the everyday rhythms of Iranian life.

The exhibition brings together 102 individual photographs and 11 curated photo series, each selected for its ability to document, illuminate and, in many cases, preserve unfolding histories.

Spanning politics, economics, culture and the arts, sports, religion, society and the environment, the images trace the contours of a country in motion. For nearly two decades, the festival has served as one of Iran's most prominent platforms for documentary photography—a field that, in many ways, occupies the same cultural territory as the museum spaces and archival institutions that define global photographic heritage.

Throughout the week, the museum will host a series of talks and educational panels, inviting photographers, students and the public to consider how images shape our understanding of civic life. The sessions run December 7 to 9 and accompany an exhibition that opened on December 6 and will remain on view until December 11.

A jury composed of Farshad Abbasi, Marzieh Mousavi and Muhammad Berno, with long-time photojournalist Muhammad Nowrouzi as secretary, evaluated thousands of submissions. Their selections reflect a cross-section of contemporary Iranian photography—ranging from intimate human-scale stories to sweeping scenes that speak to collective experience.

Visual Culture and the Arts

Works by Ardalan Ashnagar, Omid Muhammad, Amir Badrazzimi, Amirhussein Yousefi Kaysari and others anchor the cultural and artistic category, capturing everything from quiet studio rituals to large public gatherings in which art becomes a communal act.

Politics in Focus

Images by Afsaneh Jafari, Pejman Molaei, Hussein Saki and Saeed Sadeghi document moments of national political significance—photos that echo the long tradition of press imagery as both witness and historical record.

The Athletic Body

In the sports category, photographers such as Ehsan Jazini, Rana Bagheri and Forough Taherkhani turn their lenses toward movement, teamwork and the emotional drama of

competition.

Society and the Everyday

Social-issue photography, long a backbone of global documentary practice, appears here in works by Jamshid Farajvand Farda, Zahra-Sadat Rad, Shabnam Maleki and others. These images highlight the fragile, persistent ties that bind communities together.

Economics and Environments

Photos in the economic section explore labor and livelihood, while the environmental category brings viewers face-to-face with the ecological challenges confronting Iran—reflected in images by Behzad Amiri, Ali M'aref, Alireza Shah-Hamzeh and more.

Ritual and Belief

A separate collection is devoted to religious traditions and ceremonies, shown through the work of photographers whose images pre-



serve practices passed down through generations.

Photo Series and Multimedia

The festival also showcases eleven photo series, which offer deeper narrative arcs,

alongside three documentary and multimedia films chosen by the jury:

“Song of the Earthen Pitcher” by Amirhussein Dehestani Zarch
“Dedicated to Maryam” by Amirhussein Lolaei.

Picture of the Day



As autumn fades in Mazandaran, a historic fortress stands steadfast against rugged mountains, embraced by vibrant foliage and the serene rhythms of nature.

Photo by IRNA