45th Fajr Film Festival Attracts 154 Films, Up 26%



TEHRAN -- **Iran's 45th Fajr National Film Festival has attracted 154 film submissions for its two main competition sections, marking a 26 percent increase over the previous edition, while the country's cinema industry prepares for a busy run of festival screenings, new releases and industry events.**

Producers submitted their films for the Soday-e Simorgh (Crystal Simorgh) and Negah-e No (New Look) sections during a 14-day registration period from November 12 to 25. The festival secretariat has begun reviewing submissions and accompanying documentation under the event's regulations. Eligible films will be forwarded to the selection committee after the required screening copies are received.

The latest figure represents an increase from 122 submissions for the 44th edition and 105 for the 43rd, reflecting growing interest in competing at one of Iran's most prominent film events.

Elsewhere in the country's film industry, the 20th Iran International Documentary Film Festival, Cinema Verite, has announced 10 documentaries for its Spain Panorama section. The non-competitive program features films made by Spanish filmmakers, produced in Spain or exploring the country's history, culture and society. The festival is scheduled to run in Tehran from December 9 to 15.

Meanwhile, Tehran's Cinema Museum hosted a discussion on the relationship between cinema and philosophy in connection with National Philosophy Day. Participants explored how filmmaking can engage audiences with philosophical ideas and broader questions about society and human experience.

Iran to Send 10 Handicraft Artists to Uzbekistan to Expand Cultural Ties



TEHRAN -- **Iran plans to send 10 handicraft artists to Uzbekistan as the two countries seek to deepen cooperation in tourism, cultural heritage and traditional arts, Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri says.**

Speaking on the sidelines of the Tashkent International Tourism Exhibition, Salehi-Amiri said Iran and Uzbekistan share deep historical, cultural and civilizational ties that provide a strong foundation for expanding bilateral cooperation.

He said the two countries had made progress in strengthening relations over the past two years, noting that President Masoud Pezeshkian had held five rounds of talks with senior Uzbek officials during that period.

A tourism cooperation memorandum signed last year can also provide a basis for expanding practical collaboration, particularly through exchanges between tourism operators and cultural institutions, the minister added.

As part of the latest initiative, the two sides have agreed to arrange a visit by 10 Iranian handicraft artists to Uzbekistan at the earliest opportunity. The program is intended to showcase Iranian craftsmanship, facilitate the exchange of expertise and strengthen professional ties between artists and handicraft practitioners in both countries.

Salehi-Amiri described tourism as an area with fewer obstacles to bilateral cooperation, expressing confidence that relations could expand more rapidly with continued engagement from the Uzbek side.

He acknowledged that international sanctions have created difficulties for some areas of cooperation but said Tehran will pursue dialogue with Uzbek officials to address existing obstacles and facilitate joint projects.

The minister also announced plans to discuss scientific and research cooperation with Uzbekistan's culture minister, particularly in archaeology and cultural heritage. He highlighted Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, which has approximately 90 years of experience, as a potential partner for joint academic and archaeological initiatives.

During his visit, Salehi-Amiri also toured Tashkent's Museum of Islamic Civilization, where he examined its exhibitions, digital technologies and interactive methods of presenting Islamic history. The museum traces the development of human civilization from prehistoric periods, including the Neolithic era, through the emergence and expansion of Islamic civilization.

The visit also highlighted shared architectural heritage, with representations of historic Iranian cities such as Isfahan and Nishapur featured in the museum's surrounding spaces.

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Moscow Hosts Conference Marking 1,050th Anniversary of Persian Poet Rabia Balkhi



MOSCOW – **An international academic conference marking the 1,050th anniversary of Rabia Balkhi, widely regarded as the first female poet to write in Persian, was held at the Moscow Technical University of Communications and Informatics (MTUCI), bringing together diplomatic, academic and cultural representatives from Iran, Russia and Tajikistan.**

The event, held on November 19, focused on the literary legacy of Rabia Balkhi, who lived during the 10th century under the Samanid dynasty and was a contemporary of Abu Abdullah Rudaki, widely known as the father of Persian poetry.

The conference was initiated by the embassy of Tajikistan in Russia, in cooperation with the Cultural Office of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia and hosted by MTUCI.

Addressing the gathering, Abdolreza Rashed, cultural counsellor at the Iranian Embassy in Moscow, described the conference as more than a literary commemoration, calling it a reflection of the deep historical, cultural and linguistic ties between Iran and Tajikistan.

He highlighted the historical significance of Greater Khorasan, describing the region as the birthplace of Rabia Balkhi and numerous other prominent figures in Persian literature and scholarship.

Rashed emphasized the importance of Persian literature in Iranian civilization, describing the Persian language not merely as a means of communication but as a cornerstone of shared identity and a bridge for transmitting human, ethical and cultural values across generations.

He also referred to the importance attached to Persian language and literature in Iran, highlighting the literary interests of martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and his support for Persian poets, writers and literary criticism.

Rashed recited verses by Rabia Balkhi and highlighted the significance of her achievements in demonstrating the position of women in the region's literary and intellectual history.

He said that Rabia's emergence as a prominent poet at a time when women in many parts of the world faced restrictions on education and freedom of expression reflected the important place women held in the region's cultural and intellectual traditions.

He also recalled the contributions of other prominent Persian-speaking women poets, including Mahasti Ganjavi, Jahan Malek Khatun and Parvin Etesami, as well as contemporary Iranian poet Simin Behbahani and Tajik poets Gulrukhsor Safieva and Farzaneh Khojandi.

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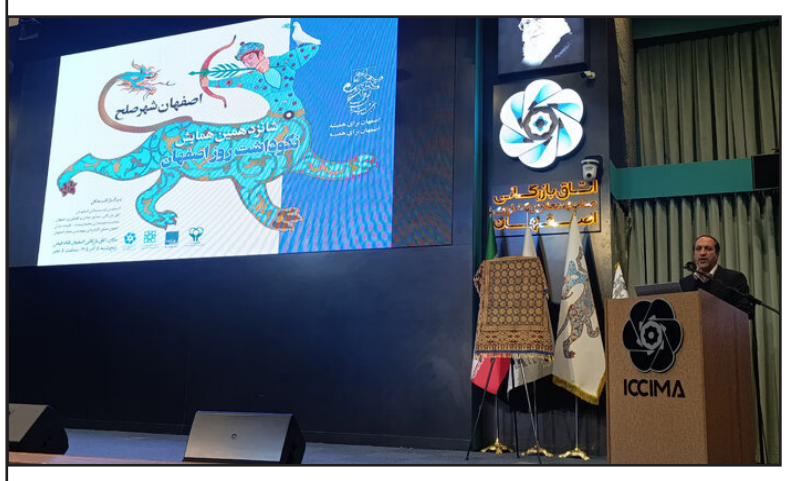
Isfahan Celebrates 'City of Peace' Identity



TEHRAN -- **The 16th Isfahan Day commemoration has highlighted the Iranian city's historic tradition of religious tolerance, cultural coexistence and artistic achievement, with speakers calling for stronger protection of its tangible and intangible heritage and the revival of the Zayandeh Rud River.**

Held at the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, under the theme "Isfahan, City of Peace," the gathering brought together officials, academics, researchers and cultural and environmental activists to discuss the city's historical identity and its prospects for sustainable development.

Speakers stated that Isfahan's long experience of coexistence among different religious and ethnic communities, together with its rich intellectual and artistic traditions, gives it the potential to join the international network of cities of peace.

Researcher Nafiseh Vaez Shahrestani said around 260 cities worldwide have joined the network, but no Iranian city, including Isfahan, is currently a member. She said the city's historical record of religious tolerance, commercial activity and cultural exchange could provide a strong basis for its membership.

She highlighted the historic presence of Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian communities in Isfahan, particularly the establishment of the Armenian quarter of New Julfa during the Safavid era.

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Rumi Puppet Opera, National Orchestras Lead Iran's Upcoming Music Programs

TEHRAN -- **Iran's music scene is set for a series of performances and cultural events in late November and early December, featuring major orchestral productions, traditional music concerts, a puppet opera based on the life of Rumi, and programs dedicated to the country's musical heritage.**

The events also include the 19th National Youth Music Festival, tributes to prominent composers and educational initiatives.

One of the major upcoming productions is the puppet opera Molavi, written, designed and directed by Behrouz Gharibpour, which will return to Ferdowsi Hall in Tehran from December 1 (10 Azar).

Based on the mystical poetry of Rumi's Divan-e Shams, the production features the voices of Homayoun Shajarian, Muhammad Motamedi, Hussein Alishapour, Maliheh Moradi and the late Eshaq Anvar.

Composed by Behzad Abdi, the opera follows Rumi's journey from the Mongol invasion of Persia and his family's migration to Konya to his transformative encounter with Shams of Tabriz. First staged in 2009, the production was last performed in 2024.

The National Orchestra of Iran, conducted by Homayoun Rahimian and featuring vocalist Amir Rafati, will present a concert titled Ba Ma va Penhan at Vahdat Hall on December 4 at 9:30 p.m. The program includes works by Iranian composers Mohsen Elhamian, Farid Esmaeili, Homayoun Rahimian, Ehsan Foroutan and Mohsen Noorani.

Meanwhile, the Orchestra of Iranian National Instruments presented

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Picture of the Day



A view of the western section of Nowshahr Port in northern Iran, November 18, 2026.

Photo by ISNA