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CULRURE COOPERATION CREATIVITY

Message from the President



Amb. Muhammad Hassan,President, ECO Cultural Institute (ECI)

Dear Readers,

Culture has a unique way of bringing people closer. It connects us through our shared memories, traditions, languages, artistic expressions and ways of life, while allowing each society to preserve and celebrate its distinct identity. Throughout October, the activities of the ECO Cultural Institute offered meaningful reminders of this connection and of the important role culture plays in fostering dialogue, mutual respect and friendship among our peoples.

One of the most encouraging moments of the month was the strong response to the ECO Mobile Photography Festival. With around 1,800 photographs submitted by 616 participants, the festival demonstrated how deeply our communities value their cultural heritage. More importantly, it highlighted the role of younger generations in documenting, preserving and passing on the traditions and knowledge that give meaning to our collective identity.

October also provided opportunities to celebrate the power of artistic and literary expression. The exhibition From the Far Horizons brought calligraphy into conversation with poetry, photography and music, reminding us that art can communicate across languages and cultural boundaries. In Lahore, the programme Beyond Borders paid tribute to the distinguished Pakistani writer Mustansar Hussain Tarar, recognising the enduring contribution of literature to cultural understanding and the intellectual life of our region.

Cinema, too, offered a powerful space for bringing our experiences and perspectives together. Through Shared Horizons: Cinema Across the ECO Countries, audiences encountered stories from eight ECO Member States, reflecting the diversity of our societies and the human experiences we share. Similarly, the exhibition Pakistan Through the Ages provided an opportunity to revisit the historical, linguistic and cultural ties that have connected the peoples of our region over centuries. The international conference on Turkish poetry further enriched this dialogue, highlighting the lasting influence of our literary heritage across generations and geographical boundaries.

Our cultural journey continued through the thirteenth issue of Econama, devoted to tea, coffee and storytelling. By exploring the cultural significance of tea houses and coffee houses, the publication drew attention to the everyday spaces where hospitality, conversation and human connection have long been part of our shared way of life.

What brings these diverse initiatives together is a common belief: cultural diversity is not a barrier that separates us, but a source of strength that enriches our societies and brings them closer. Our shared heritage offers a valuable foundation for building mutual understanding, while our differences invite us to learn from one another.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the embassies, cultural institutions, universities, artists, writers, filmmakers, scholars and all our partners who contributed to our programmes during the month. Their commitment and cooperation continue to give life to the mission of the ECO Cultural Institute.

As we look ahead, let us continue to build bridges through culture, nurture creativity and ensure that the rich heritage of our region remains a living source of inspiration, dialogue and friendship for generations to come.

Ambassador Muhammad Hassan
President ECO Cultural Institute

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ECO Mobile Photography Festival Announces Its Winners

TEHRAN — October 8, 2026



Official poster for the ECO Mobile Photography Festival 2026, themed "Passing on Heritage—One Generation to the Next, One Photograph at a Time."

The ECO Mobile Photography Festival, held under the theme "Passing on Intangible Heritage," encouraged photography enthusiasts across the ECO region to document the diverse expressions of intangible cultural heritage and the ways traditions, skills, knowledge and cultural practices are preserved and passed from one generation to the next.

The festival received around 1,800 photographs from 616 participants. Following the close of submissions, the entries were reviewed and judged by Amir Jalilvand, a noted Iranian photographer. A total of 50 photographs were selected for the festival.

Festival's Top Three

First Prize: Seyed Mehrdad Sharifi — Iran
Cash Prize: US300$
Second Prize: Shahzad Ali — Pakistan
Cash Prize: US200$
Third Prize: Ghadir Vaghari Shurcheh — Iran
Cash Prize: US150$

Each of the three winners will also receive a festival certificate of appreciation.

Alongside the top three, 47 additional photographs were selected, bringing the total number of selected entries to 50. As participants were permitted to submit more than one photograph, some photographers appear more than once in the list of selected works. The accompanying list provides the names of the photographers and their countries.





The 50 selected photographs will also be published in a festival booklet, creating a record of the selected works and the participation of photographers and cultural enthusiasts from across the ECO region.

The ECO Cultural Institute congratulates the winners and extends its sincere appreciation to all 616 participants. The strong response and variety of submissions offered a vivid view of the region's cultural richness and intangible heritage.



Highlight Box

Around 1,800 photographs from 616 participants were received; 50 were selected, and the top three winners represented Iran and Pakistan.

Calligraphy Meets Image, Poetry and Music in From the Far Horizons

TEHRAN — October 8, 2026



Poster for Amir Jalilvand's calligraphy exhibition, From the Far Horizons, at the ECO Cultural Institute. The opening ceremony was held on 8 October, with the exhibition open to visitors from 11 to 15 October 2026.

The ECO Cultural Institute opened From the Far Horizons, an exhibition of selected calligraphic works by Iranian artist Amir Jalilvand. The exhibition presents calligraphy in conversation with image, poetry, music and other artistic forms.

Jalilvand described the project as a mixed-media collection centred on calligraphy and developed with a distinct approach for the Institute. His background in photography and cinema, alongside his work in poetry and calligraphy, informs the exhibition's exploration of the relationship between written form and visual experience.



Highlight Box

From the Far Horizons presents calligraphy through a combination of visual and literary approaches.

Lahore Honours Mustansar Hussain Tarar in Beyond Borders

LAHORE — October 11, 2026



Ambassador Muhammad Hassan presents Mustansar Hussain Tarar with a commemorative plaque during the "Beyond Borders" tribute at Alhamra Arts Council in Lahore.

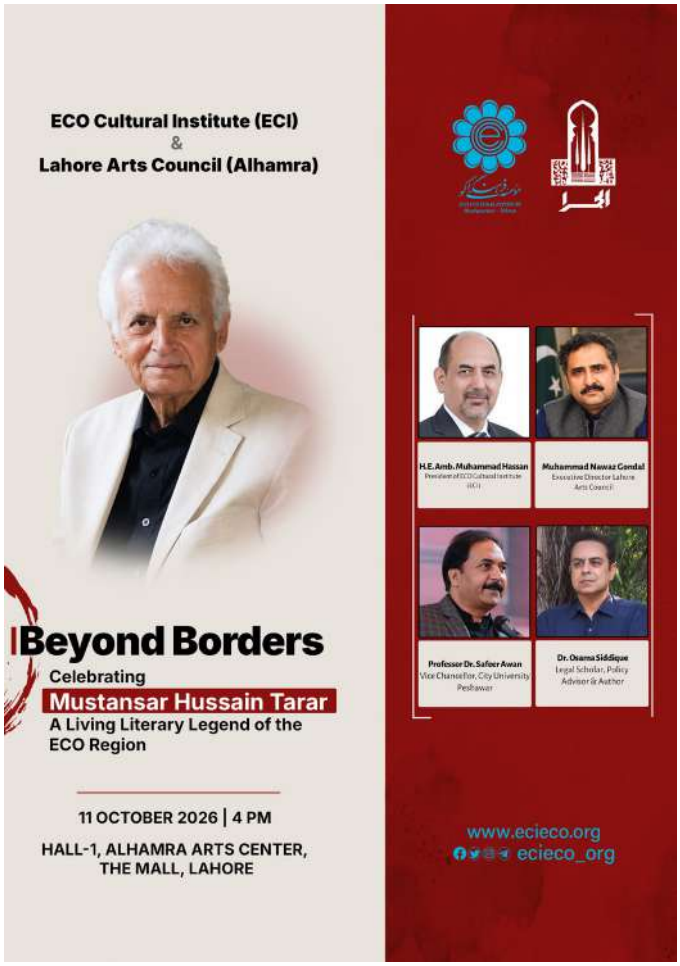
The ECO Cultural Institute and the Lahore Arts Council (Alhamra) jointly held Beyond Borders, a programme honouring Pakistani writer Mustansar Hussain Tarar and his contribution to literature in the ECO region. The event took place at the Alhamra Arts Council in Lahore.

Speakers included Ambassador Muhammad Hassan, President of ECI; Muhammad Nawaz Gondal, Executive Director of Alhamra; Professor Dr Saghir Awan of City University Peshawar; and writer and legal scholar Dr Usama Siddiq. Professor Dr Sibel Bayram of Düzce University in Türkiye and poet and translator Ahmad Shahryar also contributed by video message.

The programme highlighted the role of writers and storytellers in connecting readers across languages, cultures and national borders.

Highlight Box

ECI and Alhamra celebrated Tarar's literary contribution through a programme bringing together cultural, academic and literary voices.



Eight ECO Countries Share the Screen at Tehran Short

TEHRAN — October 20, 2026

The "Shared Horizons: Cinema Across the ECO Countries" programme was presented as part of the international section of the 43rd Tehran International Short Film Festival, in cooperation with the ECO Cultural Institute.

Curated by Javid Subhani, the programme featured eight short films from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan. Together, the films explored human experience, environmental challenges, historical memory and community resilience.

In a message delivered on behalf of the ECI President, the Institute emphasised that cultural dialogue can recognise the region's linguistic and historical diversity while bringing audiences closer through shared human stories.

Highlight Box

Eight films offered audiences perspectives on the lives and experiences of communities across the ECO region.

Pakistan Through the Ages: Tehran Highlights Shared Heritage and Regional Ties

TEHRAN — October 20, 2026



Officials inaugurate the "Pakistan Through the Ages" exhibition at the ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran.

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Tehran, in cooperation with the ECO Cultural Institute, held Pakistan Through the Ages at ECI headquarters. The exhibition and its accompanying programme brought together diplomats, cultural figures and scholars to explore Pakistan's history and the enduring cultural ties between Iran and Pakistan. The Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization attended as a guest.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Muhammad Hassan, President of ECI, reflected on Pakistan's cultural diversity, from the traditions of Sindh and the legacy of Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai to the distinct cultures of Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. He also described the region's mountain routes as historic links connecting Pakistan with the Iranian plateau, Central Asia and China.

Dr. Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, President of the Saadi Foundation and Head of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, spoke about the historical, linguistic and literary connections between Iran and Pakistan. He highlighted Allama Muhammad Iqbal's role in strengthening the intellectual and cultural relationship between the two nations.

Mr. Bandpey, Iran's Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, addressed the potential of ECO cooperation and tourism

to support regional integration, economic development and closer understanding among neighbouring peoples. He also emphasised the importance of shared heritage, dialogue and mutual respect in building lasting regional peace.

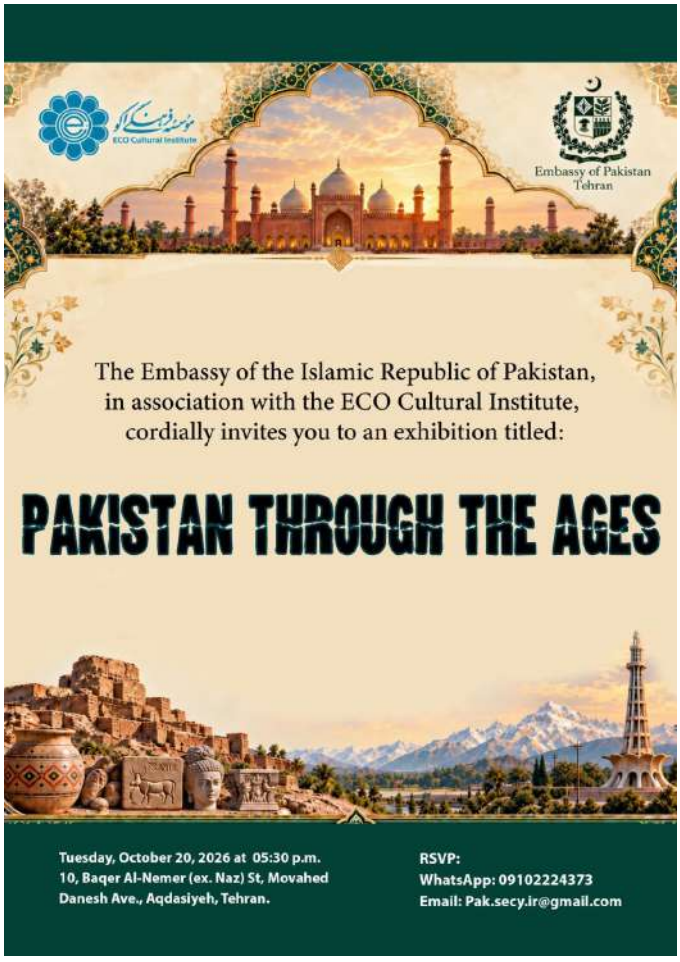
Pakistan's Deputy Head of Mission in Tehran, Ismat Hassan Sial, traced the country's ancient roots through Mehrgarh, Mohenjo-daro, Harappa and Gandhara. Her remarks also highlighted the historic influence of Persian language and literature across the Subcontinent and the connections represented by Iqbal's legacy.

The programme presented Pakistan's history as part of a wider story of exchange among the region's peoples—one shaped by movement, shared ideas and cultural encounters over many centuries.

Highlight: Speakers explored Pakistan's layered heritage and the deep historical, linguistic and cultural ties linking Iran and Pakistan.

Highlight Box

The exhibition explored the historical and cultural connections between Pakistan and its neighbours.



International Conference Examines the Heritage of Turkish Poetry

TEHRAN — October 21, 2026



The Sadequain tribute and exhibition opening at the ECO Cultural Institute on 28 September 2026.

The ECO Cultural Institute hosted an international conference on the cultural heritage of Turkish poetry, marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of Turkish thinker, sociologist and poet Ziya Gökalp.
Researchers from Iranian cities and other ECO countries gathered to discuss the region's poetic traditions and the ideas of figures including Yunus Emre, Ali-Shir Nava'i, Fuzuli, Seyyid Nesimi, Magtymguly, Tilim Khan, Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Ziya Gökalp.

Highlight Box

The conference brought regional scholars together to explore the shared heritage and continuing influence of Turkish poetry.

The conference considered Turkish poetry as a shared heritage extending from Turkistan and the Caucasus to Anatolia and the Balkans. Speakers also reflected on poetry's role in preserving collective memory and supporting cultural understanding across generations and communities.



Econama No. 13 Explores Tea, Coffee and Storytelling

OCTOBER 2026

The ECO Cultural Institute published the thirteenth issue of its electronic monthly magazine Econama, featuring a special dossier titled "Tea, Coffee and Story."

The issue examines tea houses and coffee houses as places of social interaction, hospitality and cultural exchange across the ten ECO Member States. Its comparative study considers their social roles, storytelling through visual arts and music, drinking rituals, and how these spaces are changing in contemporary life.

The issue also reviews recent ECI activities, including cultural programmes, exhibitions and the ECO Mobile Photography Festival.

Highlight Box

The special dossier considers how tea houses and coffee houses have shaped social life and cultural memory across the ECO region.