

Iran to hold Qur'anic exhibition in 10 countries



IRNA - Iran's Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) will hold 10 Qur'anic exhibitions in 10 countries, said head of ICRO's International Promotion Center Mehdi Zare'.

He made the statement on the sidelines of the 30th International Qur'an Exhibition which opened on April 1 and will close today.

South Africa, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Iraq and Oman are among the countries which are planned to host the exhibition.

Speaking on the presence of foreign organizations in the 30th edition of the exhibition, Zare' said, Qur'anic institutes from India, Pakistan, Tunisia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Yemen, Palestine and Sri Lanka are participating.

Ancient Roman city's missing bodies were vaporized in volcanic blast

SCIENCE ALERT - When Mount Vesuvius erupted nearly 2,000 years ago, the Roman city of Pompeii and its residents were buried alive, entombed in ash. But the nearby city of Herculaneum was obliterated, and few traces of its people were ever found.

Their bodies were most likely vaporized in a searing hot blast of gas and particles, according to new research by geologists from Roma Tre University and University Federico II of Naples in Italy, who have found fresh evidence of the lethal event in carbonized wood.

In 2018, archeologists uncovered the first convincing evidence that some residents of Herculaneum met a ghastly death: their soft tissues and blood boiled in a flash when hit with extreme heat from the volcanic eruption; their skulls exploded from within.

Two years later, in 2020, archeologists described another skull unearthed at the site. It contained fragments of a glassy material that led them to believe the person's brain had been vitrified, or turned into glass.

The researchers suggest that buildings within the 'red zone' of Mount Vesuvius - where approximately 700,000 people live - should be reinforced to shelter residents from the thermal impacts of any potential future eruptions, should they not be able to evacuate in time.

In the event of another short-lived ash cloud surge, "potential for survival critically depends on the ability of shelters to prevent infiltration of the hot dusty gas," they conclude.

● License Holder: Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)
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Iran Daily

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Vol. 7268 ● Saturday, April 15, 2023 ● Price 40,000 Rials ● 8 Pages

Ramadan tradition of saharikhani on the wane



Saharikhani is the common ritual of welcoming the holy month of Ramadan and is held in various forms and names throughout Iranian cities.

Art & Culture Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Although some customs and traditions slide into oblivion after a period of time, efforts are required to preserve and pass them down to future generations. One ritual tied to the religious beliefs of Iranian people is *saharikhani*. Although practiced very little, it is still alive.

In the modern era, people rely on the alarm features on their mobile phones and the tradition of *saharikhani* is getting disappeared. However, some areas continue to hold this religious tradition. Among these areas are the mountainous

parts of Mazandaran and Gilan, Sistan and Baluchestan, Kashan, Khorasan and many other Iranian cities and provinces.

Saharikhani is the common ritual of welcoming the holy month of Ramadan and is held in various forms and names throughout Iranian cities.

During the month of Ramadan, almost one hour before the morning call to prayer, a sweet-voiced person called *saharikhani* performs special poems and supplications on the rooftops and through the interwoven alleys of cities, inviting people to be prepared for the pre-dawn meal before fasting. Sometimes in local areas, they knock on doors to wake

people up for doing their pre-fasting ceremonies.

In various Iranian cities, *saharikhani* is accompanied by playing a musical instrument such as *dotar*. In Kurdistan and Kermanshah provinces, the tradition is performed with playing *tanbur* (long-necked string instrument) or *daf* (frame drum). In some other areas, only instruments are played and no one sings; this tradition is called *saharinavazi*. Wind instruments such as the *bugle* and *sorna* (an ancient Iranian woodwind instrument) are used to this end. In some other areas, *negharezani* (playing the *timpani*) was highly popular, said the Islamic arts and music researcher, Mojtaba

Qeytaqi.

The tradition of *saharikhani* is commonly accompanied with praying as well as singing religious and mystic couplets and quatrains. Houshang Javid, a researcher on religious music, said that in the past, in some regions of Iran where religious beliefs were stronger, people considered waking people up at dawn as meritorious.

The roots of *saharikhani* go back to the pre-Islamic era, when it was practiced at the court. The king was the first person to wake up and sung to wake the servants up, while keeping his own prestige. After the advent of Islam, this court custom became popular

because of the month of Ramadan and was used to wake the people up to prepare for a fasting day.

The songs for *saharikhani* were not rhymed in the beginning, Javid said, adding that the phrases like "God is the greatest," "There is no deity but God" were used. From the second century of hijra (journey of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina), poets began to write poetry for *saharikhani*.

Several Iranian poets including Rumi, Hafez, Khaqani and Nizami have written poems which could be read for performing the religious tradition of *saharikhani*.

Iran marks National Day of Iranian poet Attar of Nishapur



Every year, a number of literati, scholars and people gather at the mausoleum of the Persian poet, mystic, and philosopher Attar of Nishapur to mark National Day of Attar, which was on April 14.

Known by his pen name Farid-oddin Attar Nishapuri, the prominent Iranian poet was born in 1142 and died at the age of 75 in Nishapur, in northeastern Khorasan Razavi Province, during the Mongol invasion of

Iran. Attar means 'apothecary' and this nickname was given to him due to his profession. He was probably the son of a prosperous chemist, receiving an excellent education in various

fields. He practiced the profession of pharmacy. The people he helped in the pharmacy used to confide their troubles in Attar and this affected him deeply, Mehr wrote. Eventually, he abandoned his pharmacy store and traveled extensively, seeking wisdom in Baghdad, Basra, Mecca, Medina, Damascus, Turkistan, and India, before finally returning to his birthplace Nishapur.

Attar is one of the most famous mystic poets of Iran. His works were the inspiration of Rumi, Hafiz, and Jami, and many other mystic poets.

According to Iranian literary figure, Mir

Jalaleddin Kazzazi, Attar is a master of Persian language who was thoroughly familiar with the delicate and elegant aspects of the language. Attar is the author of numerous books and works of literature, most important of which are 'Tazkerat al-Owliya' (Biographies of the Saints), 'Manteq-ot-Tayr' (The Conference of the Birds), 'Asrar Nameh', 'Elahi Nameh', and 'Mokhtar Nameh'.

'Tazkerat al-Owliya' is a hagiographic collection about the lives, works, and beliefs of 39 Sufi saints during the 12th and 13th centuries. 'Manteq-ot-Tayr', the name of which is taken from the Qur'an, tells the

story of a group of birds who gather to decide who is to be their sovereign, as they have none. The hoopoe, the wisest of them all, suggests that they find the legendary Simorgh. The hoopoe leads the birds, each of whom represents a human fault, which prevents humankind from attaining enlightenment. The hoopoe tells the birds that they have to cross seven valleys in order to reach the abode of the Simorgh.

A manuscript of 'Manteq-ot-Tayr', dating back to the 15th century, is kept in the National Library and Archives of Iran along with 17 other of handwritten texts of his works.