

## TIBF, vitrine for displaying Iranian culture to the world



**IRNA** – Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) serves as a vitrine for showcasing Iranian culture to the world, according to Seyyed Ahmad Oboudatian, the Assistant to the Iranian President in Popularizing the Government. Seyyed Ahmad Oboudatian said the book fair holds high significance as it caters not only to a special group but also to people from all walks of life with varying thoughts and needs. Oboudatian spoke of the substantial presence of publishers and public welcome, noting that the event will provide a platform for showcasing book products, related developments, research, and narrations. The upcoming 34th edition of TIBF is scheduled to take place from May 10 to 20.

## Caspian to Persian Gulf tourism rally ends



**IRNA** – After a seven-day journey, the Caspian to Persian Gulf tourism rally concluded on Thursday with the announcement of the top drivers. The rally featured 60 two-wheel drive vehicles that embarked on their journey from Chamkhale beach. Covering a 2,300 km route, the participants highlighted the importance of safe driving while introducing the touristic, historical, and natural attractions of the north-south corridor of Iran. The rally commenced in Gilan Province and traversed through Qazvin, Alborz, Qom, Isfahan, Fars, and Hormuzgan, culminating at the Persian Gulf coasts. Participants were required to adhere to a set of regulations, including maintaining speed and safe driving, following traffic rules and regulations, and paying attention to signs and warnings.

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# Chega Sofla, proving Iran's ownership of Persian Gulf

### Arts & Culture Desk

The National Day of the Persian Gulf is a celebration observed annually on April 30. Despite the significance of this day, the village on the 6,000-year-old area of Chega Sofla, which is considered the most important document showing that the Persian Gulf belongs to Iranians, has not yet been moved. In 2020, the Iranian government urgently wrote to the governor general of Khuzestan, Housing Foundation of Islamic Revolution, and Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ministry, demanding the relocation of the village from the coast of the Persian Gulf. The purpose was to secure the city from the construction and widening of the road, but nothing has been done yet. It is worth noting that the archaeologists who excavated the site discovered evidence that indicated the influence of Persian civilization in the following millennia on Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Mesopotamia. However, the village's relocation has become a major obstacle to the preservation and development of this site.

In 2018, an archaeological team proposed a plan to relocate the village to an area outside the Zohreh plain, close to the Chega Sofla site, so that the villagers could benefit from the presence of tourists. The proposed plan aimed to preserve the villagers' rights and ensure that they



would not be separated from their roots. Abbas Moqaddam, the head of the excavation team, said in an interview with the Persian-language Iran newspaper that the relocation of the villagers to the new area could redefine the economy through agriculture, while preserving their names and roots. Furthermore, the village would be the first to be constructed from the cultural heritage perspective. The plan would focus on the architecture of the town's houses, and their coordination with Chega Sofla, to turn the new village into an attraction related to the valuable history of the ancient city.

### Historical background

Historically, an Achaemenid inscription was found on Khark Island in the 2000s that showed that the Persian Gulf belonged to Persians at least 2,500 years ago. Experts demanded the inscription's protection since some small countries on the shores of the Persian Gulf were looking for the Iranian islands on this turquoise expanse, giving them a fake name. However, their voices were not heard, and the inscription

was distorted forever. On the other hand, Chega Sofla indicates that the history of the Persian Gulf dates back to 6,000 years ago, when Persians lived on the coast. Archaeologists have found stelaes with the image of two goats facing each other in Chega Sofla. Three thousand years later, these characters were carved in the form of two Arabian gazelles on the graves of Al-Ain, the UAE. The UAE claimed in UNESCO that the cultural roots of Al-Ain necropolis are rich and registered it globally. Still, the Chega Sofla petroglyphs are over 3,000 years older than the Al-Ain pictures. Furthermore, archaeologists have found figurines in the eastern and western parts of the Arabian Peninsula that show the influence of Chega Sofla on them. The petroglyphs discovered in Chega Sofla have the ancient historical roots of the discoveries in Hazor area of occupied Palestine. The stelaes discovered in Hazor date back to the Bronze Age, which means 1,200 years B.C. Chega Sofla stelaes are 3,800 years older than the Hazor finds. The story does not end with the discovery of the

ancient ritual cup called Varka. This artifact belongs to the Uruk culture in Mesopotamia and is adorned with ritual motifs that depict offerings to the temple. To the surprise of many, a similar cup with the same form of pottery was found elsewhere. According to Moqaddam, an expert in Mesopotamian art, the Varka cup was heavily influenced by the cup found in Chega Sofla, an ancient city located in modern-day Iran. The latter cup, Moqaddam notes, is 700 years older than its Mesopotamian counterpart. Moqaddam also draws attention to the burial practices in Chega Sofla. He compares the number of cemeteries in the city to contemporaneous sites in Mesopotamia such as Obeid and Ur. Moqaddam concludes that the burials in Chega Sofla are incredibly rich, indicating that the city was prosperous and had extensive connections to other parts of the world. However, the discovery of such significant artifacts and cultural heritage sites raises an important question. Why is it that when Persian Gulf countries are looking to establish a fake history and a fake name,

they fail to mention the cultural assets that demonstrate that the Persian Gulf takes its name from Persia (Iran)? This issue has been troubling public opinion and cultural heritage activists for years. The first documented case of such falsification occurred in 1958, when the British author Roderic Owen published a book called 'The Golden Bubble: Arabian Gulf Documentary'. In the preface to his book, Owen explained that during his several years' stay in the Persian Gulf (Bahrain), he noticed that all the inhabitants of the shore were Arabs. As a result, he decided to rename the gulf after them, claiming that the name "Persian Gulf" was inappropriate. Such attempts to rewrite history and erase the rich cultural heritage of the Persian Gulf region are deeply concerning. It is essential to preserve and protect these artifacts and cultural heritage sites for future generations, as they provide critical insights into the rich history and cultural diversity of the region. In doing so, we can ensure that the world can learn and appreciate the contributions of the Persian Gulf to human civilization.

## Italian historian claims to have identified bridge in 'Mona Lisa' backdrop



A small town in Tuscany is revelling in excitement after it was claimed that the bridge painted in the backdrop of the most famous portrait in the world – Leonardo da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa' – belongs to the town. The Italian historian Silvano Vinceti said he had no doubt that the Romito di Laterina bridge in the province of Arezzo was what Leonardo had painted into the countryside landscape behind the enigmatic 'Mona Lisa', which would end a mystery that has

fuelled countless disputes over the years, the Guardian reported. Leonardo painted the 'Mona Lisa' in Florence in the early 16th century, and the identity of the woman featured in the oil painting – widely believed to be Lisa del Giocondo – has triggered as much speculation as the distant backdrop. Theories in the past have identified the bridge as Ponte Buriano, close to Laterina, as well as Ponte Bobbio in the northern Italian city of Piacenza.

Using historical documents and drone images, and by making comparisons between the painting and photographs of the area, Vinceti said it was "the Etruscan-Roman bridge, Romito". The most telling detail, he told reporters at the foreign press association in Rome, was in the number of arches: the bridge in Leonardo's painting had four arches, as did the Romito. Ponte Buriano, on the other hand, has six arches, while Ponte Bobbio has more than six.

Only one arch of the Romito, which stretched across the Arno river, remains, as do the foundations of the bridge on the opposite side of the riverbank. Documents belonging to the Medici family that were found in Florence's state archives showed that between 1501 and 1503 the bridge was "a very busy, functioning bridge", Vinceti said. He added that it was precisely at that time that Leonardo was in the Val d'Arno area, first at the service of Cesare Borgia,

a cardinal from the most notorious noble family in Renaissance Italy, and then for Piero Soderini, a statesman of the Republic of Florence. Vinceti measured the width in between the riverbanks and, using the size of the remaining arch, established that four arches of the same size fitted perfectly across the stretch. Vinceti also found documents that attest to Leonardo often residing in Fiesole at the time, with an uncle who was a priest.