



MEHR NEWS AGENCY - The Iranian children's and teenagers' films week will conclude today in Sarajevo, marking the end of a three-day event that showcased a collection of captivating animations. According to the Soureh Cinema Organization, the event began on June 6 and will wrap up today at the cinema hall of the International Center for Children and Youth in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This special event, organized by Iran's Embassy in collaboration with the Soureh Cinema Organization and the Sky Frame animation studio, welcomed the participation of the Sarajevo International Center for Children and Adolescents. Throughout the week, students from various schools in Sarajevo had the opportunity to enjoy the screening of remarkable animations such as 'Dolphin Boy,' 'Loupetou,' 'The Mobarak,' and 'Little Heroes.' Each screening attracted an estimated audience of approximately 150 Bosnian students, who immersed themselves in the world of Iranian cinema.

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Farsi language taught in 18 Chinese universities: *Envoy*

Arts & Culture Desk

Chinese Ambassador to Iran, Chang Hua, announced that the Persian language is currently being taught at 18 Chinese universities. In a recent tweet, Chang expressed delight over the reciprocal educational efforts, highlighting that the Chinese language is also taught at five universities in Iran. These endeavors signify a growing cultural exchange between the two nations. In an interview with IRNA, Iran's Cultural Attaché in China, Abbas Ali Vafaie, shed light on the extensive presence of Persian language and literature courses across more than 18 Chinese universities. Additionally, he emphasized the operation of seven Iranian studies centers within these institutions. Vafaie further explained that while some universities offer Persian language studies as part of their Oriental studies programs,

others provide dedicated courses focusing on the Persian language. Vafaie delved into the motivations of Chinese individuals to learn Persian, identifying two primary factors. Firstly, the transformation of Iran into a regional powerhouse has sparked interest among others who seek to comprehend the elements of its power. Secondly, the flourishing linguistic, commercial, and economic ties between China and Iran necessitate Chinese entities to engage with their Iranian counterparts, fostering the demand for proficient Persian speakers. Fortunately, Vafaie remarked that the enthusiasm for learning Persian language and literature has witnessed a substantial surge in recent years, particularly in China. This remarkable development reflects the genuine eagerness and warm reception shown by learners. Vahid Haddadi-Asl, the Iranian Deputy Minister



of Science, highlighted the diverse policies being implemented to strengthen the field of Persian lan-

guage and literature. The foremost objective is to establish and reinforce Persian language and lit-

erature centers in different countries, enhancing their prominence and accessibility.

Arts & Culture Desk

Shir-Mohammad Espandar, a musical prodigy hailing from Iran's southern Sistan and Baluchestan Province, dedicated his entire life to playing the *donali*, a unique double *ney* instrument. Unfortunately, he lost his eyesight permanently, but his name and art continue to illuminate the rich cultural landscape of Iran. Renowned as the world's only *donali* player, his talent resonates across borders. Bampur, his birthplace, holds a significant historical legacy, dating back to the Parthian Empire, and it is where Shir-Mohammad Espandar's remarkable journey began.

Playing two neys simultaneously was a tremendous challenge, especially in terms of breath control.

Musical prodigy

His face bears the marks of his challenging life, with white hair in a single lock and darkened lines etched upon his forehead and visage. His eyes concealed hidden secrets, only to be discovered by those who listened to the haunting melodies of the *ney*, allowing them to delve into the depths of his enigmatic soul. Shir-Mohammad Espandar served as a retired staff member of Iran's Culture Ministry, relying solely on a retirement pension for his livelihood. However, his association with the Art Credit Fund has provided some support. He holds an honorary doctorate in traditional music from France, and an honorary diploma in *ney* playing from Iran. With his *donali* instrument, he has captured the



Local music needs urgent consideration not to fade into oblivion

Genius player of *donali*, lost his eyesight forever

He lost his eyesight permanently, but his name and art continue to illuminate the rich cultural landscape of Iran.

essence of the desert's sound, and it is a wish that this unique instrument continues beyond the artist's lifetime. His son, Allahbakhsh Espandar, shared in an interview with Iran newspaper about his father's physical condition, stating, "The cause of my father's blindness was due to his old age and negligence in taking care of his eyes. He had been suffering from cataracts for several years, but the doctor deemed surgery unnecessary. Unfortunately, this led to a gradual deterioration, eventually resulting in glaucoma, and due to the misdiagnosis, he lost his vision permanently."

Background

Shir-Mohammad's journey as a musician began at

the young age of six, when he worked as a shepherd and discovered the enchanting melodies of the *ney*. Despite facing unfavorable living conditions after losing his mother and embarking on a business trip to Karachi, Pakistan, where he married his cousin, his passion for the *ney* flourished. Recalling his experiences, he shared, "Fate introduced me to a musician playing the *ney* during a wedding ceremony in Pakistan, and that's when my love for the *ney* blossomed. Observing someone playing two *neys* simultaneously, I learned this instrument. It was Jamal Shah, the renowned *donali* player of his time. I asked him for the *ney* in order to observe it, and after playing it against my arm, he said, "If you have

an interest in learning this instrument, you will definitely learn it." Playing two *neys* simultaneously was a tremendous challenge, especially in terms of breath control. Despite lacking formal education, I play the *donali* better than someone with a music doctorate. This happened around 1958 when I was about 15 or 16 years old. After mastering this instrument, I returned to my country. At that time, music was not very popular, and people were not familiar with it. When I played the two *neys*, people whispered, "He never sleeps day and night, his mind is consumed by *ney* playing." But I responded, "I play it out of love and passion." To this day, no one in Iran has been able to play the double *ney*

like me." Speaking about the *donali*, Shir-Mohammad said, "In every land there exists a musical instrument called the *ney*, but witnessing the *donali* and playing it simultaneously astonishes and delights people. Even when I performed in other countries, tickets sold out quickly, leaving some without admission. I received numerous offers to teach this instrument abroad, but I decided to teach it only in my homeland. If you are interested in learning the *donali*, come to Baluchestan." Shir-Mohammad Espandar proudly shared, "I have introduced this music in several countries to promote the glory of my homeland. I have never sought, nor will I ever seek, favors or privileges from officials or those in power. I have a merciful God and deserving, beloved people for whom I have always been grateful. Through the grace of God, I have brought joy to millions of people with my music and, today, in the twilight of my life, I find contentment and happiness." Allahbakhsh Espandar appealed to officials for the necessary support, urging them not to let Shir-Mohammad and his *donali* fade into oblivion. He emphasized the importance of preserving the legacy of this remarkable master and his instrument.

