

14th FIA wraps up in Iran



IRNA – The winners of the 14th Farabi International Award (FIA) were honored in both national and international sections on Monday. The closing ceremony was held in Tehran with the presence of Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf and Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Mohammad-Ali Zolfigol and prominent professors and researchers. In a speech Zolfigol delivered at the ceremony, he said: "By studying history, we understand the strengths and weaknesses of the past. We can also improve the strengths and do not repeat the weaknesses and mistakes. We must strengthen our national identity."

Foreign students to attend int'l cultural training course in Iran



IRNA – The second cultural training course for international students of universities and higher education centers across the country will begin with the participation of 500 students from more than 15 nationalities hosted by Iran University of Science and Technology. The second cultural training course is aimed at empowering international students as cultural ambassadors and deepening, consolidating, and getting to know more about the basics of Islamic thought. Over 500 international students from more than 15 nationalities will attend in the event, which will run on July 14-18.

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Iranian bas-relief unveiled in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

The ancient Iranian bas-relief carving, believed to be over two millennia old, which was illicitly taken out of the country almost seven years ago, was repatriated to its country and unveiled at the National Museum of Iran on Monday. During the ceremony, Jebrael Nokandeh, the director of the National Museum of Iran, said that the bas-relief belongs to the Sassanian era, and is made of limestone.

Iran's Deputy Tourism Minister Ali Darabi said that according to the 1970 convention, the Islamic Republic of Iran is seriously pursuing the repatriation of historical objects, and in the recent meeting with China, the cooperation of member states was proposed, and the extensive effort of international countries to return historical objects was raised. He noted that a total of 30 historical works were returned to the country with the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran's Judiciary, Iran's Culture and Relations Organization, and Interpol; and today the Sassanian bas-relief, which is one of these important works, is on display at the museum. According to Darabi, pre-

viously, brick carvings were returned to Iran from France, and all these works will be exhibited in the near future.

Darabi added, "We have 30 Sassanian bas-reliefs in Iran; this relief was brought to the United Arab Emirates during the war and then received at the London airport, and since it was damaged during transportation, it was restored and displayed in the British Museum for three months. These important antiquities had to be quarantined, and 12 experts had the mission to verify the authenticity of the pieces."

Director General of Museums and Historical-Cultural Property of Iran Morteza Adibzadeh also confirmed the historical authenticity of this work and said that it is very likely that this relief was taken from southern Iran.

Adibzadeh added that according to preliminary studies, the stone of this relief is made of limestone and Sasanid signs can be seen on it. It is highly likely that this relief is from southern Fars Province, although research is still ongoing and we hope to find the exact location of this petroglyph.

Repatriation of antiquities is one of the inherent du-



ties of the Tourism Ministry, and cases related to repatriation are followed up with seriousness, he noted. Adibzadeh added, "If we have database resources, we can do this by taking a sample from the back of this stone in order to conduct interdisciplinary tests

and elemental analysis." "Since the work was broken and in bad condition, we have requested the preliminary reports, based on which we will publish research results and reports," he concluded. The chargé d'affaires of the Iranian Embassy in London

announced that the ancient Iranian bas-relief carving was successfully delivered to the Iranian Embassy in London on June 24.

Approximately seven years ago, authorities apprehended the coveted 2,000-year-old Iranian carving during a smuggling attempt at a British airport.

Estimated at a staggering value of over £30 million (\$37 million), this remarkable artifact holds great historical and cultural significance for Iran.

Dr. St. John Simpson, a senior curator and archaeologist in the British Museum's department of the Middle East, said, "We almost never come across a case of something being cut out of the 'living rock.' That's a level of brutality that surpasses anything. 'You've even got felt-tip marks on the back before they've used an angle grinder to slice diagonally behind it and across the top. It was then packed in an incredibly bad manner, in a small, almost unpadded crate held together with nails."

"If it had been a state-of-the-art art-handling type crate, that would have attracted a different sort of attention because it required all sorts of paperwork." He has identified it as a unique rock relief sculpture dating to the period of the Sassanian Empire, 224-651 AD.

"It belongs to a period when Iran was the center of a powerful empire stretching from Syria to the Caucasus and Central Asia, and with its capital at Ctesiphon, south of present-day Baghdad," he said. "The Sasanians were powerful rivals of Rome and famous today for their fine silverware and cut glass."

Time to boost Iran-Africa tourism



By Hamideh Hosseini
Staff
writer

Africa, the second-largest continent, after Asia, is home to 54 countries, with a population of approximately 1.5 billion. The continent boasts an abundance of captivating attractions and pristine natural wonders, making it a key destination for tourism. With its diverse landscapes of forests, plains, deserts, stunning waterfalls and beaches, Africa provides exciting and adventurous experiences, teeming with unique wildlife and plant species.

Africa's significance extends beyond its natural wonders. As the birthplace of humanity, particularly East Africa, it

holds historical and cultural importance. Ancient civilizations like Egypt and Carthage emerged in North Africa, showcasing the continent's early human civilizations. Africa's rich history, migrations, and trade have fostered a wide array of ethnicities, cultures, and languages, attracting those fascinated by cultural diversity and tribal life. This cultural appeal serves as a substantial source of income for African countries.

Against this backdrop, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi embarks on a landmark visit to Africa today, marking the first such trip in eleven years. His itinerary includes Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Iran recognizes the economic potential of Africa, which boasts a \$600



MICATO SAFARIS

billion economy. Tourism holds particular significance as a potential avenue for cooperation between Iran and African nations. This visit presents an opportunity for tourism experts and officials in Iran to carefully examine and consider the successful African model of promoting peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife, which

has resulted in economic benefits for the continent.

The key to boosting tourism between Iran and African countries lies in their shared cultural, historical, and religious affinities. Iran and African nations share a common culture that values hospitality, rituals, and traditional arts. The challenge is to introduce these

similarities to the people and tourists in these lands, fostering cultural exchanges and tourism. African countries are not only commercially and economically appealing but also offer natural and cultural tourism. Investments in African nations have generated enthusiasm among tourism and business professionals, who aim to develop relations with other countries.

To fully unlock Africa's potential, long-term investments and capacity building are crucial, requiring involvement from the private sector and government negotiations. Iran's cultural and historical ties make it an attractive destination for Africans, and promoting tourist attractions in both regions can increase

the number of visitors. Marketing efforts should focus on Iran's traditional arts to foster handicraft exports and create a common market between Iran and African nations. African countries possess tourism capacities that attract global visitors. To expand the market, negotiations and careful planning are necessary. Inbound tours from Africa and outbound tours from Iran can be facilitated, benefiting both regions. The current focus on Africa by policymakers and politicians presents an opportune moment to strengthen tourism relations alongside political, economic, and commercial ties.

Considering indirect flights via the UAE, Turkey, and Oman can overcome the challenge of travel-

ing to African countries. Establishing flight routes with these companies can improve access to Africa. While Europe and Asia traditionally attract more tourists, targeted advertising can increase Africa's appeal to Iranian travelers. Evaluating and modifying the perception and image of Africa among Iranians is essential to tap into the target market.

Similar to successful marketing efforts for Chinese tourists in Iran, strategic promotion and outreach can attract African tourists. Even capturing a small fraction of the Chinese tourist market could significantly boost the Iranian tourism industry. Smart planning and effective advertising strategies are crucial to attract tourists from Africa.